



May Local Elections – Climate Pledges

Local Climate Action: I pledge to push for accelerated progress on Wakefield's Climate Change Action Plan, particularly the drive to decarbonise the wider district and its economy.

Wakefield's climate change action plan is quite good, but...

The plan to decarbonise the wider district is recognised as the action plan's weakness. If Wakefield District is to be a climate leader, and if we are to support and enable climate action in communities and businesses, we need to strengthen and revitalise this aspect of the plan.

Some of the projects in the plan are getting bogged down and slowed waiting for reports and feasibility studies.

As the cost of living crisis, and the fuel and energy price rises hit us, we need investment in insulation to cut home energy bills. The most needy need this most.

Pushes from elected members can accelerate action on these issues, empowering officers and creating the political will for further action.

Local Action on nature: I pledge that if elected, Wakefield District will be a haven for nature – not just in parks and nature reserves, but across the district.

We are not just in a climate emergency, but in an ecological emergency. Scientists have dubbed this the Sixth Mass Extinction, because of the rate of species loss. Response to the nature crisis is not just about preserving a set of plants and animals in nature reserves, but enabling nature everywhere – like roadside nature reserves, like not spraying unnecessarily to encourage soil life, like supporting gardeners to stop using peat, like encouraging people to feed the birds, like implementing the council's no tree felling policy to preserve micro-habitats that are already established.

Changing culture and practice requires a clear political drive, with policy owned and implemented politically.

Divestment: I pledge to support and actively work towards the West Yorkshire Local Government Pension Scheme divesting from its fossil fuel holdings.

Pension funds are some of the biggest holders of fossil fuel industry shares. Whilst there may be a few months of profiteering in the industry because of the war in Ukraine, the intent

is that society reduces its dependency on fossil fuels to lower climate damaging emissions. This means that such shares will lose value, and according to industry experts, at some point collapse. We are clear that the WYFS Fund should not be left holding such shares at the time of collapse. The best way to manage this, and manage the fund, is to divest from all fossil fuel industry holdings, and reinvest in genuine renewables (not nuclear, not biomass) and electricity storage. With this strategy, both the climate and the pension scheme beneficiaries have their future interests safeguarded. This is now council policy, and so needs active support from elected members to make it happen.

National Action on Climate: I pledge that I will push my national party to support far-reaching, concrete climate policies, and to fund these policies for the long term. These policies must include fair access to green public transport.

Local action on climate is severely limited by lack of funding. What funding there is from central government is short term, box-ticking and leads to stop-start in the economy and prevents green start-up industries becoming established. We especially need a national home retrofit programme, starting with the most vulnerable, so that home energy bills can be slashed permanently

Local councils could do so much on place-based climate action that engages local people in creating their own solutions, but through austerity, they have lost so much that they can no longer invest in their own communities to support adaptation and resilience, energy security, food security and more. Local councils need reliable funding to lead local climate action, and that can only come from central government.

The whole issue of green public transport is so critical to both post covid recovery and the green transition, but is something that no local authority can deliver alone – but the West Yorkshire Combined Authority can. We need our local elected members to work collectively across the region to deliver green, fair and accessible public transport for all.

It is critical that local parties understand the potential held within their communities to push national parties in government and opposition to “up their game”. Our collective future depends on it.