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**Six environmental priorities for the new Mayor to consider**

Thursday 2nd May will see the election of the first Mayor of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA). All residents in North Yorkshire and the City of York will have a vote.

***How will this affect us in Malhamdale?***

The MEG group has looked at this - especially in relation to the opportunities this presents for action on nature, the environment and on tackling climate change. We wanted to share our thoughts.

***First, what will The Mayor do?***

They will have money to spend - some £540 million from central government over 30 years - to drive impactful projects across the region. The intention is that this will attract further investment to spend on local priorities such as transport, education and housing with a joined-up approach across our region. This is part of the move to devolve decisions and funding away from Westminster.

The new Mayor will be joined by two councillors from the City of York and two from North Yorkshire Council who will be the Board for the Combined Authority. They will have the support of an executive made up of public servants. North Yorkshire Council and the two National Parks will continue to be responsible for the delivery of services and for planning, but strategic level decisions will move to the new authority as will the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. So, in summary The Mayor will have significant influence given that they will have:

* Responsibility for a 30-year Mayoral Investment Fund and the powers to borrow against funds.
* Control the full devolution of the Adult Education Budget.
* Have powers to improve the supply and quality of housing and secure the development of land or infrastructure.
* Have powers and funds to improve transport through a consolidated, devolved, multi-year transport settlement.
* Be responsible for community safety and the have powers to appoint a Deputy Mayor who will carry out many of the duties currently held by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

You can find out more on the new Authority on their website: https://yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk/.

***Second, what are the opportunities for action on nature and the environment?***

The new Mayor will have an opportunity to address the challenge of climate change, to raise public awareness, and drive a rapid transition to a net zero economy. This could, and should, bring the following benefits to Malhamdale:

**1. Warm homes**- Actions to create an affordable pathway for all our homes to become energy efficient and powered by renewable energy. Alongside action to create more affordable housing.

**2. Cleaner and cheaper energy** - Supporting policies that incentivise investment to produce renewable Yorkshire energy and deliver it to our homes and businesses.

**3. Better transport links** - Putting clean, low carbon transport first. Prioritising active and shared transport to give fairer access for all, and ensure Malhamdale is better served by public transport.

**4. Upskilling everyone for a low carbon economy** - Helping us all understand how jobs, homes and lifestyles need to change, and invest in green jobs to successfully navigate the transition.

**5. Protecting our homes, farms, businesses** and infrastructure from the worst of new climate extremes and helping us adapt to a climate that is warmer, stormier and less predictable.

**6. Restoring and enhancing our natural world and biodiversity**. This will include championing action to tackle the nature emergency through (amongst others) working in partnership with our farmers and landowners to produce the food we need in a sustainable way.

There will be several hustings with the mayoral candidates ahead of the election. We are hoping there will be one specifically on environment. We encourage all Malhamdale residents to ask questions of all the candidates if they have the opportunity. Please feel free to use this article as background and to include questions on how they would help deliver the above six benefits.

The new Authority, with the loss of Craven Council and the new North Yorkshire Council and two existing National Parks, means a potentially baffling local authority structure for the Dale. The new authority covers a vast area from rural areas to the larger towns of York, Scarbrough and Selby. To help ensure the needs of rural communities such as ours, MEG is part of the North Yorkshire Climate Coalition (www.nyclimatecoalition.org) where we will continue to, share ours concerns and issues to the new Mayor and the existing North Yorkshire Council on environmental issues.

All are welcome to our monthly meetings. The next one is on 4th April in Malham Village Hall at 7:30pm. For general information about MEG, please email malhamdalevolunteers@gmail.com.

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