

The background is a colorful illustration of a rural landscape. It features rolling green hills, a blue river, a village with houses and a church, a tractor in a field, and wind turbines on a distant hill. Various icons are scattered throughout, including a pound sign (£), a laptop, a paperclip, a map, a bird, a graph, a Wi-Fi symbol, a car, a bicycle, a house with solar panels, a power plug with a leaf, and a recycling symbol. Dotted lines connect some of these icons to the central text.

RURAL COMMISSION

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Background

- The Rural Commission was **set up by the County Council in 2019 and is sponsored by the Chief Executive.** It is the **first of its kind in the country.**
- The Rural Commission is **an independent Commission.** It is **supported administratively by the County Council and by a Reference Group,** Chaired by the Leader of the County Council.
- The Rural Commission is **comprised of eight key figures from across the region,** covering farming, business, science, religion, academia, journalism and community development. **The Very Reverend John Dobson (DL), Dean of Ripon Cathedral, chairs the Commission.**



The task and the approach

- The main aim of the Rural Commission was to **investigate the challenges faced by rural dwellers in sparse communities** across the County and to **identify actions to tackle the key challenges**.
- The Commission agreed at its inaugural meeting that it would investigate the rural challenges in North Yorkshire on a **theme-by-theme basis but recognised the synergies and interplay between them**.
- **Seven core policy themes** were identified: farming and land management; economy and jobs; digital connectivity; energy transition; transport; housing; and education, schools and training.
- **Four additional crosscutting themes** were also identified, including climate change, demographics, leadership and community.

Evidence gathering process

- The Rural Commission was an **evidence-based inquiry**. The Commission held a series of **7 evidence sessions** for each of the core policy themes and heard evidence from **70 expert presenters**. **27 written evidence submissions** were also received.
- The Commission **visited various locations around North Yorkshire to hear from local residents, volunteers, community groups, parish councils and local businesses**.
- The Commission also held **meetings with the Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership, three North Yorkshire MPs and officials from Defra**.

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Highlights: Seven core policy themes

Rural economy:

- **A diverse economy** - high skilled jobs alongside low wage sectors.
- A role for North Yorkshire **leading in green employment.**

Farming & land management:

- A proud history but evidence of **significant challenges for farming.**
- Defra must provide **free support** so farming can survive & restructure.

Energy transition:

- Existing **energy infrastructure is weak** (e.g. electrical).
- Government must **invest in electricity infrastructure** in rural areas.

Digital connectivity:

- Many rural dwellers have **poor or no connectivity - a major blocker.**
- Government must view **digital connectivity as a human right.**

Highlights: Seven core policy themes

Rural housing:

- A **significant shortage of affordable homes** in large parts of the County, esp. in national parks.
- **Each parish to build five new houses** over 10 years - 40% affordable or available for rental.

Rural transport:

- Rural dwellers need to travel for school, employment, shopping, and health - raises issues of **accessibility, affordability and environmental impact**.
- County Council to provide more innovative passenger transport such as **more demand responsive transport**.

Rural schools, education & training:

- Rural schools perform well but **risk closure**.
- **DfE must revise its National Funding Formula** to ensure increased support for rural super sparse secondary schools.

Highlights: Crosscutting themes – climate change

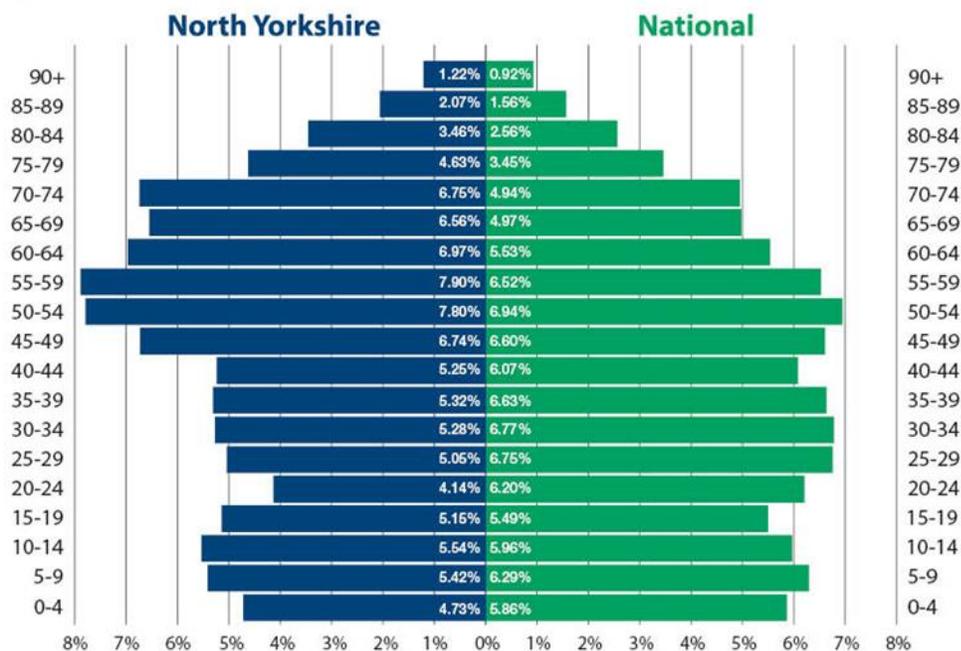
Climate emergency: The existential crisis of our time (of all time) – AND a major driver of the economy

