



COP26 Q&A 19th January 2022

On the 19th January, NCC Climate Team held an online Q&A event. This can be watched online [here](#). There was great engagement in the event with over 80 questions asked of our Panel. We could not answer all the questions on the live event. Here we have tried to answer the questions that we could not answer live.

The following questions and answers have been groups by topic or interest.

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Planning

As there is a climate emergency recognised by the Council, why does the council not request emergency measures for all as yet unapproved newbuild developments, including fitting 4kW peak solar power to each new roof, reducing the need for other roofing coverings and costing less than retrofitting? Before homes are built, solar can be planned and roofs can be aligned to the sun. Are councils able to ask more of developers than building regulations require?

The Council cannot make changes to national planning legislation or building regulations. We can support and encourage the inclusion of renewables in new builds through our Local Plan, which we are doing. We are developing supplementary planning documents on renewable energy to accompany our Local Plan in order to support this and ask developers to consider sustainability within their plans. This, however, is not the same as legislation and thus cannot be enforced in the same way.

Building Regulations will change in 2022 to reduce domestic building CO₂ emissions by 31% and in a major way in 2025 to reduce these emissions by 75%. Plus, new homes are to be future proofed against the need for retrofits to reach Net Zero. Since heating by gas boilers is such a major contributor to these emissions and replacement by heat pumps will require a hot water cylinder, does NCC believe that Planning permissions should ensure that space for such a cylinder is designed into new builds from June 2022?

No, we can't require it in planning from 2022. We are not able to legislate in this way. But we are looking to prepare planning guidance which can encourage it and other efficiency measures as above. In due course we'll be looking to update our Statutory Development Plan and will seek opportunities to maximise energy efficiency and sustainability standards.

Why do all the local councils keep approving more luxury holiday homes that we do not need? Make developers either build what is needed or make them plant trees on those locations to assist with this process.

Tourism is a significant and growing part of Northumberland's economy. The Council acknowledges that growth and development in tourism should be sustainable.

Does the planning department assess all applications against a sustainability checklist?

Currently the climate team are consultees on all planning applications, where we use our own custom checklist to ensure applications have considered a very wide range of climate-related issues. This is something that is likely to change when the new Local Plan comes out, so we are currently working closely with planning to see how the increased focus on sustainability will change the process through which applications are validated.

With respect to planning 106s etc., could we ask or require developers to provide allotment land as part of new developments? At one time we asked for playgrounds to be provided but I think with sustainability and climate change objectives this could be a better use of land and would improve community cohesion.

Thanks for the suggestion; we will consider this and pass it on to our colleagues in planning.

Engagement

Has NCC any plans to issue guidance or assist Parish Councils with actions they can take on climate change? For instance, I'm very interested in the work of the Ovington Tree Planting group and would love to know how they achieved their goals. We'd like to do something similar, but could use an action template.

Yes, we are developing a toolkit for Town and Parish Councils to help them create climate action plans, which will hopefully be ready by Summer 2022.

As a large local council will it be possible to work with NCC to develop a plan for Choppington PC that will add value to your strategy?

The Council recognises the important role that Town and Parish Councils will have in supporting and furthering our County targets for Net Zero. We are currently in the process of creating a TPC toolkit to support TPCs in creating their own action plans for tackling climate change more locally. This will hopefully be ready by Summer 2022. We can also provide support and advice as and where needed. Moreover, any feedback or ideas would be welcomed in supporting the Council's climate plans towards 2030. Finally, speaking with other Town or Parish Council that have already started work towards climate action plans might provide a good way of sharing knowledge and advice around this area.

How are you going to encourage schools and their local communities to install solar panels and similar? Solar for Schools installs clean-energy generating solar panels on school rooftops around the UK. These panels fund sustainability education programmes while making substantial savings for the schools on their energy bills. Their projects are funded by a community of socially-minded investors.

