

Wider Partnership Conference 19.11.2021

Workshop - Ensuring a Green Recovery Facilitated by Jos Holmes LA Climate Action Co-ordinator working for the York North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Jos' role is to support all the local authorities across York and North Yorkshire, including the two national parks, to develop and implement their climate actions.

Participants included local Councillors, voluntary sector representatives and public sector staff with a personal and professional interest in climate change issues.

Introduction by Jos

Jos had previously shared her presentation and quickly ran through it. She spoke about the language used to discuss climate change being too scientific and technical and failing to engage people. For example, the link between flooding and climate change is not always clear to people. The previous speakers example of using something like The Place Standard would be an interesting way of engaging with people about the place where they live and they would be answering the climate change question without even knowing that it's been asked. This also uses the UN Sustainable Development Goals which look at quality of life rather than economic growth as the metric for success. The Rural Commission (previous speaker) had indicated the tremendous potential for 'green' employment and growth in our countryside.

Jos referenced the [Climate Action Plan | Yorkshire & Humberside Climate Commission \(yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk\)](https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk) and the emerging 'York and North Yorkshire Routemap to Carbon Negative' which aims for our area to be England's first carbon negative region (carbon negative equals reducing greenhouse gases. NB. Methane 25% more potent than Carbon Dioxide). This ambition has been approved by the LEP and all the LAs and is part of the Devolution Deal. The LEP is also developing the approach to Economic Development in Y&NY, and would welcome feedback. Please complete the LEP Survey Fairer, Stronger, Greener [Plan for Growth Survey | Strategies | York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership \(ynylep.com\)](https://ynylep.com)

The UK's strategy on a net zero future has been published in the run up to COP26 [UK's path to net zero set out in landmark strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) and also the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action plan. They set out the various actions that we need to take and are mostly complementary.

York and North Yorkshire has a very ambitious target to become England's first carbon negative region, and to reach Net Zero by 2034 and to be carbon negative by 2040. We are able to achieve this by reducing carbon emissions across transport, industry, and agriculture, whilst also decarbonising the power supply. Unique to our region is the huge potential for carbon sequestration in soils and forestry, but also carbon capture and storage and use of biomass energy production

The green recovery is being driven forward by a focus on the circular economy, which is about keeping our resources in circulation by reusing them and in decarbonizing our energy system. That is key. We have six toolkits for businesses to encourage this 'circular' approach, biobased construction guidance and a 'circular towns' guide for communities. Circular towns guide is on the website with Scarborough and Selby piloting

We need to remember that low carbon climate change action isn't always the same as protecting our biodiversity. Sometimes they don't always work together. We are working on investment cases and research for Natural Capital has been undertaken over last couple of years. We have Local Area Energy Plans in development, and they'll have a big impact on how we decarbonize our areas.

A little bit about the Carbon Abatement Study, so this gives us our evidence. We know we can get to carbon negative by 2040 through 90 recommended actions.

We've got 7.7 megatons of carbon (or greenhouse gases measured by carbon) and our key emissions are in transport, buildings and industry and obviously a lot around land use and agriculture. We need to be reducing vastly the amounts of greenhouse gases that are emitted into the atmosphere.

Transport: reducing private car use; electric vehicle transition; working with local businesses to decarbonize their fleet, and also looking at infrastructure and planning. Can we reduce the need for people to get into their cars through the idea of a '15 minute neighbourhood'?

In York, buildings are the highest emitter, and the key things we need to do is to retrofit homes and buildings with better energy insulation to reach energy performance certificates C or better.

Everything we build should be built with climate change and low carbon in mind, and to do this we have developed a sustainable procurement toolkit and biobased construction research. So if we're building a new road or a new business premises, then from the local authority perspective, we know we can do that in a low carbon way. Building with materials that actually lock away carbon and hemp is a good example of that. Quite innovative and we've done some supply chain work recently.

One of the cross cutting themes of our 91 actions is around communication and developing the way that we talk to people about climate change. Because these changes are very big for people's lives and we need to be careful about how we give these messages and how we encourage people to change their behaviour.

Skills: LEP has commissioned research on the skills required to deliver a low carbon circular economy, and there were 14 recommendations. Skills funding is driven now by employers, and until we have employers' asking for the skills needed for green recovery such as electric vehicle battery fitting or electric vehicle car maintenance then there is a gap in skills needed for green recovery. An example from Harrogate College is to develop an employer network to try and promote those discussions and to raise the profile of some of these skills that we know are going to be needed in our area, for example fitting air source heat pumps, maintaining hydrogen vehicles, servicing wind turbines and solar farms.

Are growth and net zero compatible? Doughnut economics demonstrates we can grow, but we have to grow within the planetary boundaries that our planet is capable of.

What do we mean by a green recovery?

Having the right workforce skills to take forward a green recovery mix. Colleges need to be offering suitable training. Examples of good practice included Selby College talking with Drax about their needs, and Harrogate College as above. Young people need to be able to access these skills in the region to stay here.

