

North Yorkshire Council Election 5 May 2022

NY Climate Coalition survey of candidate views on key environmental issues

Candidate name	Party	Division
Neil Swannick	Labour Party	Whitby Streonshalh

Thanks for taking part in this survey. We hope you will see this as an opportunity to share your thoughts with voters on important climate and environmental issues. While we would ideally like candidates to answer the survey in full, we appreciate that some of the points are quite technical. Candidates come from many different backgrounds and may be drawn to local government because of a passion for other aspects of service delivery and community interest. Please feel free to focus on the questions you feel are most relevant to you. You can always add more information later if you wish.

1. The newly elected members of North Yorkshire Council (NYC) will be responsible for overseeing the county's net zero strategy. Would you support the provision of carbon literacy training (e.g. through the [Carbon Literacy Project](#)) as part of the induction programme for new councillors?

Yes, I would very strongly support the provision of carbon literacy training for all councillors and staff. I have been associated with the Carbon Literacy Project in Manchester since its inception and was one of the first guinea pigs to take part in training. Carbon literacy training complements physical measures to mitigate carbon emissions and adapt to climate change.

2. Transport, agriculture and domestic energy are the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in North Yorkshire. In your view, how should the new NY Council tackle these most effectively?

Transport: our manifesto pledges commit Labour councillors to making all public transport vehicles including NY Council vehicles electric by 2030. Also to encourage and facilitate cycling for shorter journeys and to develop a network of cycleways, meeting the Sustrans safe design standards and connecting every settlement in the county.

Agriculture: I have no expertise in agriculture, but, in line with our manifesto, agree that NY Council should, in any way it can, promote best practice in farming and woodland management, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Domestic energy: on a national level, I believe that Government should enable a massive programme of home insulation. This would create multiple benefits: reducing carbon

emissions and fuel poverty, whilst creating jobs and new skills. Local authorities, because the public trust them more than national government and the private sector, are best-placed to lead such programmes bringing local knowledge and innovation.

3. Many politicians support net zero commitments, but some argue that “green” measures to protect the environment and climate are too expensive, will cost jobs and need to be delayed. Where do you stand on this?

Though the methodology of the Stern Review of 2006 has been subject to subsequent debate, the basic premise that the longer we leave the problem of climate change unsolved, the more expensive the solution, is widely accepted. I believe that climate change is the world’s most urgent problem and opinion polls regularly support that view.

4. As we seek more energy independence nationally, what role do you see in our region for onshore wind, solar farms and fracking?

Our manifesto pledges are to ban gas and oil fracking, support renewable wind, solar, biomass and water, and to encourage community ownership as well as community and co-operative energy procurement to reduce household costs.

I support electricity generation by offshore and onshore wind turbines and solar farms, subject to adequate schemes of community engagement and benefits.

5. How could the future NYC use its powers under the planning system to promote sustainable development? Should there be a presumption against high-carbon development proposals in NYC’s planning policies?

Whilst national planning policy includes a commitment to sustainable development, it is important that local plans are designed to result in tangible carbon emission reduction outcomes. Our manifesto pledges to support investment in energy efficient homes and in retrofitting of buildings to reduce energy consumption. We would pursue the 3R’s principle of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle and support the principles of the Circular Economy.

6. There are plans (in the [NY Local Enterprise Partnership strategy](#)) to double the current area of woodland in the region. Would you actively support this target?

Yes ! I would want to see this used to increase biodiversity and green infrastructure as well. I am concerned there is a focus on tree planting as carbon offsetting when we should be doing this as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

7. Will you sign the UK Divest Pledge: “If elected, I pledge to support the council divesting its pension fund out of fossil fuels and redirecting those amounts into sustainable investments and the local economy over an appropriate time-scale. I promise to do everything in my power to make sure this happens within the first year of my term in office.”

Our manifesto pledges to develop an ethical investment strategy which disinvests in high carbon industries.

8. Would you support net zero measures as a spending priority for the new council?

Yes. All financial decisions should support, or at least not adversely affect, the net zero target.

9. Most districts/boroughs in NY and around 75% across the UK have declared a climate emergency. In your view, should the new NYC adopt a similar motion to underpin its decarbonisation and planning policies?

Yes, I believe NYC should declare a climate emergency and I would be in support of suitable steps being taken to underpin decarbonisation and planning policies. We must also commit sufficient council resources to support delivery of our ambitions.

10. Is there anything else you'd like to add on your environmental or climate views?

For example, what would your future priorities be in your division and more widely in North Yorkshire? Do you have any comments on more technical matters such as hydrogen as a fuel, Drax, grid capacity, energy-efficiency, retrofitting, peatland conservation, plastic pollution, waste, circular economy, nature recovery or the government's new energy security strategy?

I believe that Whitby could have a green and sustainable future involving servicing the wind farms in the North Sea, electric vehicle charging and new digital and environmental industries. A pollution-free coast would support existing maritime industries such as sustainable fishing and tourism.