Thank you for sharing these details about Solar for Schools; this is definitely something we will look into further. We are currently in the process of producing a Schools toolkit, with a main focus on the teaching and student side of schools. This will also have some information on swaps for sustainability. We are also aware of the significant potential for reducing the carbon footprint of schools through their estate. Whilst we are looking to supplement any schools strategy with a guide for decarbonising the school estate, we recognise that this will vary with each individual school and their properties. Finding the appropriate technology for each estate will be key, of which solar might be an effective and efficient solution.

What do you think are the most effective things that local community groups and parish councils can do to support the climate agenda?

The Council recognises the important role that Town and Parish Councils (TPCs) will have in supporting and furthering our County targets for Net Zero. As a first step, Town and Parish Councils might declare a climate emergency, create a climate change sub-committee, allocate funding or other resources such as land to issues of climate change, and put climate change at the heart of a Neighbourhood Plan. To support climate action at the Town and Parish Council level, we are currently in the process of creating a TPC toolkit. This will hopefully be ready by Summer 2022. For community groups, a key action they can take is raising the agenda with their Town or Parish Council, or working alongside them in facilitating collaborative action plans for tackling climate change in their community. Community groups are also fantastic at spreading awareness and registering people's opinions and ideas about climate change. This is another reason why collaboration between TPC and community groups can be so effective.

Travel

I made the unfortunate mistake of walking into Hexham at school-out time today and smelled the emissions of all the school coaches and private cars along the route. Will the Climate Change Team

reconsider an early idea put forward - that contracts for school transport should be given to those companies that can provide zero-emission vehicles to transport students?

The Council will explore the possibility of applying to future funding provided by the UK government to support the adoption of electric or other clean transport. The climate team will also seek to support the next schools transport procurement to ensure that preference is drawn towards low carbon suppliers, while maintaining fair and transparent procurement practices.

NHS Fleet Solutions offer electric vehicle car leases to staff. Is there any opportunity for Northumberland Council to set up a similar scheme or work with the NHS, and then offer opportunities to charities to join the scheme?

Northumberland County Council already offers access to NHS Fleet Solutions to its staff and to date there has been significant take-up of electric and hybrid vehicles. As NCC contracts the use of the NHS Fleet Solutions it would be unable to offer the use of the scheme directly to charities, but would be supportive of charities seeking to contract the scheme directly with NHS Fleet Solutions.

Is the highways department in NCC fully behind Active Travel? It seems very car-centric at the moment.

The climate change team works closely with the highways team to develop plans around sustainable transport. The highways team has an obligation however to maintain and improve the county's road network. The Local Transport Plan contains details of the cycling and walking schemes which will be prioritised.

I have heard NCC charges Hexham Community Partnership £7,000 to close Beaumont Street in Hexham on Event Dates and much more than that for Farmers' Market Days. Is this true? I am concerned that walkers and cyclists are not prioritised as we try to create safer towns free from air pollution and more easily accessible to children and adults.

We are about to go to public consultation on our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) which detail how we would invest in active travel as funding is made available. We have contacted colleagues regarding the cost of road closures.

Energy

How will you balance the needs for electricity generation against the needs of the natural environment, for example hydropower and the planning environment? We submitted plans for a small domestic array of photovoltaic panels near the A695 but had this turned down, although it would have rendered us almost completely carbon neutral. The balances are difficult. Is any work being done to assure that all thinking within the council is joined up?

The Climate Change Team meet with the planning department regularly to discuss planning applications. Renewable energy generation projects will be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment that will analyse any potential impacts the project may have on the local environment.

Furthermore, the project planning process will involve a pre-application submission to the Environment Agency who will be a stakeholder in the decision making outcome of the project.

Can traffic lights be made to be run on solar power rather than grid power?

Traffic lights are essential road equipment and must be on at all times 24/7 to ensure road safety. As a result of this, traffic lights are unsuitable to run on solar power given that energy can only be harnessed from the sun during the day. It may be possible for traffic lights to run on solar power during the day and use back-up generation from the grid at night. This is not something we have currently looked into – technical and economic feasibility studies would have to be undertaken.

