

## NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

### TRANSPORT, ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 APRIL 2026

#### Annual Report of the Climate Change Member Champion Councillor David Hugill

1. **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update of the activities relating to the role of Climate Change Member Champion during 2025/26.

2. **Introduction**

“Championing mitigation of climate change is not purely about the planet, but about the people, their health, wellbeing, ability to work and play. It’s about social justice and “levelling up”, not just across the country but across society. We know climate impacts on different sectors of the population in different ways.”

3. **Celebrating Wonderful Initiatives**

In my report last year, I highlighted a project in Ripon that focussed on water management, lighting and sustainable travel. This year I would like to take you 3500 miles west to the State of Vermont, USA. This is an area I have visited to meet a farmer group called the ‘Carbon Farmers of America’. That was some years ago, but Vermont is still at the forefront of the climate agenda as the home of founder members of the American Solar Grazing Association. This organisation has 900 members across 45 states. They have a vision of keeping farmland in production, providing a sustainable future for farmers and helping solar companies to be productive community members and good stewards of the land.

In North Yorkshire, we are seeing very limited ambition from developers in how they will manage grass growth under solar panels. Excessive growth will be controlled by the use of Glyphosate. I feel that management in a more sustainable way, using grazing livestock to control sward height, can create valuable habitat for threatened pollinators and birds.

Moving back to Ripon and a speaking engagement at the Climate Fair organised by Ripon Together at the racecourse. This inspired me to explore Water Harvesting on my own farm. With the help of a 40% grant from ‘Farming in Protective Landscape’, I have just taken delivery of storage tanks with a capacity of 50,000 litre, which will take all the water from my poultry unit. Once it has undergone filtration and UV treatment, the water will be used for livestock and cleaning equipment. According to a report by the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management, water use in UK can contribute to around 5% of UK greenhouse gas emissions.

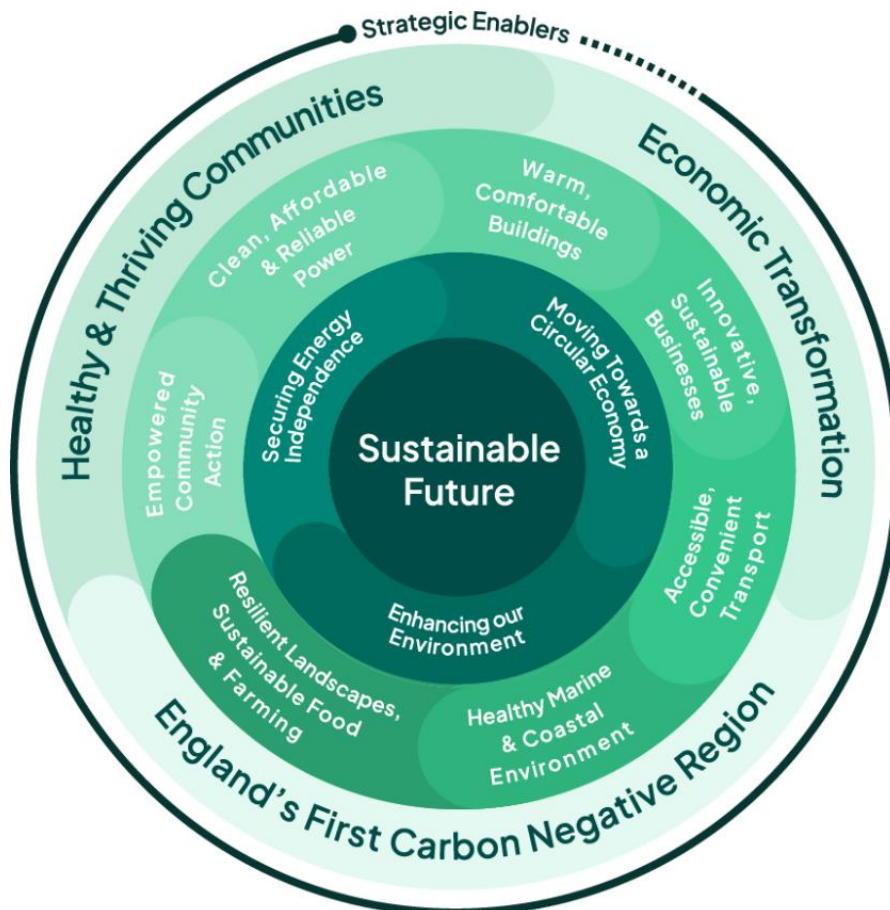
4. **York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Strategy for a Sustainable Future**

Formerly called the 'Route Map to Carbon Negative', this sets out an ambitious pathway to achieve energy resilience, as well as improving the regions environment and move to a circular economy. Together with the City of York Council's Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency, I have chaired a Task and Finish group giving the plan a refresh. It is deeply satisfying to watch the draft strategy go through the levels of governance at the Combined Authority in recent weeks and see it now launched as a public consultation, running until the 10<sup>th</sup> of June.

The public consultation can be completed at [Strategy for a Sustainable Future | Public Consultation > York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority](#)

I would encourage all committee members to take part in the consultation and to publicise the strategy in their networks.

