

# Our Mission

A fair share and a strong voice for Yorkshire!

In 2023, the public spending in London and Scotland was £14,500 per person, according to HM Treasury figures. But in Yorkshire it was just £11,900 per person – that's a shortfall of over **£14 billion** across Yorkshire – **every year**.

And it gets worse: the money Yorkshire *does* get is frequently spent badly, on the wrong things, and micromanaged by ministers and civil servants from hundreds of miles away, over the heads of people who live here and know the region.

## A parliament for Yorkshire

The answer to this neglect is a Yorkshire regional parliament, elected by and accountable to those who live here, and with the same kind of powers and formula-assured funding that the Scottish parliament has.

Not only will this make Yorkshire an equal partner in a stronger and fairer UK but it will also mean that the policies and spending affecting Yorkshire-folk will be decided here in the county, by people elected by, representative of, and accountable to its residents.

A Yorkshire Executive, formed out of the parliament, could do so much more than simply administer policies though. It would be Yorkshire's voice both within the UK and more widely – lobbying for the county's interests, attracting inward investment, championing its businesses and so much more that simply isn't happening at the moment.

Put simply: a Yorkshire parliament is a good investment that would return the outlay many times over, and deliver a better, fairer Yorkshire than Westminster is doing.

## Stop the Outvestment of Yorkshire

Outvestment means taking money from a less wealthy area, to a wealthier one. You pay taxes towards HS2 and Crossrail but will get no benefit. This is why the UK has the most affluent area in NW Europe – London – but Yorkshire has three of the top 10 poorest areas.

London-based parties have London-based priorities. Only the Yorkshire Party is focused on Yorkshire.

## About the Yorkshire Party

We are a centrist party, dedicated to improving Yorkshire through stronger local powers and fairer funding.

Our co-leaders are Dr Bob Buxton, who teaches engineering apprentices for a living, and Dr Simon Bittcliffe, who runs an eco-friendly printing firm, and has sponsored the rewilding of 166 acres of land.

Since being formed 10 years ago, we have received hundreds of thousands of votes and won council elections at all levels.

We need more votes – we need your vote – to shift powers and funding away from a broken Westminster to Yorkshire.

Only then, can we get our fair share of investment in transport, education, health and so much more.

## When the Yorkshire Party wins, Yorkshire wins!

It doesn't matter which London-based party you vote for.

Only a vote for the Yorkshire Party will give Yorkshire the stronger local powers and fair share of funding we need for better, greener, more prosperous future.

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# Health & Social Care

## Yorkshire Party councillors have been fighting for years to defend and improve local health, social care and dental services...

We have had some successes but the London Tory government continues to cut local provision. Children's Services – which protects the most vulnerable children in society from abuse – must be properly funded, it is our moral duty. So must care for the elderly and for vulnerable adults.

The NHS and Social Care need to deliver together. We believe that is best done from the same department of a Yorkshire Executive, accountable to a Yorkshire Parliament.

The Yorkshire Party will establish a single patient-centred public health service to replace the current fragmented and failing labyrinth.

The patient, young or old should be championed through the path to better health. It makes no sense to be stuck in hospital because there's no plan for them. It makes no sense that a GP or Pharmacist cannot treat an abscess because that's classed as 'dental' if there are no accessible dentists – with the result that in Yorkshire, in the 21st Century, the most common children's hospital admission is for severe dental operations! This is a disgrace and an absurdity.

All aspects of public healthcare should be integrated, resourced and staffed to a level that can deliver quality care without continually putting pressure on staff or causing unreasonable delays to patients.

We will celebrate our NHS staff and build their careers in an excellent, flexible, responsive, free and accessible public service. That service needs to include Prevention as well as Cure.

The Yorkshire Party will build specialist colleges, for adults and school-leavers, to address skills shortages in health, dental and social care, growing the economy.

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# Crime & Justice

Crime is minimised in a community when people feel a stake in where they live, where they trust the system, where they believe people are treated equally, whatever their position, power or wealth, where they believe wrong-doing will be identified and punished, and where all this happens in a timely manner. At the moment the crime and justice system is far from this ideal. It is overburdened and under-funded, too much depends on chance, and it too often serves itself rather than society and victims.

The **Yorkshire Party will change this**, to reduce the number of victims to begin with, and to ensure that those victims that there are, are treated respectfully and fairly and see justice done.

## Effective Policing

The police's primary job is the prevention and detection of crime. The Yorkshire Party will give our police forces the resources and flexibility to deliver on that job.

Front line police numbers will increase and increased and integrated technology will allow officers to be more effective in their role.

