



Meeting:	Decision Session - Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change
Meeting date:	21 November 2023
Report of:	Assistant Director Policy and Strategy
Portfolio of:	Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change

Decision Report: A Climate Ready York

Subject of Report

1. This report recognises the increasing threat facing the city, and region, by climate change.
2. It outlines progress towards strengthening York's resilience to climate change and sets out key climate risks, as identified through a climate risk and vulnerability assessment (see **Annex D**), including feedback from the wider region.
3. The report seeks approval to take a holistic approach to prepare for climate change by integrating adapting to a changing climate in emerging policies and strategies.

Benefits and Challenges

4. Climate change is already having significant impacts, and these are set to increase. Robust assessment of climate risks and opportunities underpins effective action to build climate resilience. York is no different to all other cities in needing to plan for a changing climate.
5. Investing in resilient infrastructure, institutions, systems, and natural capital has immediate benefits, while failing to do so can incur immediate and future locked-in costs, endanger lives, and hinder economic activity. Improved resilience to climate change impacts achieved because of adaptation action is not only a protective

measure to manage acute shocks and slow-onset hazards: it is also a driver of social and economic development¹.

6. Regional local authorities are working together to learn and build expertise to help the region better prepare for climate change.
7. The speed of global warming is faster than predictions, with leading climate scientists no longer able to confidently forecast the impact of rising global temperatures on interconnected weather and global cooling systems, like oceans and ice. The speed of this change is faster than the regulatory or policy environment and as such York will need to respond to climate change risks in an agile and flexible way.

Policy Basis for Decision

8. The Council's 10-year Plan sets out a goal for York to be carbon neutral and contribute to the regional ambition to be carbon negative, with iconic green spaces to enjoy today and the environment protected for future generations. The Plan will be delivered, in part, through the York Climate Change Strategy 2022-2032 and Action Plan which recognises the threat of climate change at both a global and local scale.
9. The 10-year Plan and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan align to the Council Plan 2023-2027, *One City for All*, which includes Four Core Commitments (outcomes) covering Equalities and Human Rights, Affordability, Climate Change, Health and Wellbeing (E.A.C.H.).
10. There is currently no statutory requirement, outside of flood risk strategy, for local authorities to strengthen resilience to a changing climate based on the scientific predictions such as anticipated rises in temperatures.
11. Local Authorities are encouraged to report an assessment of climate risks and actions annually to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ("DEFRA").

¹ Saving lives and livelihoods: The benefits of investments in climate change adaptation and resilience
Sophie Dicker, Sam Unsworth, Rebecca Byrnes and Bob Ward March 2021

Financial Strategy Implications

12. The report identifies the impact of climate change on the city, and this brings potentially significant financial implications for the Council. Examples of additional costs could be an increase in energy use (e.g., for cooling rather than heating), additional insurance premiums resulting from the costs incurred relating to significant weather events, as well as capital costs arising from building in climate resilience into activities.
13. The recommendations in this report do not in themselves impact the council's financial strategy however the longer-term financial impact of responding to and dealing with climate resilience will need to be included in future budget considerations for the council.

