

Summary of Arthur Barker's talk:

RAF Climate Change Conference, 13/05/08

- Although this conference is focusing on adaptation rather than mitigation, these two elements of the climate change agenda cannot be divorced. Unless we mitigate, adaptation efforts will need to be greater.
- Much recent adaptation focus has been as a consequence of summer 2007 flooding, but this has generally been a success story. For example all schools in the region, except six, were ready for re-opening at the start of September term and those six that were not, in the most affected areas of Hull, were just delayed by a week.
- Arthur's role is Chair of the Regional Climate Change Executive group. The group have been responsible for developing the regional climate change action plan and working with a wide range of organisations and stakeholders in delivering actions within the plan.
- The action plan is currently being revised with the focus divided equally between adaptation and mitigation. Priority areas within the new plan are to include: housing; transport; health, land-use (including biodiversity - species and habitat loss) and strategies.
- A regional adaptation study has also just commenced being undertaken by consultants Royal Haskoning and following a similar format to a study carried out in the North East.
- Specific adaptation work has been carried out across the region, primarily on flood defences including those linked to Thirsk and Northallerton where water is stored upstream thus offering better protection to the towns themselves.
- The Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward, have lead the way by being the first RDA to have a Greenhouse gas emissions target in its' Regional Economic Strategy. Yorkshire Forward have also recently set up Carbon Action Yorkshire which is engaging with the top 100 companies in the region in looking at ways they can make emission savings. YF also recognise that appropriate environmental technology needs investing in.
- There are also issues relating to planning for example, the emphasis of new development being built on brown field rather than Greenfield sites and conformity with Local Development Frameworks and the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Also links to consultation of the Sub National Review under which proposals mean that in the future instead of a range of regional strategy, i.e. for transport, economic development and housing, there will just be a single integrated regional strategy while the Regional Assembly as we know it will cease to exist.
- Other key developments include the work of Yorkshire Futures, including the low carbon energy review and the region's climate change website www.yourclimate.org.
- With regards to mitigation and reducing our emissions the two biggest issues are domestic housing and land transportation. If these, plus air travel, are tackled the best expectation is that emissions will plateau rather than decrease.
- Local Authorities are currently completing their Local Area Agreements, to be signed off in the near future, many of which will include an adaptation to climate change indicator.