Policing needs community consent and support. We will increase public accountability of Yorkshire's police forces to ensure that their culture and public interactions retain that consent and engagement. We will also prioritise police accessibility and responsiveness: nothing undermines faith in the police more than the belief that they will not react to a reported crime.

We would scrap Police & Crime Commissioners and make senior officers directly responsible to elected representatives.

## The Justice System

The Justice system is presently unfit for purpose. Case backlogs are unfair to victims of crime, to defendants and to those who work in the system.

Extra resourcing will be made available to address this issue so that cases are dealt with in a timely manner. We will reopen or establish courts in more locations to make justice more accessible.

We will consult with experts, practitioners and the public on how to make the justice system fairer and more inclusive, to best ensure that criminals are punished, victims receive justice and the innocent are not caught up unfairly.

The best deterrent to crime is the fear of being caught and convicted. Harsher sentences achieve nothing if criminals do not believe they will receive them. We therefore prioritise catching criminals.

## The Prison Service

It is imperative that prison capacity is increased and is readily available when required. In time, we would expect prison numbers to fall, as more effective policing cuts criminality but in the short term it is essential that the system is able to safely hold those sentenced to prison for their due term.

Prisons must also become orderly institutions and safe spaces for those incarcerated.

We support greater efforts to towards rehabilitation, education and better support to avoid reoffending after release from prison. We support post-release plans for former convicts to reintegrate them back into society after release, to reduce the risk of reoffending.

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# Environment

It is our responsibility to hand on Yorkshire's environment to our children in a better state than we inherited it. We are in both a Climate Emergency and a Biodiversity Emergency. Now, more than ever, we need to demonstrate respect for the biosphere.

We want **Clean Water, Fresh Air, Good Food** and abundant **Renewable Energy**.

The best way to do this is through a Yorkshire Parliament taking control of regulation and toughening it so that polluters pay, waste is reduced, development is sustainable and wildlife is protected.

## The Yorkshire Party would:

- **Ban fracking** in, on or under Yorkshire – and support a ban through the rest of the UK.
- Establish **Green Technology** colleges to develop the skills needed to support the environment and Green economy.
- Introduce **tougher limits** on permissible pollution.
- **Ban** water companies from paying dividends and executive bonuses, where they are in breach of pollution limits.
- **Work with our farming sector** to reduce pollution from run-off, and from the use of harmful chemicals.
- Support an ambitious program of planting **trees, hedgerows, and rewilding**.
- Back a dense network of rapid **EV charging points** throughout the county and support further development of hydrogen fuel cells.
- Support the UK **moving away from fossil fuel-driven power stations**, other than as back-up plants.
- Have **solar panels** and first-class **insulation** as standard in all new buildings.
- Provide **subsidies** for all for solar panels and insulation in existing buildings, helping with the **cost-of-living** crisis.

**The change from coal was imposed brutally; Yorkshire has earned the right to forge a better future but this time, bringing knowledge, workforce, enterprise and opportunities for the benefit of everyone in Yorkshire, the country and the planet.**

If you want Yorkshire to set an example and lead the green industrial revolution, then please vote Yorkshire Party. Our environment needs **decisive action**. Our future prosperity depends on it.

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# Education

Investing in our future...

One of the main reasons for Yorkshire's underperformance in so many fields has been the under-funding of its education. A better-educated workforce leads to more jobs, more investment and fewer people leaving to seek opportunities elsewhere. A society with more hope in it will be one with less crime and fewer social problems.

When London schools were at the bottom of the league tables, the London Challenge was introduced. That scheme involved more funding, teacher-training and collaboration between schools.

Yorkshire's schools receive less funding and are often towards the bottom of league tables. But there's no 'Yorkshire Challenge'. The Yorkshire Party backs such a 'Yorkshire Challenge' plan for our schools and children.

## The Yorkshire Party supports:

- The abolition of Ofsted, and its replacement with a constructive regulatory body, with support and outcomes based on longer term evidence gathering and collaborative work.
- Properly funded schools and colleges, to at least the same level as the UK average, per pupil.
- Better support for SEND pupils, who often cannot find appropriate school places.
- Better school-based mental health provision.
- Greater incentives to train to teach, to tackle the huge shortage in teacher numbers.
- A review of teacher workload, to retain existing staff.
- Better pay and conditions for all school staff, including teaching assistants for SEND pupils. Better retention rates will alone pay for this.
- A fairer deal for university students, who pay too much in fees and accommodation costs.
- A reduction in the interest rates students pay on loans, to the lower of the BoE base rate or CPI inflation.