You have mentioned research into bio-fuels but all of these involve large use of land (they harvest energy from sunlight). How is this relevant to Northumberland? We are not in the bread basket states of the US. And why would we misuse land to create food (and burn it) when we could better use the land for farming, parks and gardens or even rewilding?

We plan to do research into the potential use of biofuels within the county. However, the biofuel we plan to research is not generated through the use of crops, nor will we be using any land to produce them. A biofuel is any source of fuel that is sourced from biomass, i.e. organic matter, which can include plant or algae material and animal waste. Our research includes investigating associated supply chains, manufacturing and production capabilities of selected biomass in the UK and Europe. Were NCC to pilot the use of biofuels, it would be ensured that production and manufacturing of the product was sustainable and not detrimental to the local supply chain environment.

Waste

As an alternative fuel from waste consultant based in Cramlington, is the long term plan still to send Northumberland waste to Teesside for incineration, which is neither environmentally friendly or economically efficient? I'm working on projects in Wales and Scotland to change this policy with Government and Local Council support.

The process the Council uses for treating residual waste that is not recycled or composted by residents is preferable to the locally available alternative, which is landfill and which is adopted by most local authorities in England. Previous government policies, including landfill tax and (now defunct) landfill emissions trading scheme (LATS), moved many large authorities to take up Energy from Waste (EFW) as a proven and sustainable treatment option. The Council will be guided by government policy on the treatment of residual household waste when it is published.

Where can I go to find clear information about which plastics can and can't be recycled? What happens to the plastics that are recycled?

Please find a link here to the [NCC Waste Recycling page](#).

We also recommend using [Recycle Now](#) to see where you can recycle more specific plastics that are not currently collected by the council, for example most large supermarkets now collect soft plastics, which cannot be feasibly collected by the council. We have been working with the Co-operative to

promote the recycling of soft plastics across their stores in Northumberland, and they have some very useful resources on plastic waste found [here](#).

I wonder why the County incinerates so much plastic waste that some other councils recycle? Might this change in future?

The Environment Act provisions, including Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Plastics Tax, will place a value on plastic packaging. It will do this by requiring the producers and distributors of such low quality packaging to improve its quality before being distributed into the packaging supply chains and to pay towards the cost of its recovery and recycling. Local councils will play their part by being obligated by new regulations to modify plastic packaging collection and treatment processes, but will receive financial contributions to offset the costs, in order to reduce what the public / council tax payers contribute. Most plastic packaging costs local authorities a lot of money to segregate for recycling, which in turn has relatively little value as a commodity. The obligations placed on producers and distributors of packaging will mean that council tax payers will no longer have to foot the majority of the bill for increasing its plastic recycling offer. It would cost far too much to modify the Council's materials recovery facility at West Sleekburn, designed in 2005, to be able to separate out these low quality materials. EPR will help overcome these challenges.

Are there any plans to tackle use of plastic locally, i.e. packaging by retailers and food producers, or is this being tackled at national level only?

This is being looked at nationally as part of the government's plan within the new Environment Act circular economy measures, where there will be specific legislation requiring compliance by obligated manufacturers, distributors and retailers involved in plastics packaging. There are extensive proposals set out in the 2021 DEFRA Consistency in Household and Business Recycling, Extended Producer Responsibility in packaging waste and plastic tax consultations. The Council is happy to work with organisations to promote the recycling of plastics, which does not impact on current levels of resources. For example we worked with the Co-op in supporting the launch of their store take-back service for plastic films not collected at the kerbside. It would not be wise to invest in new plastic recycling services right now as government has stated in these consultations that new funding to help improve recycling will not be available, nor paid retrospectively to councils until any published commencement dates when collections of a range of food waste, separate plastics, cartons and other dry recycling is anticipated to become mandatory.

Why is Northumberland one of the only counties that do not recycle glass?

