

North Yorkshire Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee

28 November 2024

Climate Change Activity in the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area

Report of the Corporate Director Environment

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on recent climate change activities that have taken place in the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 North Yorkshire Council's Climate Change Strategy was approved by Executive in July 2023 in response to the declared climate emergency. The council's Climate Change Delivery Pathway (CCDP) was approved by Executive on 20 August 2024 and sets out how the Strategy will be delivered.
- 2.2 An informal report previously made to the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee in October 2023 outlined the public consultation responses to the Climate Change Strategy as part of its development phase and included an update on some of the local activity taking place.
- 2.3 The council's overall progress on the climate change strategy is reported biannually to the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, alongside an annual progress report direct to Executive. The most recent Overview and Scrutiny report was made on 17 October 2024.

3.0 UPDATE ON RECENT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVITY

- 3.1 The Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee requested this update report to be included in the committee's work programme to provide a local view of climate change activity, for members' information.

3.2 Climate Change Strategy: Governance

3.2.1 Regional greenhouse gas emissions:

As reported at October's Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, regional greenhouse gas emissions across North Yorkshire were 5,714 ktCO₂e in 2022 (this is the most recently available data). This is an overall 31% decrease since 2005, and 5% lower than 2021.

3.2.2 North Yorkshire Council carbon footprint:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also noted the 2023/24 operational carbon footprint (the first year of North Yorkshire Council's operations) which was 31,663.98 tCO₂e. This includes fleet fuel consumption, heating, electricity, and certain "Scope 3" emissions which fall outside the direct control of the organisation but are a direct consequence of our operations, in this case business mileage in employee vehicles, and various transmission losses and "well to tank" emissions from supplied energy.

3.2.3 Carbon Disclosure Project:

In September 2024 the council for the first time submitted a response to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). This internationally recognised scheme is a voluntary reporting and accountability platform for local governments, investors and companies to help them understand their impact and take action. The council's submission is now being independently assessed, and the results will provide a benchmark score on our activity, including identifying areas for improvement.

3.2.4 Council Climate Scorecards:

The council has also provided information (principally via freedom of information requests) to the campaign group Climate Emergency UK for the completion of their Council Climate Scorecards process. A score and "league table" of all councils will be published in 2025.

3.2.5 Harrogate Convention Centre (HCC) sustainability plan:

HCC has engaged events industry sustainability consultants to develop a plan for the venue aligned with the NYC climate change strategy and best practice within the events industry. Increasing demand within the industry for sustainable venues reinforces the need to take action (as well as the risk of losing clients with a lack of action). The plan, which is awaiting formal adoption, focuses on HCC's Energy, Materials and Waste, Food and Food Waste, Logistics, Travel and Theatre and Productions

3.2.6 Harrogate staff green group:

An informal staff green group (a small group of interested volunteers) based at Harrogate Civic Centre meets regularly as a forum for sharing ideas and information across teams. The group instigated an event at the Civic Centre to raise awareness of the council's green car salary sacrifice scheme and provides suggestions for other green workplace improvements.

3.2.7 Community engagement:

In the Harrogate and Knaresborough area regular liaison has taken place between council officers and the wider community, for example:

- Zero Carbon Harrogate (ZCH)
 - Funding for an operations manager was awarded to ZCH via the UKSPF, along with the associated county-wide Climate Change Coalition. ZCH is working with the council on the North Yorkshire LEAD project.
 - Liaison meetings have taken place between the Head of Environment & Sustainability and Zero Carbon Harrogate Directors to identify opportunities for collaboration and ongoing unilateral support for the climate change agenda.
- Knaresborough Community Energy (KCE)
 - Officers have engaged with KCE, a not-for-profit company newly established in Knaresborough, who are actively pursuing a number of community energy initiatives, including a pilot decentralised energy scheme in partnership with Northern Powergrid.
- Harrogate Schools Sustainability Round Table
 - Officers attend this regular forum, to discuss schools' sustainability topics, with a particular emphasis recently on travel to school.
- Harrogate Youth Council
 - The Youth Council identified climate change as an area of interest, and officers have attended meetings to provide support and information as required. The council also participated the "Let's Talk" consultation on climate change via a dedicated youth engagement questionnaire.