## We are committed to building specialist colleges (for school-leavers and adults) to fill skills gaps in:

- Green Technology
- Digital Industries
- Health, Dental and Social Care
- Hospitality
- Education

Green technology colleges will give students the opportunity to help Yorkshire lead the green industrial revolution and give children something to aspire to, in a sector that many young people are passionate about..

## Yorkshire's fair share of education spending

These ambitious changes may be funded simply by Yorkshire receiving its fair share from general taxation. As it stands, Yorkshire taxpayers effectively subsidise better-funded education in London and the South-East.

This has been the case under the last Labour government, the Tory-Lib Dem coalition and the current Tory government.

Only a vote for the Yorkshire Party will deliver Yorkshire's fair share of education spending.

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# Democracy

De-centralising power and creating a fairer political system

Confidence in government in the UK is at a low point. Too much of our system of government is no longer fit for purpose in a modern democracy and needs renewing or replacing.

## The Yorkshire Party supports:

- **English regions being able to choose to have Regional Parliaments on similar lines to those already established in Scotland and Wales.**

This would pave the way for the establishment of a Regional Parliament for Yorkshire and proper devolution to Yorkshire.

- **Replacing the House of Lords with a Senate, elected from the regions of the United Kingdom**

The Senate should provide a balance to the House of Commons; it should not replicate it. We therefore back longer terms for senators than MPs – perhaps 9 years – and elections from the regions, using an amended STV electoral system. Elections would take place every 3 years, with a third of the house elected each time. Membership should be reduced to no more than 250. It would have veto powers over constitutional legislation, and longer delaying powers over everything else.

- **Introducing Proportional Representation**

The Yorkshire Party supports the introduction of STV (with a top-up mechanism) for elections to the Senate, to local councils and to other elected representative bodies, including devolved parliaments. We back the use of AV for elected single-person roles, such as mayors. We would consult on the best electoral system for the House of Commons, bearing in mind that Westminster would already have a powerful PR-elected chamber in the Senate, and that there is merit in electing the Commons in a different way – however a move away from First Past the Post is essential.

- **Capping donations to political parties**

The amount an individual can contribute to a political party in a year should be capped at \$25,000. Contributions by organisations should be banned entirely, as should funding from abroad (companies and trade unions are there to serve their shareholders and members respectively, and not political parties). If we want democracy then we need to be prepared to pay for it otherwise funders will want payback in terms of future favour. Political parties should therefore receive state funding based on their support in elections.

- **Making politics more accessible**

Politics remains far too much the preserve of a privileged caste, with money and connections. Too many barriers exist for ordinary people trying to become involved. The Yorkshire Party supports regulating party selections in much the same way as public selections are, with low limits on spending so that candidates or their patrons cannot buy seats.

- **Voting reform**

Britain's voting system was mostly designed in the 19th century (and before). It needs to be modernized to make voting easier, safer and more efficient. We would scrap current voter ID requirements, consult on introducing non-paper based voting to supplement traditional ballot-box voting, and consult on whether the voting age should be reduced to 16.

- **Reforming the Honours System**

The honours system should not be used to reward or compensate political favourites. Instead, an independent commission should recommend honours based on service to the public, over and above that expected in any job. The names of honours should be reviewed to ensure they are appropriate to the UK as is in the 21st century.

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# Transport

Getting our region moving: Improving efficiency. Reducing emissions.

A quality transport network is essential to a thriving Yorkshire economy and for people's quality of life. But Yorkshire's transport network has been subject to underfunding from London for decades; schemes are proposed, scaled down and then cancelled. Existing infrastructure is not upgraded – or not even maintained. Rural areas and smaller towns are left behind. A Yorkshire Regional Parliament with a fair devolved funding settlement would bring about the improvements needed to Yorkshire's transport network. However, until then, we will lobby the government in London to ensure Yorkshire receives its fair share to get Yorkshire moving while cutting emissions.

## A Metro for West Yorkshire

Leeds is the largest city in Europe without a metro. Its roads, bus and rail networks are also heavily congested at key times of the day. The Yorkshire Party supports building a West Yorkshire metro system to make a step-change in capacity, and to make travel easier and more pleasant, not just in Leeds but throughout West Yorkshire (and into North Yorkshire). Linked to changes in planning, which currently make infrastructure in the UK far more expensive than is necessary, this could be funded from Yorkshire's fair share of the money from the cancellation of HS2.