Current kerbside glass recycling trials are ongoing at four locations across the Council. The Council is funding a second year of the trial to take us up to March 2023 to obtain the information needed to make an informed decision on the costs and benefits of introducing a kerbside glass recycling service across the whole County. It will also provide evidence to government about the funding needed for the recycling gains that a kerbside glass collection would achieve. Before the end of the trial it is anticipated that government will have published guidance on what recycling services all Local Authorities should provide. In the meantime, glass recycling bring banks are available across the county.

I am interested in your thoughts on waste. I think this is a classic example of where more regional collaboration could bring real benefits. Any thoughts on how you would be working more effectively at a regional level in this area, and in others?

This is a good point and one we are currently working with waste services to look at. There is some suggestion that regional procurements of food waste processing capacity would make sense, as government reports that there is to be a lack of infrastructure to deal with food waste (from household and commercial sources) in some regions. There is also the balance to be struck between geography influencing waste collections as well as treatment transport costs and the benefits of partnerships providing one large single regional facility (increased transport versus lower central treatment cost). In response to the government consultations on recycling consistency (broadly providing all UK households with the same standard and frequency of recycling collection offer), the Council has been bringing its general agreement to this proposed policy to the attention of policy makers but asking for the disproportionate cost of introducing them in large rural areas like Northumberland to be taken into account.

I'm very concerned about the proliferation of PV panel use as it isn't clear whether they can be recycled and what chemicals or minerals are used in their construction. So are we creating a new waste for future disposal?

The life expectancy of solar panels is up to 30 years and after this they can be recycled. Every solar panel company (importer or manufacturer) in the UK must join a Producer Compliance Scheme (PCS), such as the Government-approved PV CYCLE. This ensures that all solar panels are collected and recycled properly. In the case of silicon-based solar panels (which make up 92% of the market share), 100% of the aluminium can be recycled and 95% of the glass is used again. Find out more information [here](#).

Heating and homes

Has there been any progress in researching possible discounts for the County bulk buying solar PVs - and, perhaps, heat pumps?

Northumberland County Council is in discussions with the North of Tyne Combined Authority about an approach to a bulk purchase of solar PV offer for the able-to-pay market in Northumberland. At present the North of Tyne Combined Authority are confirming procurement and contracting rules, but NCC is hopeful that a PV offer maybe available to residents in 2022. Unfortunately, there is not a similar offer available for heat pumps. With the changes in government legislation to incentivise heat pump installation from April 2022 some of the financial burden of installing heat pumps may be alleviated.

Given that lots of Northumberland buildings are old stone and so inefficient, how about a broad fund to support home insulation? A simple action to give immediate impact.

We completely agree that one of the major things we need to do in the UK is insulate our homes and increase their energy efficiency, so we need less energy to heat them. Unfortunately, the issue of

poorly performing homes is a national one. There is a central government funding stream that comes from the Department of Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (called Green Homes Grant and Sustainable Warmth) from which local authorities can deliver energy efficiency measures for the homes in their area that are most vulnerable to fuel poverty. To make sure those in most need are helped. There is an eligibility criteria attached to these funds; only households with a EPC rating of D/E or below and a household income of less than £30,000 are eligible. There is also a spending limit as to how much money can be spent on each home (this is a sliding scale that correlates to the EPC rating of the property).

There are other funding streams available to homes directly from the government or their energy supplier. More information can be found on [the government webpage](#). Although it is excellent that some funding is available, there will unfortunately be homes that are not eligible. Regrettably as a local authority we do not have the financial resources to create an insulation fund ourselves. As a team we are allocating a lot of time and thought as to how we can help and facilitate the residents in Northumberland to both insulate their homes, and convert to low carbon heating methods, in a way that is affordable for most households.

What funding is available if I want to insulate my home?

You can access funding through the Green Homes Grant if you are eligible. We are in the process of setting up a system for applications to the next funding round. If you would like to enquire, please send your details to climate@northumberland.gov.uk with the subject heading 'Green Homes Grant'.