Recommendation and Reasons

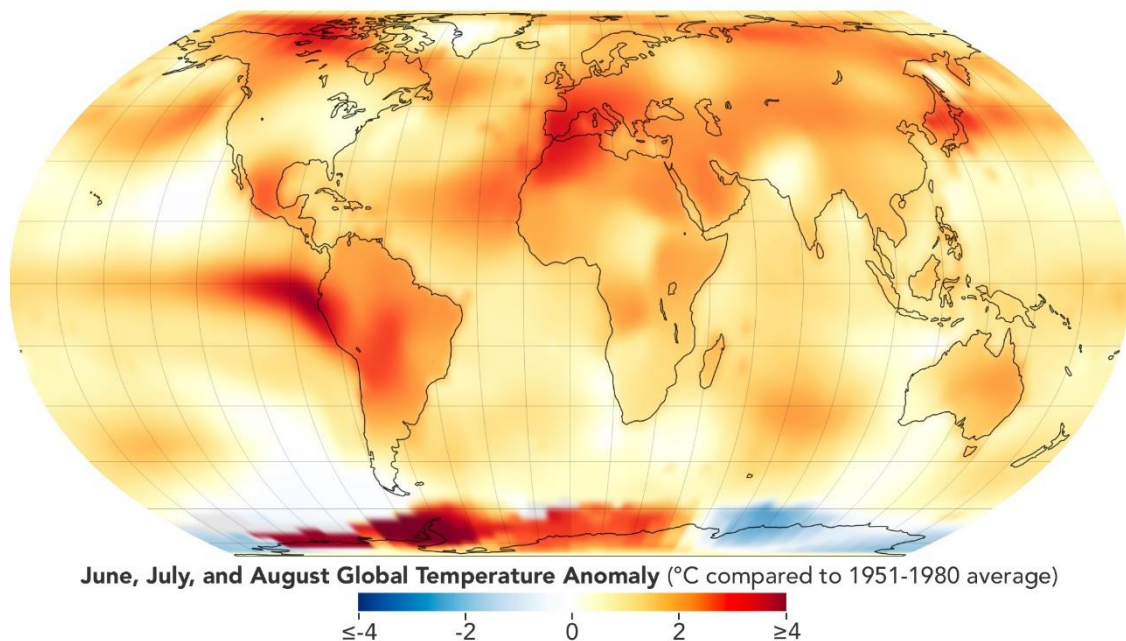
14. The Executive Member is recommended to:
 - i. Approve the assessment of identified climate risks as set out in Annex D.
 - ii. Approve the recommended next steps, as set out in Paragraph 49.

Reasons:

- i. To provide a basis for ongoing climate action.
- ii. To strengthen the approach towards a Climate Ready York.

Background

15. Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing our planet. According to the World Resource Institute, global temperatures have so far risen by 1.1°C, and already the planet has seen an increase in natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, and other extreme natural events.
16. NASA announced in September 2023 that this summer was the hottest on record. The months of June, July, and August combined were 0.23 C warmer than any other summer in NASA's record, and 1.2 C warmer than the average summer between 1951 and 1980. August alone was 1.2 C warmer than the average.



17. With the UK battered by Storm Babet and Storm Ciaran, we are yet to fully understand, or predict, the impact a changing climate will have on York, and in particular, the extent of more significant and frequent flooding events.
18. Increased frequency and magnitude of adverse weather events because of the changing climate brings multiple impacts that every Council service will need to address. To prepare for increases in global temperatures and the impact it brings locally and to Council services requires a shift in how the Council responds, whilst learning from the council's well-rehearsed response to flooding.
19. Adapting to climate risk is a feature of the CDP² rating process and building climate resilience will contribute to retention of York's 'A' rating.
20. The Council announced a climate emergency in 2019, establishing an ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. In October 2021, the Council asked Executive to report on the city's climate resilience and in December 2022, and Council approved the Climate Change Strategy, which set out objectives to further strengthen York's resilience to climate change.

² Formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project

21. In February 2023, Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee considered a report setting out the Council's approach for assessing climate risks and opportunities and the proposed next steps, including engagement with city and regional partners.
22. Work to understand climate risks has been ongoing since then, aided by the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission (YHCC) Climate Adaptation Programme.
23. The draft Local Plan sets out the regulatory framework for new developments across the city. It is recognised that at the time of producing the Local Plan, and indeed since, the speed of global warming exceeds predictions with impacts not yet fully understood or able to inform current planning powers.
24. Provision in the Community Infrastructure Levy to overcome these impacts once better understood provides some assurance that despite the speed of global warming, the city will still have some capability to respond to impacts.
25. York already has expertise in preparing for extreme weather events. Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, CYC a statutory duty to develop, maintain and implement a strategy for the management of local flood risk. The local flood risk management strategy defines how the Council, in partnership with other organisations who also have statutory roles, will manage flood risk across its area. The strategy focuses on flood risk from all sources, such as rivers, surface runoff, groundwater, and ordinary watercourses. The strategy links to the strategic flood risk assessment³ and reinforces policies within the emerging Local Plan⁴.

York Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities Assessment (CCRVA)

³ <https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/download/795/strategic-flood-risk-assessment-documents>

⁴ <https://www.york.gov.uk/LocalPlan>

26. Drawing on the latest UK climate projections⁵ and Met Office data showing the expected impacts of climate change on urban areas in the UK, current and future climate risks for cities like York include:
- **Heatwaves and extremely hot days;** - causing health issues like heat stress, crop failure, food insecurity and disruption to travel, work and services.
 - **Heavy rain and storms;** - leading to fluvial and surface water flooding, structural damage, crop failure, food insecurity and disruption to travel and services.
 - **Extended dry periods and drought;** - leading to pressure on water supplies and causing issues like building subsidence along with crop failure and food insecurity.
27. Following Council's steer and using the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 3 framework as the starting point, an initial assessment of risks undertaken in 2022 (see **Annex A**). This identified 46 risks and opportunities, of which six risks were seen as a priority for the city, including:
- Risk to people, communities and buildings from river and surface water flooding
 - Risk to building fabric.
 - Risk to terrestrial species and habitats from temperature change, water scarcity, wildfire, flooding, wind and altered hydrology.
 - Opportunities from new species colonisation in terrestrial
 - Risk to soils including seasonal aridity and wetness.
 - Risk to food safety and food security.
28. Whilst the report provided useful insights, its author noted limitations associated with its production. Given these limitations, the report made clear that the identified priority risks are not the only ones relevant to York and recommended that future work considers ALL risks and opportunities from the UKCCRA3.
29. Since 2022, the Council has sought to build on this initial assessment by drawing on evidence from across the wider region,

⁵ UK Climate Projections (UKCP18)

a process facilitated by the Yorkshire and Huber Climate Commission Climate Adaptation Programme.

30. For example, Kirklees Council's CCRVA is considered comprehensive and methodologically robust⁶. It identifies priority risks within eight themes including, Water, Waste, Health and Wellbeing, Buildings and Property, Culture Leisure and Tourism, Natural Environment, Energy and Infrastructure and Services. See **Annex B**. Risk identification included a review of the CCRA3 and stakeholder engagement.
31. The assessment notes there is a substantial amount of overlap between risks, consequences, and climate impacts. This means that the same types of risks can arise from different types of climate impacts and likewise the same consequences can arise from a variety of different risks. Additionally, a single risk can give rise to several different consequences, and these can then cascade further into additional risks and/ or consequences. There are also interdependencies between different risks, consequences, and themes.
32. Kirklees Council's assessment also notes that not everyone is impacted by climate change in the same way, with some population groups more vulnerable to climate change than others. This is detailed in **Annex C**.

Learning from others

33. Due to the nature of climate change, and the predicted increase in heat, water insecurity and freezing temperatures, different services, infrastructures, and systems will be affected differently.
34. To ensure the impact of risks and vulnerabilities are understood, the Council has engaged with different organisations and services to explore the impact of a changing climate.

⁶ Assessment methodology was in general accordance with the guidance set out in ISO 14091:2021 - Adaptation to climate change.

Regional local authorities

35. The YHCC Climate Adaption Programme brought neighbouring local authorities together to share evidence and good practice. The regional workshops identified several common challenges encountered by local authorities:
- Given the sometimes lengthy timeframes being used to assess climate resilience, climate adaptation can compete with more immediate priorities. In part to address this, some local authorities have adopted an explicit and high-profile 'Climate Ready' commitment to sit alongside the 'Zero Carbon' ambition.
 - Climate risks, when assessed, can strengthen corporate risk registers, strategies, and plans to help strengthen climate change risk management.
 - Securing high level awareness of the risks and vulnerabilities is critical, particularly when the risks impact on all different areas of systems and infrastructures.
 - Some local authorities have integrated climate adaptation and mitigation plans - with clear labelling of actions contributing to climate adaptation, climate mitigation, or both.

