

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
17 December 2008

**ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Chairman's Statement

The Committee has met twice since my last Statement, on 15 October and 12 November 2008.

1. At the **meeting on 15 October** the agenda included:
 - a) **Environmental Management Strategy/Climate Change Update** – Members noted that a revised Environment Management Strategy was being developed, focussing on actions to reduce the environmental impact of the County Council's activity. It was also reported that a draft version of the Climate Change Strategy will be completed early in the New Year and would be brought to the Committee for consideration.
 - b) **Fairtrade Update** – The Committee agreed with officers' recommendation that Fairtrade status for the County should not be pursued at the present time, but did not want this to send out a negative message to the general public, as the Council is supportive of Fairtrade initiatives.
 - c) **Carbon Management Programme progress report** – Members received a very interesting report on actions being taken to reduce the County Council's energy consumption and carbon emissions. Members heard about new and potential projects such as Variable Speed Drive devices to fit to electric motors. Members highlighted that the Carbon Reduction Commitment might have a significant impact on the Council and looked forward to receiving further reports once the detail of the Climate Change Act was known.
 - d) **Unsurfaced, Unclassified Roads** – A presentation was given on the physical condition of parts of the 'green lane' network. Members heard that almost 50% of the network has been surveyed and that the County was becoming more proactive in its management and maintenance. Consultation on the draft UUR Strategy will take place in the New Year, and will be considered by the Committee.
2. At a **special meeting held on 12 November**, the Committee considered the reasons for the withdrawal of the County Council's Waste Core Strategy. A presentation was given by officers and we heard concerns from members of the public. It was agreed that a sub-group of Committee members would be involved in developing the new Minerals and Waste Core Strategies next year.
3. **'Tackling Climate Change in your Community' Event on 9 October**

The Committee is taking a leading role in shaping the Council's response to dealing with climate change and in October, we hosted an event for North Yorkshire elected members on tackling climate change at a community level.

Adapting to the changing climate is one of the biggest challenges facing our county, and research shows that the majority of voters want councils to take action on climate change.

The event for elected members, which was held in Harrogate, was attended by 40 councillors from County, District and City of York Councils.

The speakers included BBC Weather expert Paul Hudson, who talked about how climate change is affecting Yorkshire, and David Strahan on why local authorities should be preparing for a decline in oil supply. We also heard about the launch of a new Energy Saving Trust advice service and what is happening at a regional level to tackle climate change.

We had excellent feedback on the event.

4. **Joint County/District Flooding Scrutiny Task Group**

The Committee is continuing to look at how our county is adapting to climate change by participating in a joint County and District/Borough council scrutiny project on flooding.

Summer 2007 was the wettest summer period on record in Yorkshire, with 225m of rainfall falling in just 12 days. More and more communities in North Yorkshire are being affected by flooding and this has an increasing impact not only on people's homes and lives but on businesses and transport networks.

It is important that we work closely with our partners and with local people to minimise the impact of flooding and to support communities to recover and deal with the long-term effects.

The joint County/District scrutiny task group will look at these issues and report its findings and recommendations in Summer 2009.

5. The provisional agenda for the next meeting of the Committee, on 7 January 2009, includes the following:
 1. **Sustainable Waste Management** – To receive a briefing on, and have a discussion about, sustainable waste management.
 2. **Reducing Corporate Waste** – To update Members on progress to date with the recommendations of the scrutiny review.
 3. **Management of Litter** – To update Members on progress with the recommendations made in the scrutiny review.

County Councillor John Blackburn
5 December 2008