## Roads

Most travel in Yorkshire beyond very short distances is made on roads, usually in cars. It is essential that these are safe, clean and usually free-flowing. Outside of big cities, public transport can never adequately replace the flexibility of cars (and even in cities, only on certain routes), so the overall transport network must integrate that reality. As such, the Yorkshire Party supports:

- The **construction** of a second Pennine dual carriageway crossing, linking Sheffield and Manchester.
- The **full dualling** of the A66 between Scotch Corner and Penrith to dual carriageway.
- The **upgrading** of the A1 to motorway status throughout the region and beyond.
- The dualling of the A64 all the way from **Leeds to Scarborough**
- A review of Yorkshire's most congested villages and towns, to **identify candidates for bypasses**
- **Substantial improvements** to real-time monitoring, 100% reliable traffic signage, and more emergency refuges on smart-motorways.
- The development of a dense network of **EV recharging points** in towns, cities and rural areas, to encourage more people to switch fuel type and to **improve air quality**
- **Better use of technology** to fix potholes earlier and more effectively.

## A Yorkshire Travel Pass

The Yorkshire Party supports a public transport travel pass, similar to – but going far beyond – London's Oyster Card. It would be usable on all franchised buses, rail operators and trams; for park-and-ride, cycle storage, bicycle hire and other travel services. It would calculate the cheapest fares and cap maximum daily and weekly amounts. Through a related app, users could track services, order smart-buses (see below), and much more.

This would be far more deliverable with and through a Yorkshire regional parliament but until then we will work through existing structures to deliver it.

## Rail

Yorkshire's rail network has been neglected by successive Westminster governments, and has fed off scraps from the UK budget.

Whether through a Yorkshire Regional Parliament or by direct lobbying, the Yorkshire Party supports a rolling programme of full rail electrification for the routes between **Leeds, York, Sheffield, Doncaster and Hull**. This will make travel faster, more pleasant and enable greater capacity.

We support reopening of lines where there is a viable case to doing so. We would prioritise the Minster line from **York to Beverley** via **Market Weighton**, the **Skipton to Colne** line, the **Barrow Hill** line east of **Sheffield**, and the **Ripon** line, connecting **Northallerton** with **Harrogate**

The Yorkshire Party also supports stronger regulation on rail fares, as well as simplification of them.

We will back investment in infrastructure and interchange nodes to enable greater movement of freight by rail, for example from docks to interchange sites.

We recognise the valuable contribution made by heritage rail to the tourist industry in Yorkshire and support better connections with the traditional rail network where this is possible.

## Buses

Bus services are in crisis with many services lost, frequencies reduced and others unreliable. The Yorkshire Party supports franchising right across Yorkshire with local authorities and combined authorities working together, responsible for specifying the services needed in their areas and agreeing cross-boundary services with neighbouring areas. These franchises need to ensure that the service package is viable to the providers, as well as fair to passengers, with minimum service frequencies and regulated fares. We also want to see a rapid move away from diesel and towards electric or hydrogen-powered buses.

## Smart Buses

Too much public transport remains in the mindset of the Victorian era, where providers put on a set timetable for a set route and expected the public to work around that schedule. **Modern technology** means we can, and should, do much better.

The Yorkshire Party will champion the introduction of smart buses in rural areas and at night, where traditional bus services are sparse or non-existent. Smart buses are a cross between a bus and a taxi, with similar capped or subsidized fares, where users can order them using the Yorkshire Travel app, from point to point, where the smart bus will use technology to develop its route according to what people are ordering in real time. This would be paid for by the savings from replacing infrequently-used scheduled services with these smart buses, which would be more efficient, better used and safer.

## Air Travel

The Yorkshire Party strongly supported the campaign to oppose the closure of Doncaster-Sheffield, and the subsequent fight to re-open it, and are very pleased with the progress achieved so far – but will not rest until it is back operational.

Yorkshire needs **both Doncaster-Sheffield and Leeds-Bradford** and the smaller airports, to serve the people of Yorkshire and beyond. Yorkshire loses out from passengers and freight having to travel to and from airports out of the region, creating inconvenience, congestion and emissions – as well as lost business. We back Yorkshire taking a fairer share of the UK's air traffic.

## Inland waterways

The Yorkshire Party backs greater use of Yorkshire's waterways for moving bulk freight, including development of Leeds inland port.

## Walking and Cycling

We need continued improvements in our cycle and walking infrastructure to provide safe and pleasant routes which will encourage people to walk and cycle more for both day to day travel needs and for leisure.

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# Housing & Planning

## Making Yorkshire the best region to live in

Housing in Yorkshire – as across the UK – is in crisis. Prices and rents are sky-high making it impossible for many families and young adults to get on to the housing ladder or even to leave their family home.