City partners

36. Throughout 2023, the Council engaged city partners to raise awareness of climate risks and to gain an understanding of how city organisations understood the risks pertinent to their own organisation, supply chains and infrastructure.
37. Partners shared their own unique perspectives, summarised below:
- Partners had experienced a range of climate impacts on customers, staff, buildings and equipment, costs, and business continuity.
 - Consequently, organisations were already adapting to climate change in various ways, such as turning down heating and changing energy systems, reviewing HR policy, and working practices, adjusting income projections for anticipated disruption events, changing seasonal menus, and assessing building occupancy.

- Opportunities for future joint action include:
 - Risk assessment and sharing good practice.
 - Building capacity for new skills and technologies
 - Lobbying for national policy action and resources.
 - Raising awareness of risks and issues, especially for those that are digitally excluded.

Council services

38. Different services in the Council will be affected in very different ways, depending on the weather event itself, and the impact it has on users and continuity of service.
39. The Council is already taking action to adapt to climate risks, including through the Council's planning, development and regeneration functions, housebuilding and retrofit programmes, estates and energy management, transport and highways, fleet replacement programme and changes to working practices. Examples include changing personal protective equipment to be more light weight during heatwaves, changing routines to miss extreme heat of the day, and considering materials that will be more durable.
40. Adult and children's health and wellbeing service adaptation plans will reported to the York Health and Care Partnership, and the Health and Wellbeing Board. There is a multi-agency health and care group developing plans to build both resilience and response.
41. YHCC and DEFRA set out guidance about how organisations manage climate risks through their risk management procedures. Integrating climate risks within all levels of risk management, from the corporate risk register (CRR) down, is considered an effective way to ensure attention remains focussed and risks are regularly monitored.
42. Later this year, the Council will begin reporting through the DEFRA Adaptation Reporting Power. This will bring greater focus on adaptation planning and provide opportunity for participating local authorities to highlight barriers and constraints to achieving climate resilience.

Steps to strengthen a climate resilient York:

1. Understanding York's risks and vulnerabilities

43. To better understand York's climate risks and vulnerabilities, *The York Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities* report has been updated to include evidence and learning from others and is presented for Executive Member approval in **Annex D**.
44. The evidence included in the revised report has been derived from various sources to build a picture. It is not a statutory requirement on local authorities to have a Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment and instead, York, has learned from others and drawn together multiple evidence to inform the assessment.
45. The Executive Members for Environment and Climate Change are asked to note this is a live document and as such will continue to evolve over time as more is understood about the impact of climate change on the city, the systems, and infrastructures within it.
46. It is recognised that a number of significant risks were not included in the initial priority assessment and will need to be explored further in future work. The speed of climate change and the impact it is already having on our city's systems and infrastructure means that we will continue to need to learn from and respond to ever increasing extreme weather events. This is an approach York is familiar with, as it has continued to learn and adapt from successive flood events.

1. Strengthening York's Climate Resilience

47. Engagement with local authorities across the region revealed the challenging nature of climate change risk assessment and adaptation planning, not least due to the speed of global warming and whether the science is able to adequately forecast, the lack of statutory responsibility to adapt the environment and the potential inherent constraints of the regulatory planning environment that is not able to respond at the same speed as global warming.

48. Learning from neighbouring authorities and to help York build on the positive catchment area flooding programme, Executive Members are invited to strengthen the Climate Change Strategy ambition to be net zero by 2030, by adding that **by 2030 York will have set the conditions to be Climate Ready.**
49. Should Executive Members approve strengthening the Climate Change Strategy ambition to include climate resilience, several steps will be taken to strengthen York's approach:
- i. The climate change action plan will be updated to indicate when actions are mitigating carbon emissions or adapting to climate change events, or both, continuing to keep climate adaptation to the fore of planning and delivery.
 - ii. A task and finish group will identify opportunities and requirements for additional action against priority risks and further risk assessment.
 - iii. Emerging strategies and policies, such as the draft Local Transport Strategy, will consider the speed of global warming and build in provision for climate adaptation from the outset.
 - iv. The Community Infrastructure Levy criteria will be reviewed to include supporting preparations for climate resilience, whether that is new developments or supporting existing developments, transport, education, or economic activity.
 - v. The Council will continue to engage with regional and local partners, sharing good practice and lessons learned to help build a library of adaptation expertise.
 - vi. The Council will continue to work with DEFRA to share understanding of the risks and actions and opportunities to strengthen local authority powers to deliver adaptation activities across different systems and infrastructures.
 - vii. The Council will review *York's Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities report* annually, updating it to ensure it remains comprehensive and relevant.