3.3 Mitigation: reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

3.4 Various placed-based decarbonisation and climate mitigation projects are underway in the Harrogate and Knaresborough area as a result of support and funding facilitated by North Yorkshire Council. A snapshot of activity over the past twelve months is given below:

- 3.4.1 UK Shared Prosperity Fund – capital and revenue grants:
Four UKSPF grants have been awarded under the climate change programme within the H&K area, with a total value of £119,487, unlocking a further £31,450 investment in projects including solar PV installations, energy efficiency improvements and an electric minibus for a local access charity and a revenue grant for project management at ZCH.
- 3.4.2 UK Shared Prosperity Fund – community decarbonisation audits:
Specialist audits have been carried out for several community buildings, businesses and elderly people’s care homes under the support element of the UKSPF scheme and an earlier scheme (the Community Renewal Fund). These enabled groups to gain a clear understanding of decarbonisation measures needed for their buildings, some of which have led to successful funding bids.
- 3.4.3 Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (LEAD):
The LEAD project has been launched locally, to deliver home energy efficiency advice to local residents. Zero Carbon Harrogate are working with the council on delivery.
- 3.4.4 Photovoltaic (PV) panels at leisure centres and Harrogate Civic Centre:
Solar PV arrays are installed at Harrogate Civic Centre, Harrogate Leisure & Wellness Centre and Knaresborough Leisure & Wellness Centre. Over the past year, the systems have generated approximately 160,000 kWh, saving over 33 tonnes CO₂e.
- 3.4.5 Merger of Jesmond House and Harrogate Civic Centre:
The two Harrogate sites were consolidated into one office base (civic centre) in 2024. Data on savings is not yet available, but it is assumed energy and running cost savings and resulting carbon reductions will be achieved.
- 3.4.6 Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs):
The network of public EVCPs in Harrogate and Knaresborough has seen increasing take up. In the wider context, the council will be going out to tender soon to engage a charge point operator for the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funded project. This will provide charging points across the county, with a focus on delivering in areas where the market otherwise would not, by using public subsidy, while operating under a portfolio approach to ensure that the charge point operator is able to lever in private investment.
- 3.4.7 Harrogate Car Share:
The public Harrogate Car Share scheme is an online platform, allowing users to register their regular or one-off journeys to seek and offer a journey match.
- The scheme currently has over 1,700 members.
 - Over the past year, an estimated 190,000 miles has been saved, equivalent to £55,000 travel cost and 42 tonnes CO₂.
- 3.4.8 Local active travel improvements:
Area Committee members will be aware of a range of travel initiatives taking place in the area which will have positive climate impacts. Recently completed or ongoing projects include the development of walking and cycling infrastructure plans for Harrogate and Knaresborough.
- 3.4.9 Electrification of local bus services:
The council secured £7.8 million through the government’s Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) grant scheme, in partnership with the Harrogate Bus Company. This has been used to upgrade the local bus fleet to electric vehicles. New electric buses are entering service on the urban route 1 between Harrogate and Knaresborough, route 7 linking Harrogate, Wetherby and Leeds, and rural route 24 between Harrogate and Pateley Bridge, as well as the flagship double-deckers on the 36-route linking Ripon, Harrogate and Leeds. These will run alongside existing electric bus routes introduced since 2018. The new

vehicles are expected to enter service in batches throughout November 2024. Once all 39 vehicles have been delivered, the entire local bus fleet will be 100% electric.

3.4.10 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP):

The North Yorkshire BSIP plan was recently revised, with improvements funded via the government's Bus Service Improvement Fund, including enhancements to weekday timetables on Route 1, maintaining a £1 maximum fare for under 16-year-olds and 16–19-year-olds, and providing more customer facing staff a busy bus stations.

3.4.11 School Streets pilot:

Beechwood Grove, Harrogate (Oatlands Junior School) is currently undergoing a trial period as a designated School Street. An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order has been made to introduce a pedestrian and cycle zone. The intention is to reduce congestion and improve road safety at school start and finish times and facilitate sustainable trips to and from the school. This pilot scheme (and another one in Scarborough) is being monitored and reviewed to decide on potential continuation and roll-out to other areas in North Yorkshire.