Enabling Response to Climate Crisis:

- Renewable Energy Generation (wind, PV, hydro, etc.)
- EV Charging for residents, visitors and community dial up travel hubs
- Planning easements to allow insulation of buildings
- Energy Grid way-leaves
- Driving enhanced biodiversity
- Challenging non sustainable processes, behaviours and cultures
- Empowering Communities

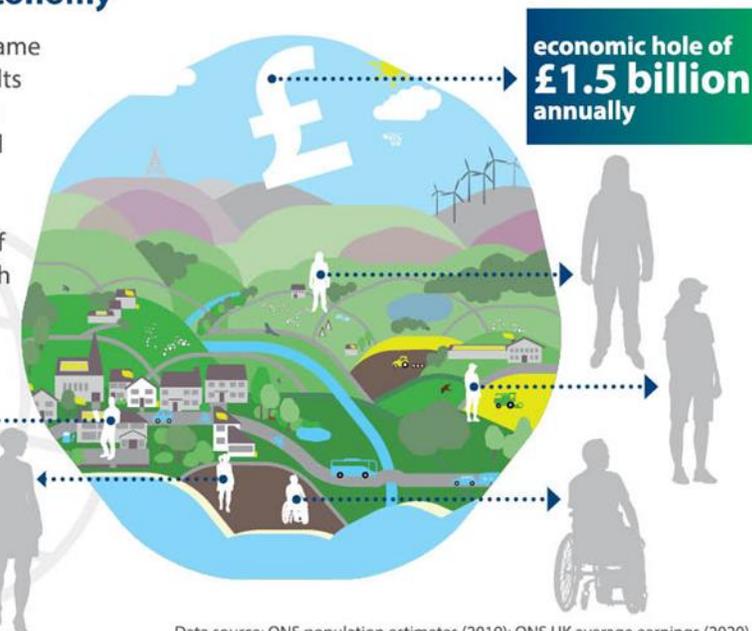
Highlights: Crosscutting themes – missing generation

2019 population estimates (ONS)



Economic cost of the missing generation to North Yorkshire's economy

If North Yorkshire had the same percentage of younger adults as the national figure, there would be **45,000** additional people living in the County than there are today. This creates an economic hole of **£1.5 billion**, annually, which is growing year on year.



Data source: ONS population estimates (2019); ONS UK average earnings (2020).

Highlights: Crosscutting themes – leadership & governance

- **Leadership at every level:** Local, regional and national – reflected in the Commission’s letter to the Prime Minister and the Commission’s recommendation to create a new Advisory Task Force
- **New single unitary authority:** A critical announcement for North Yorkshire
- **Devolution:** Next up! BUT no time for complacency in order to ensure real decision making powers and significant spending capacity

Highlights: Crosscutting themes – community

- **Community at every level:** Local community, regional community and national community
- **Thriving communities:** Numerous examples of thriving communities from the Rural Commission's road-trips and walk-about around North Yorkshire, e.g. the Commission's visits to Hovingham and Malton
- **Lessons from Covid:** The pandemic has taught us many things, including the power of communities to come together to tackle one of the biggest challenges of our time
- **Stronger together:** We need to continue to work together to build stronger communities and a stronger county



Rural Commission Report

Rural North Yorkshire: The Way Forward

Published 14 July 2021



Since the launch

- **Letter to the Prime Minister:** After the Prime Minister's promise of real devolution for rural areas
- **Feedback from regional partners:** Constructive, supportive and a willingness to work together to implement the Commission's recommendations
- **Ripon Cathedral Rural Forum:** Affirmation from regional partners – especially for the new Advisory Task Force
- **North Yorkshire County Council:** Agreement to set up the Task Force
- **Final meeting of the Rural Commission:** Review of feedback on the report and handover to the Task Force, to ensure continuity

The background of the banner is a colorful, stylized illustration of a rural landscape. It features rolling hills in shades of green, purple, and brown. In the foreground, there are houses, a blue car, a bicycle, and a blue pond. A blue river flows through the middle ground. In the background, there are wind turbines on a hill, a sheep, a laptop, a map, and a bar chart. The sky is light blue with a white bird and a power line tower. The overall theme is a blend of nature, technology, and community.

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www.northyorks.gov.uk/ruralcommission