Locally grown expertise important in high value roles rather than firms importing a workforce from outside the area.

We need to be mindful of not leaving people behind as we pursue a green recovery. If your house is cold and you can't afford to put the heating on, or to buy an electric car, boiler or heat pump, or for your house to be insulated, you're not going to be bothered about what's going to happen in 30 years in climate change terms. Goes back to the accessibility of the conversation and being inclusive of everyone. Local projects like Community Fridges to address food waste help to build awareness and is at a scale many people can relate to. These small projects help to build that bigger picture.

Exploring alternative travel options. For instance shared car ownership and car clubs. Demand responsive transport also a useful additional option, and retaining home working.

What does your sector need to do?

Industry has challenges. The pharmaceutical industry is highly regulated for temperature and climate control. Some industries are difficult to decarbonise. Research shows there may be alternatives including the use of hydrogen, and it's possible to offset carbon production through tree planting and trying to capture some of that carbon, either chemically or physically or in trees.

Voluntary & Community Sector has capacity issues; little funding to make green changes and very stretched. Whilst these are real pressures, we have to recognize that the impact of *not* making changes is going to be so much worse for those groups that are supported by the voluntary sector because they're more likely to be those marginalized, poorer, communities.

CFY have produced a climate change toolkit – link below.

<https://communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk/membershipresources/climate-change-toolkit/>

There are opportunities to take community initiatives forward driven by local passion – for instance community hydroelectric schemes, but funding is hard to get and bureaucracy is disheartening. Harness the power of communities by reducing barriers and providing support. Eg keen to develop the Circular Towns approach, but there isn't funding to initiate that support.

Align green recovery with public sector procurement to drive changes by including targets within new LA contracts for goods and services. Dilemma that if we're procuring from large organizations, they are likely to have a green policy in place, and be able to comply with our expectations, but there is a risk that if we start to put various green criteria on contracts for small businesses, they won't be able to comply, and get pushed out of the market. How do we start to look at everything across the board that we're doing and try to make sure we're not pulling in two different directions and there aren't perverse incentives in the system?

Private Sector: help private business understand the opportunities green recovery presents with the right workforce e.g. Converting to air source heat pumps, installation of EV chargers. There will be a lot of investment over the next 30 years on people converting to air source heat pumps etc. We need to be making that link with businesses and educational establishments in terms of trying to grow the local skills and expertise that we need to deliver on the technical aspects of carbon reduction initiatives, with the benefit kept within our economy locally

What do we do well now and what could we do more of?

Reducing sulphur in exhaust fumes, moving away from dependence on coal e.g. DRAX

Number of cyclists has increased and could increase more with more cycling lanes /routes.

Public awareness is increasing through tree planting and awareness of food waste.

Recycling rates are high in North Yorkshire.

Bring expertise into the community across different geographical areas E.g. Zero Carbon Yorkshire taking a role in this.

Produce a pool of information and resources that provide people with basic information as to how to make informed choices about their environmental impact. Often it is very complex. For example, is it better to eat fresh food wrapped in plastics than food that isn't (bearing in mind the wrapped food has a longer shelf life, which means less waste).

Need to plant an extra 38,000 hectares of trees – 74 m trees – business opportunities to grow, transport, plant, aftercare.

We're doing quite well around things like recycling, greening areas, tree planting schemes, food waste which also contribute towards reducing carbon emissions. People feel a great affinity for their very local areas. They'd be happy to go out and plant a tree in their park but they wouldn't necessarily go and plant a tree miles away. How can we harness community based and local power?

The NYCC Transport Overview and Scrutiny did some scrutiny of community based hydroelectric power generation. What was impressive is how there are examples of where various people in the community have identified a need, formed a group with appropriate governance and they've done feasibility studies and then actually successfully put in place renewable schemes. But they are few and far between because there are lots of administrative, bureaucratic, legal and financial challenges in the way. Need to make sure that people have the next level of support for delivering these projects and not just leaving them in abeyance between different strands of funding and support.

Empowering people to shape their local environment is critical to climate change agenda moving forward. It is in the hands of people as to what happens next.

Who would you like to collaborate with?

Collaboration across North Yorkshire important but challenging as the county is so large.

Local Government needs to collaborate with VCS, and the VCS could develop partnership working – a good example given of work with Warm and Well around Green Recovery. Community First Yorkshire's toolkit can help too.

Link with business and education expertise to deliver on technical aspects of carbon reduction.

Carbon capture is different –bringing together land owners and the national parks and others to enable that to happen

Electric supply infrastructure development – delivery of increased demand and potential for renewable energy generation– Local Area Energy Plan will support this over next 6 months.

Collaborating across the patch on subjects or areas of information, including connecting with the NYCC Council internal Yammer group, where there's a lot of people who are personally really passionate and who we can learn from.

Make sure that we're sharing expertise across different community areas and do not compete with each other – we don't have the time or money to duplicate activity.

We have an informal Y&NY Climate Practitioners Network – to share info and celebrate local activities. Please contact Jos Holmes if you would like to join that network.