Options analysis

50. Options are:

1. Do nothing.
2. Share expertise, but do not take further actions until climate change impacts are more regularly experienced and understood.
3. Strengthen York's approach to building climate resilience now, recognising the speed of global warming is faster than current regulatory powers.

51. **Analysis**

	Benefits	Disadvantages
Do nothing	<p>By not understanding climate risks, York residents and partners will be unaware of the potential threats.</p> <p>No resource will be wasted in implementing mitigations that turn out not to be useful.</p>	<p>The cost of inaction will lead to increased reactive maintenance or systems changes that will intensify.</p> <p>The cost of adapting in the future could be greater than the cost of preparations now.</p> <p>The Council will miss the opportunity of learning from good practice, sharing tools and processes, and ensuring York is able to capitalise on available funding.</p> <p>York will be inadequately prepared for the risk of climate change.</p>
Share expertise	<p>The YHCC programme provides a structure and pathway to build expertise.</p> <p>York will recognise the risk of climate change</p>	<p>Unable to capitalise on funding as insufficient information of the risk to York to prepare.</p> <p>Insufficient understanding in place to prepare the city for future challenges.</p>

	and be better informed about steps to take.	
Strengthen York's approach to climate resilience	<p>York's climate resilience will be strengthened – The Council will be better prepared for the impact of climate change -the adaptations required will be understood and form part of emerging strategies, policies, or plans.</p> <p>The Council will be able to capitalise on available funding (such as CIL) or incorporate into the work programme to minimise impact on the revenue budget.</p>	York's businesses and residents will be more aware of the threat of climate change and global warming, which could lead to uncertainty and concern.

Consultation

52. Consultation with local authorities from across the region via the YHCC Climate Adaptation programme has informed the development of *York's Climate Change Risk and Vulnerabilities Assessment* and this report.
53. Organisations and businesses across York were invited to take part in two climate adaptation workshops during 2023 and feedback from these sessions has been incorporated within this report and the risk assessment report.
54. The Council's Climate Change Programme Board were consulted on an early draft of the report.

Organisational Impact and Implications

Financial

55. The recommendations in the report have no immediate financial implications however as identified in the Financial Strategy Implications section there are longer term implications for the council in dealing with the impact of climate change.

Human Resources (HR)

56. There are no HR implications arising as direct result of this report.

Legal

57. There are no legal implications for the matters specifically referred to within this report, including the proposed next steps.
58. There is no legal requirement to consult on updates to the Climate Change strategy. The Policy Framework set out within Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution (Scheme of Delegation) confirms that any updates to the Council's Climate Change strategy is required to have regard to recommendations by Executive. Updates to other policies and plans because of this work (such as (but not limited to) the draft Local Transport Strategy or any draft Local Plan documents) may be required to have regard to recommendations by Executive but will require the approval of full Council in due course as per Appendix 1.
59. Subject to any Data Protection and Privacy implications (see below), or any implications related to sensitive/confidential information, there should be no legal implications with sharing of data, information and/or expertise via the YHCC programme.
60. Any issues requiring support from Legal Services will however need to be addressed as and when they arise.

Procurement

61. Whilst there are no direct procurement implications relating to the strategy outlined, should the council need to respond to the climate

resilience and should any works or services be required, procurement implications will then come into place.

62. Should any priorities require procurement, all works and/or services must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.