Experience shows that few things form communities like people putting down roots and emotionally investing in the place where they live, whether they're renting or are an owner-occupier. And at the core of this is security. People need to feel, and to be, secure in their homes.

The Yorkshire Party's housing policy is founded on providing that security.

## Making Housing Affordable

In the medium term, housing can only be made more affordable by significantly increasing the housing stock, of all types. The aim should be half a million new homes a year across the UK by 2030, with 40,000 per year in Yorkshire. We would prioritise brownfield development, with subsidies to regenerate contaminated or difficult sites, but recognise that any party that claims that the housing crisis can be fixed without development on greenfield sites is being unrealistic and disingenuous; the Yorkshire Party prefers honesty.

In line with the Yorkshire Party's belief in subsidiarity, we would free up local councils to again build council housing, and would protect existing council and social housing against right-to-buy or similar schemes.

The Yorkshire Party also proposes to make owner-occupation more attractive and financially viable by abolishing all tax credits that advantage landlords. This will free up properties and reduce demand – and therefore prices – and deliver greater fairness.

In the short term, however, action is needed to deal with the housing sector as it is.

## Planning Reform

We will only reach the level of building envisaged above with radical planning reform. The present system, of needing permission for virtually any change anywhere, needs to end, alongside the endless red tape that add huge cost and great delay to any development (and also distorts the market, making it hard for small local firms to get a foothold).

Other than in protected areas, we will end the culture of civil servants micromanaging proposed developments, and significantly reduce the opportunities for hostile actors to prevent or delay the housing that so many people desperately need. Within planning, the state's job should be restricted to ensuring that what is built is safe to live in, and that adequate public services and infrastructure is in place to support new communities.

## Renters

Yorkshire has the highest demand for private rented housing in England and Wales, with less than half of it provided either by a local authority or a registered social landlord – but renting cannot and should not be seen as a second-rate option to buying.

As with housing to buy, the best assurance of good properties to rent at affordable prices is choice and a renters' market. However, that will take years to deliver. Until then, additional regulation will need to protect renters from unscrupulous landlords. In line with our desire to ensure households have as much security as possible, the Yorkshire Party backs:

- An **end to no-fault evictions** other than in carefully controlled circumstances and with at least 6 months' notice.
- A **regulated 'good landlord' system**, with landlords registered with local councils subject to meeting quality standards. This would be revenue-neutral to councils to administer; they could not charge excessively to create an income stream.
- **Published rental rates** would be part of the Good Landlord System, with a requirement that properties cannot be re-let at a rate below that which the previous tenant was charged for at least 6 months. This would prevent landlords from artificially hiking rates to free up properties but circumventing giving notice.
- Benefits for rents to be first paid **within a week of application**, even if this means the state working off incomplete data.
- A restoration of the level of **Local Housing Allowance** to the 30th centile of the local market.
- Increased powers and resources for the Housing Ombudsman to **act against rogue landlords**, whether a single individual or a large organisation.

### A Rent Guarantee Scheme

The Yorkshire Party would set up a rent guarantee scheme, to be administered by local councils and to be available to members of the Good Landlord System, where tenants struggling with rents would have their rents guaranteed by the councils, through loans, providing the tenant engages with support in sorting out their financial difficulties; councils will be required and expected to act with consideration and understanding.

This will help authorities to meet the stated aims of the existing discretionary housing payment, with fewer administrative obstacles to the service users. We want to provide a same-day service for those in housing need.

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## Leasehold Reform

Developers have abused the leasehold system appallingly in recent years, leaving many people facing huge bills and properties no-one would want to move into. The Yorkshire Party would end this scandal by:

- Supporting legislation to abolish leasehold for any single-property building, with the freehold transferring to the leaseholder.
- Giving leaseholders in multi-property buildings the option to jointly own the freehold of their building, or a relevant share as appropriate.
- Making ground rents and service charges reviewable by the Ombudsman, who would have the power to set rates if the landlord was found to be acting unfairly.

## Housing within a Devolved Yorkshire

**Devolution is the main priority of the Yorkshire Party. The powers it would bring would help end the housing crisis in the region.**

The governments of the UK's devolved nations have already used these powers to develop, for example, the Leasing Scheme Wales, which offers incentives for property owners to lease their properties to the local authority. This gives tenants in the scheme longer term, secure and affordable accommodation (5-20 years) as well as access to a high-level of support to help maintain their tenancy. In Scotland, both a rent cap and an eviction ban have previously been in place, while there are ongoing discussions about longer-term rent controls.

**We in Yorkshire demand the same powers: to take the future of its housing into our own hands.**

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