

## **Climate Committee – Chair’s Forward.**

In declaring a Climate Emergency on 29<sup>th</sup> March this year, the City of York Council has recognised the massive threat to our city and our planet from the consequences of runaway climate change. Delivering a zero carbon York by 2030 will be the biggest challenge the city council has ever tackled. But this city knows a thing or two about massive projects; our ancestors built the Minster.

Achieving our goal of a zero carbon future will require us all to see common cause and work together: residents, businesses, academic institutions, the council, politicians, developers, community groups, unions, and charitable institutions.

A city is not a collection of buildings; it is first and foremost a community of people. We acknowledge the importance of involving and engaging all residents and businesses, and in particular young people, in our work, as we will all bear the burden of any failure to deliver a zero carbon future.

We recognise that our efforts cannot be at the expense of the York’s natural environment and biodiversity, nor should we propose actions that impact negatively on marginalised or disadvantaged communities in our city. Our proposals must apply the principles of Climate Justice to protect those communities and enhance biodiversity, to safeguard the natural world and to deliver an environmentally sustainable future for York.

Having established where we are now, in terms of CO2 emissions, we must chart our course by using backcasting to work back from our 2030 decarbonisation goal and establish where we must be year by year between now and 2030. The technologies to implement this transformation already exist; all we need are the vision, confidence, energy, resources and the drive to deliver a new future. Our work will necessarily engage all areas of the council’s activities.

We seek to encourage innovation and to see the goal of reducing carbon emissions as an economic opportunity and not a burden for our city. Our plans will not seek to manage the decline of York but to propose how we can transform a bold, positive and environmentally and economically sustainable future, creating a new York alongside our beautiful historic city.

My ambition is that the ten year Climate Emergency Action Plan and Sustainable Energy Action Plan we produce will be agreed by all York’s political parties and that the annual report charting our progress towards our goal will be signed by all the parties every year between now and 2030 to acknowledge our common endeavour and commitment to create a zero carbon York. My dream is that together, we the city councillors representing the citizens of York, will declare that to tackle the climate crisis that is engulfing us we will on this issue from now on speak with one voice.

To paraphrase J.F.Kennedy’s speech at the start of the race to the Moon in the 1960s: We choose to tackle climate change. We choose to tackle climate change in this decade and do the other thing. Not because it is easy but because it is hard. Because that goal will serve to organise the best of our energies and skills. Because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one that we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.

*Christian Vassie*

*Chair of the Climate Change Policy and Scrutiny Committee*