Is NCC able to make recommendations of providers of solar panels/air source heat pumps?

As local authority officers we are unable to make recommendations for specific suppliers or businesses. All solar and air source suppliers who install on domestic properties should be [MCS Certified](#). It can also be useful to check that providers are [Trustmark registered](#) and adhere to the PAS 2035 domestic retrofitting requirements. There are also independent websites such as the [Energy Saving Trust](#) that can be a good source of information.

We try and reduce fossil fuel use by using wood burning stoves, leaving gas in the ground. We use local (our woodland!) wood, but of course we burn wood which releases CO₂ and particulates (although we do have very good stoves). What is the Council's approach to wood burning?

There are a lot of environmental factors to consider concerning the use of wood burning stoves. Wood stoves emit a variety of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O) and carbon monoxide (CO). Furthermore, wood burning stoves emit small particles of black carbon which is a major contributor to global climate change. According to [Government statistics](#), domestic wood burning has become the largest source of small particle air pollution in the UK responsible for 38% of PM_{2.5} in 2019. Residents that use wood burning stoves currently would be advised to use locally sourced wood from sustainably managed forests. The Climate Change team at NCC, would prefer to advocate for renewable sources of heating, including heat pump installation, use of biofuels and implementing district heat networks. Where a new

heating system is not achievable, improvements to building fabric and energy efficiency measures should be considered.

Sequestration (removing CO2 from the atmosphere) and land use

Have you any advice as to how we should approach landowners? We have offered to plant trees on their land but received absolutely no response.

Approaching landowners about tree planting can be challenging, especially when there are multiple demands on the land use. We would suggest approaching them with a specific case for where you might like planting, the pros and cons, and also the potential options for funding for this activity. There is lots of information about this on the [Great Northumberland Forest \(GNF\) website](#). Additionally if you would like support for a specific project you have in mind, our team for the GNF might be able to assist you. Please email them at enquiries.forest@northumberland.gov.uk

Can you tell us who is responsible for hedge-cutting and verge-mowing in the Council and how we might secure a reduction in both?

Northumberland County Council (NCC) aims to cut all rural roadside verges once per annum. We aim to complete this task during the months of June and July, weather permitting. The reasons we do this are to improve lines of sight not only at junctions but also around corners. Long vegetation, particularly when it is wet, flops onto the road, narrowing the carriage way causing a potential hazard to drivers or other road users. If the land to the side of the road is not cut at least once per year, saplings and shrubs take over, again causing narrowing of the highway. If left, this sort of vegetation can damage drainage systems and the road surface, and is costly and time-consuming to remove. We also consider pedestrian safety. Cutting the metre strip at the side of the road where achievable allows an area for pedestrians to step out of the way of traffic more easily, should the need arise.

There are, however, approximately 80 areas of verge identified across the county where we delay any cutting until later in the year, due to flora of particular interest. We work in partnership with the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Northumberland National Parks to help identify these sites. The majority of hedges in the county are privately owned and not cut by NCC.

As protecting biodiversity and flora and fauna is going to be vital to help species become resilient to the effects of climate change, is there any way that the council can develop a more sympathetic approach to verge and wayside tree management? These zones of the country nationwide are now recognised as important as part of our natural environment.

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Why is the council involving itself in planting trees to "capture" carbon dioxide when 80% of photosynthesis occurs in the ocean? Of the remaining 20% a proportion of the carbon cycle involves trees. But what proportion of CO₂ are Northumberland Council's trees expected to absorb?

Planting trees has many additional benefits other than just sequestering carbon. Studies have shown that having access to green spaces can significantly improve both physical and mental wellbeing. Moreover, careful planting can improve biodiversity and provide habitats for rare species of animals and plants. In terms of the Council owned woodlands, we estimate that they have a carbon sequestration potential of 13.37 kt/yr. We appreciate this is a small proportion of the overall sequestration needed for Northumberland, let alone the UK, however, the benefits of improving and creating more woodlands in Northumberland extend much further than just carbon sequestration.