A communications pack is also available by email to [energy@yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk](mailto:energy@yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk)



## 5. Influencing and networking

I have attended a variety of events and conferences over the last 12 months. The highlights include:

- **NYC Environment Team away day**  
It was a privilege to be invited to this day held at the Castle Howard Arboretum. The highlight for me was going out into the field as part of the team to remove hedge guards from hedges planted around eight years ago. The key aim was removing plastic from the countryside.
- **Local Climate Action Events**  
The Ripon Climate Fair was a well-attended event as was the Ryedale Environment Groups 'Restoring Nature Conference'. It was good to see a number of NYC Members in attendance at both events.
- **Groundswell Festival**  
My annual pilgrimage to Groundswell is always inspiring and look forward to this year's renewal.
- **Nuffield Farming Conference**  
Possibly the highlight of the year was a trip to the Nuffield Farming Conference. On a wintery November 2025 evening in Aberdeen, I was presented with an award to recognise 25 years of involvement with Nuffield, the catalyst to my involvement in Climate Change. The following morning saw a fascinating presentation from a returning scholar on converting food waste to fertiliser. The vector in this instance was the Black Soldier Fly that has been gaining attention because of its hyperaccumulation of protein and fats via consumption of renewable substrates. There is a growing network of insect farms worldwide and the presenter was keen to work with UK policy makers. I have joined the Nuffield Insect Group which includes an insect farmer in North Yorkshire.
- **Food for the Future Event, Northallerton**  
This was organised by the Public Health team at NYC. The event attracted a number of local food producers and was a useful networking opportunity. The Yorkshire Grain Alliance and their vision for the Yorkshire food system was really inspiring.
- **Drax Power Station**  
A visit to Drax Power Station with the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Climate Change Team gave me a chance to view the plant, but more importantly learn about the supply chain relationship with Canada and the USA.
- **Yorkshire Farming Conference**  
I represented the Council at this event held at the Great Yorkshire Showground in February 2026.
- **Hedge Planting Day**  
Later in February I hosted a volunteer event with Stokesley Climate Action Group and my Co-Chair from the Strategy for a Sustainable Future Task & Finish group on my farm. We planted around 2000 hedge plants, plus a row of

agroforestry, in what was a stimulating and thought-provoking day. Not only was it great to see another hedge taking shape, but to witness conversations from people passionate about saving the planet.

- **Community Energy in Harrogate and Knaresborough**

Community Energy has a major role to play in the energy transition and Zero Carbon Harrogate is keen to get involved. I recently took part in a meeting with the consultants who have been providing technical assistance to develop the first stage of a project. This project has received funding from the Community Wealth Building Fund, part of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

**6. North York Moors and Vales Environmental Farmers Group (NYMV)**

At the time of my appointment as Climate Change Member Champion, I pledged to use my farming connections to get our farmland delivering more in terms of nature and carbon sequestration. Working with the Environmental Farmers Group, who work with clusters of farms around river catchments, I co-chair a group setting up a cluster in the North of the county. We have received funding from the 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' and now have employed a part-time officer. The membership of the group is restricted to those farming within the North York Moors National Park, Ryedale and the Vales of Mowbray and York. NYMV has set an ambitious target of bringing 20,000ha into the cluster. The team have already had one enquiry of a "natural capital trade" from the private sector and we are working hard on farmer recruitment to reach our target.

**7. Waste Strategy**

Council approved an ambitious plan to harmonise kerbside recycling and residual waste collection. Early results have been encouraging. The refresh of the councils Waste Strategy has started and look forward to following its progress.

**8. Fracking and Fossil Fuels**

The Burniston 'proppant' squeeze planning application was due to be heard on 24<sup>th</sup> April. Regardless of the decision made on the day, climate action groups remain concerned at how the Council is dealing with the climate emergency declared in July 2022. Fossil Free North Yorkshire have continued to contact me regarding the investments in fossil fuel companies by North Yorkshire Pension Fund. NY Climate Coalition goes further in naming a bank which invests heavily in the fossil fuel industry and suggests a less well known bank which we should be using for our day-to-day banking.

**9. Local Plan**

Plan making is moving at pace with some ambitious targets to reach. While consultations will always attract plenty of comments of what a development should look like in terms of carbon footprint, we mustn't lose sight of the carbon footprint of the construction phase. A net zero construction policy should be considered. Experience in Cornwall and Central Lincs has shown that working this way does not extend build times.

## 10. Conclusion

While this is snapshot of the many components of mitigating climate change, there are many other strands that I will be watching closely in the next year. These include:

- Procurement,
- Moorland management to prevent wildfire,
- UN Sustainable Development Goals,
- Carbon Literacy,
- EV charging,
- Development of an Air Quality Strategy
- The reporting of data to show the actions we are taking to combat this climate emergency.

## 11. Equalities

The Climate Change Strategy has 'Equality of Opportunity' as one of its key principles. Many of the actions taken over the last 12 months have supported this. Through the delivery of community climate action, countryside access and housing upgrade programmes, many organisations supporting vulnerable people in our society have been helped to reduce carbon emissions and to improve access to nature.

## 12. Recommendation

That Members note the report.

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