

# YORK 2020: A RESILIENT LANDMARK CITY

## York Environment Forum's Vision for A Sustainable York

York has a high-level ambition to become 'a leading environmentally friendly city' and the City of York Council is taking positive steps towards this with the Climate Change Action Plan and other initiatives. But

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time is not on our side. The climate is changing, resources are being squeezed and our vulnerable economy needs local resilience to survive.

Becoming a landmark environment city isn't simply a noble ambition, it's a necessity. And we need to be bold, think big and start now.

With its many easy wins and community perspective, our vision for York 2020 shows how York can become a beacon city, leading the UK in environmental sustainability by demonstrating a new paradigm for living, working, commerce and tourism that encapsulates all of the city's strategic ambitions.

In an energy-insecure world, **resilience** is key. The way we live will be different, whether we resist change, merely react to it or whether we embrace it and plan proactively for a new way of living.

Change can be unsettling and fear of it can stifle, but 'different' need not mean 'worse' or a return to the 'Dark Ages'. With our Vision for York, 'different' means something better, innovative and reinvigorating that also presents solutions to the multiple challenges we face. If we do this, York will be attractive not just because it looks beautiful and has great amenities and public spaces but because it will have built up the local resilience – and hence the certainty – that investors desire. This will support the city through the years ahead and provide the security in terms of jobs, food and energy that we all want as well as improving our quality of life and producing a healthier economy.

So that's our choice. We can either sleepwalk into an insecure future or steer York to a high-quality, economically secure, resilient future in the very different world we face. 2020 is just a few years from now. We need to start today.

The good news is that it will be possible to deliver a significantly less carbon-intensive lifestyle in the next decade. And York has the proportions, the intellectual acumen, the 'green' sympathies and a number of important strategies in place – as well as an overarching ambition – to achieve this. However, they must be driven forward with urgency. We need a step-change in attitude at all levels and across all sectors to achieve this.

Our Vision has three main tenets: to be a Green City, a Mobile City and a Resilient City. This is explained in the following summary. Our Vision is by no means complete, but we want to share the ideas in it with a wider audience and we welcome comments and contributions. Above all, we want this paper to sow the seeds of a flourishing future for York.

*Kate Lock, Chair, York Environment Forum*

## SUMMARY

### GREEN CITY

York to be an exemplar environmental city, with a **zero-waste strategy** and **low-carbon** and **zero-carbon** technologies making it the **least polluting city in the UK**. A reputation for **pioneering new building design** compounds its status as a **prime base for knowledge industries** and creates a **boom in green jobs**. The use of best environmental practices **protects York's history** for the future and gives York a **worldwide reputation for retro-conversion** as well as the most **energy-efficient new builds**. **Eco-tourism** attracts a new and stable home-grown market for visitors. York is **physically green** too, due to a **tree-planting programme** that has transformed the city's hard landscaping into a **virtual orchard** of shady and abundant greenery.

### MOBILE CITY

York is the first UK city to become **congestion-free** by phasing out the need for private motor cars within its city walls, the requirement being unnecessary due to an excellent **integrated walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure**. This is complemented by car-sharing clubs, plug-in points for electric vehicles, improved river and rail transport and fast, frequent, affordable bus services.

York's suburbs and villages enjoy **robust and sustainable links** to the city with transport nodes on the outer ring road providing centres for car-share clubs, car hire, cycle hire, taxis and buses in and out of the city.

### RESILIENT CITY

York is better able to sustain itself economically and physically with a network of **ward-based communities** centred on **schools as community hubs**. Residents of all ages are clued up about green living and **support each other** at grassroots level through neighbourhood and voluntary groups, facilitated by a **progressive city council**. This **stimulates local employment**, shops and services and **creates resilience**, reducing reliance on vulnerable and expensive global markets.

**Food crops**, orchards, micro-plots, roof gardens, allotments and communal vegetable growing abound and the emphasis on local produce, embraced by hotels and restaurants, **boosts the rural economy**. **Clean energy** from microgeneration helps to power homes and businesses and waste is seen as a **resource**. All of this is part of a city-wide ethos not just to reduce **York's ecological and carbon footprints** but also to show that a resilient city is a **healthy, smart, prosperous and secure** one, too.