Heather burning is often used on landscapes with carbon sequestering peat. This can cause damage to peat. Does the Council have a view on this?

This is an extremely complicated subject but the balance of expert opinion seems to be that burning on peat is likely to have adverse effects both from carbon and biodiversity perspectives as well as water quality and flood management issues. The Government has recently banned burning on deep peat within areas designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. For your interest, a good long-term study on the impact of heather burning on peat can be found [here](#). As a Council we understand that most landscapes in Northumberland have multiple uses. Therefore, each case is individual and must consider the unique use and stakeholders alongside the ecological benefits when considering its use and management.

Extreme weather events

The big storm resulted in the loss of electricity for some towns and villages for several weeks. The government is pushing for everyone to have electric cars and no gas. How would people then be able to charge their vehicles and heat their homes in this event?

NCC is working with Northern Power Grid and Scottish Power Energy Networks to understand the reasons behind the severe cuts following Storm Arwin. While a resilient grid will be essential to the rollout and adoption of electrified heating and transport, community energy and localised renewable energy generation may improve grid resilience if correctly adopted. It would also be the case that if you had a fully charged electric car plugged into your property in the event of a powercut, you would be able to power your house with vehicle to grid charging from the car battery

for several days. The electrification of heat and transport offers many potential solutions as well as hurdles.

What adaptations were considered following Storm Arwen?

We have pushed for an enquiry into electricity grid resilience and are looking at how new developments such as vehicle to grid EV charging, other battery storage and community energy generation with local supply could provide back-up power sources in the event of future power failure.

Why are you talking about extreme weather events when there is no evidence of these?

The question is not clear on whether it claims there is no evidence of extreme weather events or whether there is no evidence that these are linked to climate change. The Council would dispute both claims however; extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and are increasingly attributable to human influence. More information can be found on the [MetOffice website](#).

Is there a risk to the Net Zero target, should the worst happen where the Northumberland forestry is affected by severe weather systems, like storms, floods or fire?

If significant parts of Northumberland's tree cover were to be destroyed by severe weather then the Net Zero target as currently modelled would be in jeopardy. Whilst our teams are managing the damage from the previous storm events this winter, careful planting, planning and proactive maintenance of our forests will help them to be more resilient in the future. We are currently looking into funding opportunities to secure more resources for the proactive management of NCC woodlands.

Flooding is set to be a big part of the future risks. Are there any plans around supporting communities in Northumberland with flooding?

We are working to include adaptation in our future Climate Action Plans. Both our fire and rescue services and our coastal erosion and flooding teams work with communities to reduce the risk of floods and to respond in the event of flooding.

Climate Data and Facts

Are delegates to this aware that the Anthropogenic (human) contributions to CO₂ are only 4% (IPCC AR4)? Given that UK contributions to this are less than 1%, why does the Council think that they can influence the climate in any way?

The IPCC's fifth assessment report is quite clear that human-caused emissions and activities have caused around 100% of the warming observed since 1950. The special report from 2018 on the impact of warming 1.5°C and above backs this up. The scientific consensus is clear and the Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, which it is now acting upon. Northumberland County Council

may not be able to influence a global stage, but doing nothing is not an option. We can support the UK's route towards Net Zero and we can help show leadership in this field.

Why do you refer to 1.5 degrees of warming when it is a fact that this is the rise since the end of the Industrial Revolution? How much warming does the panel think UK contribution to Net Zero will contribute FROM NOW up to the target date?

We are concerned with reducing emissions within our control and influence in order to contribute to a long-term reduction in greenhouse gases and their associated global warming. We acknowledge that Northumberland's emissions are a very small part of the global picture but doing nothing is not an option we consider viable. We want to contribute everything that we can as a council and as a county to reducing global warming.

Would the Council look towards reporting their carbon emissions to a body such as TCFD and have they outlined their own scope 3 emissions fully via supply chain?