3.4.12 Schools climate change engagement:

The council's energy team continues to provide learning sessions and teacher training and schools support on energy and climate change. Four schools within the Harrogate and Knaresborough area have been awarded the prestigious Green Flag status from the Eco-Schools scheme.

3.5 Adaptation: Preparing for the changing climate.

3.6 Work to develop an Adaptation section of the CCDP will be concluded in 2025 and this is now the Climate Change Team's current focus for policy development. The Council is working alongside the Combined Authority who will be commissioning a comprehensive Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment for North Yorkshire. This will identify detailed geographical areas of risk for climate change and will provide an evidence base for developing an Adaptation Strategy.

3.7 The area committee received a presentation from the Head of Resilience and Emergencies in September 2023, and further updates on emergency planning are included in the committee's work plan.

3.8 In the H&K area some significant flooding events have happened in recent months including a flash flooding event in Knaresborough in May 2024 which resulted in several homes being evacuated. This was caused by surface water flooding, highlighting the fact that people and properties outside the usual flood risk areas may also be vulnerable.

3.9 Flood warning and alert areas exist along the River Nidd and some of its tributaries, and at various locations along the River Ure. Around 20 flood alerts or flood warnings were issued by the Environment Agency within the H&K area between June 2023 and June 2024.

3.10 As a result of climate change, the Harrogate and Knaresborough area can expect to see weather changes in line with wider regional projections, specifically, hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. Extreme weather events such as intense rainfall and heatwaves are likely to become more frequent. That is why it is important to better understand the future impacts of climate change, to identify steps we can take to adapt to, or be better prepared and resilient to the effects of climate change for our communities and Council operations.

3.11 Supporting Nature

3.12 The Parks and Grounds service has carried out a number of activities to support biodiversity in the area's parks.

3.12.1 Knaresborough parks:

- Planted over 500 trees to create a copse area at Hay-a-Park
- Worked with various community groups who have created 2 perennial beds at Conyngham Hall
- Worked with Friends of Jacob Smith Park to manage and improve biodiversity on this site

3.12.2 Harrogate parks:

- Planted over 1,000 trees on the Stray to create 2 copse areas
- Planted over 300 trees on Cowdyke Beck in Jennyfields
- Rewilding of Irongates Field to encourage biodiversity
- Use of biological control for the treatment of pests to reduce the use of chemicals in our glasshouse production
- Rewilding of grassland above skate park in the Valley Gardens to encourage biodiversity
- Planting of trees in the Valley Gardens
- Creation of new rose garden using scented and pollinator varieties in the Valley Gardens

4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

4.1 The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to play its part in tackling the causes and impacts of climate change.

4.2 The activities outlined above contribute towards the council climate change strategy objectives, and deliver the following specific Council Plan ambitions:

- Place and Environment:
 - A clean, environmentally sustainable and attractive place to live, work and visit
 - A well connected and planned place with good transport links and digital connectivity
 - Communities are supported and work together to improve their local area
 - Good quality, affordable and sustainable housing that meets the needs of our communities
- Economy
 - Economically sustainable growth that enables people and places to prosper
 - Culture, heritage, arts and sustainable tourism all play their part in the economic growth of the county
- Health and Wellbeing
 - People are supported to have a good quality of life and enjoy active and healthy lifestyles
 - Reduced variations in health through tackling the root causes of inequality
- People
 - In times of hardship, support is provided to those that need it most
- Organisation
 - A carbon neutral council

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The recommendation is to note the information in this report, alternative options have not been considered.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 As this report is for information only, there are no financial implications.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As this report is for information only, there are no legal implications.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This report outlines a number of positive carbon reduction and associated initiatives in the Harrogate and Knaresborough area. A Climate Change Impact Assessment is not required as the recommendation is to note this for information only.

10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 As requested by the Area Committee, this report outlines some of the local activity being undertaken to address climate change, contributing towards the council's climate change strategy objectives. The activities described above enable the council as an organisation, as well as resident in the Harrogate and Knaresborough area, to make climate responsible choices.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION

11.1 It is recommended that the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee notes the recent climate change activities which are outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy](#) (PDF 11MB)

[Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee, report on the CCDP, 17 October 2024](#) (PDF 2MB)

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