Health and Wellbeing

63. As noted in this report, climate change poses a serious threat to human health, and in fact has been described by the Lancet Commission as 'the biggest global health threat of the 21st century'.
64. Local public health issues raised by climate change, and which require an adaptation response, include:
 - i. Population-level effects of extreme heat / cold events e.g., excess deaths
 - ii. Increase in likelihood of emerging zoonotic diseases which could affect health in the city.
 - iii. Decline in food systems, and associated effect on nutrition and therefore human health.
 - iv. Declining air quality and increased incidence / exacerbation of respiratory and other illnesses
65. In addition, health sector adaptation / mitigation plans around climate change will need to include:
 - i. estate issues e.g., vulnerability to flooding.
 - ii. the NHS role in reducing carbon emissions e.g., use of anaesthetic gases.
 - iii. adapting to the increased healthcare use associated with poor air quality, poorer diets, and more sedentary activity.
 - iv. absorbing patient surges / demand related to extreme heat / cold events.
66. NHS England planning processes (Greener NHS) have requirements on both the ICB and local providers around climate change adaptation, mitigation, and emergency planning.

Environment and Climate action

67. Tackling Climate Change represents a core commitment within the Council Plan (2023 -2027) and this commitment extends to both mitigation and adaptation. Our climate is already changing and ensuring that the Council and City are in the best state of preparedness for dealing with these changes will have long-term health and financial benefits.

Affordability

68. The assessment has identified the following impacts:
- Further risks to homeless communities without safe shelter.
 - Increased requirement for retrofitting properties with cooling systems.
 - Risk to household energy demands from increased cooling/heating requirements.
 - Increase in risk of condensation, damp, mould growth, mildew.
69. These have negative impacts on those who are homeless or in poverty within the city. As stated in the assessment people on a low income are less able to deal with climate events as they lack the economic or financial capacity to invest in measures to make their home more resilient or to obtain e.g., flood insurance.
70. There are plans to develop a 10-year Anti-Poverty Strategy and climate change impacts and mitigations should be cross referenced with ongoing work around mitigating climate change.

Equalities and Human Rights

71. The Council recognises, and needs to take into account its Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in the exercise of a public authority's functions).

72. At the time of writing there are no equalities implications identified in respect of the specific matters discussed in this report. However, an Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out in due course and the process of consulting on the recommendations in this report will identify any equalities implications on a case-by-case basis, and these will be addressed in future reports.

Data Protection and Privacy

73. As there is no personal data, special categories of personal data or criminal offence data being processed, there is no requirement to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). This is evidenced by completion of DPIA screening questions AD-01500.

Communications

74. Climate is a core commitment of the Council Plan- One City, for all- and cutting carbon and enhancing our environment for the future is a priority.
75. While there are no communications actions directly linked to this report, communications work will be required in support of the council plan and climate strategy. This will include sharing information, support and advice with staff, residents, and businesses, as well as highlighting the work that is taking place in support of York's net zero ambitions. Some of the information in this report may be used in messaging to highlight the climate emergency and why the council is taking action.

Economy

76. The recommendations in this report respond to the impacts and risks identified in the report and its Annexes for businesses and the economy. Building risks and impacts apply equally to residences and to business premises, transport risks and impacts would affect the ability of people to get to work, customers to get to premises, and businesses to receive and deliver goods and services. Mitigating those risks, as is recommended, is therefore of great importance from an economic perspective.

Risks and Mitigations

77. This report is about understanding and preparing to mitigate the risks of global warming and climate change.
78. The risk of doing nothing means that York will not be adequately prepared for climate change risks, unable to capitalise on available funding (or make better use of existing funding) and unable to safeguard different residents who are likely to be more vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Wards Impacted

79. All.

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Background papers

- Council 2019 - A climate emergency
- Council October 2021 - A report on climate risks
(Public Pack) Agenda Supplement Agenda Supplement for Council, 21/10/2021 18:30 (york.gov.uk) – item 6 (ii)
- Council December 2022 - approval of the Climate Change Strategy
Agenda for Council on Thursday, 15 December 2022, 6.30 pm (york.gov.uk) item 36
- Executive November 2022 - approval of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=13292&Ver=4> item 47
- Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee - February 2022 Climate risk report

Annexes

Annex A - York's Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities Assessment
October 2022

Annex B - Kirklees Priority Climate Impacts by Theme

Annex C - Kirklees - Assessment of Vulnerable groups

Annex D - York's Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities Assessment
- revised September 2023.