At this stage the Council is not intending to provide disclosures to TCFD due to the resource requirements for the disclosures. The Council has recently reviewed and improved the accuracy of its emissions reporting so that it is now in a better position to report to an external body. Supply chain emissions are not currently calculated in our scope 3 emissions. The Council has a sustainable procurement policy which considers the carbon impact of its procured goods but ultimately it cannot directly impact these carbon emissions.

Could you explain the last slide in the presentation – it appeared to show a massive reduction in Northumberland's net CO₂ emissions in recent years?

The 82% drop in Northumberland's net emissions between 2005 and 2019 is largely due to a reduction in industrial emissions. The county has become a green economic hub in recent years, with developments in off-shore wind and the Britishvolt Gigafactory in Blyth boosting the green economy of the area. Additionally, the Council is ensuring carbon savings in its own estates and transport by installing ground source heat pumps and solar panels on a number of buildings, electrifying the Council fleet and converting the majority of streetlights to LED.

Will NCC be able to compare the impact of their staff currently working from home against working from their normal office base?

NCC have been analysing the impact that lockdown has had on our estate and transport emissions. We are also reviewing evidence from existing studies on if a reduction in work travel/office emissions balances out with an increase in home energy emissions. At present, there are no plans to gather data on staff's home energy use, in part due to the sensitivity of this information and the complex factors that can affect individual energy use.

Resilience

Can the County do anything to increase food security, such that local farmers can supply residents on a larger scale, rather than the occasional farmers' markets?

This is a really interesting question and of great importance to Northumberland County Council, particularly to support our farming communities. There have been some interesting studies and innovative solutions to help local farmers pool their resources to secure larger retailing contracts in competition with larger retailers. The Council will continue to investigate these emerging ideas to see how we might best support local farmers to supply Northumberland residences. We have also set up a farming working group in order to open up communication with farming communities to best understand how the Council can support them.

I feel all the local efforts being carried out to tackle climate change in Northumberland/the UK are exciting opportunities to see a return to more self-sufficient and sustainable communities, creating jobs and driving healthy local economies, which is essential in the light of Brexit. Is this an explicit focus of the plans now and going forward?

Absolutely, the Council wants to support sustainable, thriving communities and local supply of food and energy where possible.

Divestment

At COP26 there was a commitment to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and phase down coal use. Northumberland County Council is now part of the Tyne and Wear Pension fund, which has £238 million invested in fossil fuels. Tyne & Wear Pension fund is part of the Border to Coast Pension Pool which includes Bedfordshire. In the past few months, two out of the three Bedfordshire councils (Bedford and Luton) have announced they want to divest the pension fund from fossil fuels, and will ask Border to Coast to do the same. Divestment is twenty times more impactful than stopping flying and going vegan combined, plus there is a risk of stranded assets with the switch to renewable energy. Will Northumberland also be asking Tyne & Wear pension fund to divest?

This is a valid point and one which the council will consider carefully in the coming months.

Please could you tell me whether NCC's money from the Government is in a bank that does not invest in fossil fuels?

The Council banks with Barclays and is aware of Barclays investment in fossil fuels. This is being considered.

Other

Do you advocate a plant based diet to reduce emissions from the factory farming of meat and dairy?

Emissions associated with food choices are complex as our food chains are now global and the choices we make have knock on effects in sometimes unexpected places. We would encourage a balanced diet with an emphasis on local, sustainable produce wherever possible

Matt - You have said that even if you do not agree that there is Anthropogenic Climate Change we can all get around the creation of climate jobs. What are these climate jobs, because in my experience they appear to consist of bureacratic jobs for middle class people concerned with counting, limiting and rationing? Are there any jobs being created which are involved in the production of things rather than the management of peoples behaviours?

There are jobs in many sectors contributing towards a reduction in carbon emissions and a more sustainable economy, for example in manufacturing associated with renewable technologies such as the British Volt battery plant being built north of Blyth.