

East Midlands Combined Authority – Mayoral Elections

Discussions with the Candidates

Email from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Advocacy Manager, Scott Blance



Hi everyone - further to our Biodiversity Round Table Meeting last month, I recently met with Frank Adlington Skinner, the Green Party mayoral candidate. We thought it would be helpful to share some notes, along with a reminder of some of the discussion with Clare Ward (Labour).

We have approached all the candidates for meetings and will inform you if any additional commitments are made.

Frank Adlington Skinner (Green)

During a short but positive Zoom call with Frank, he outlined a number of key issues including:

- Democracy was central to Frank's pitch, as was his desire to embed the environment into all decisions. His mayor's office would establish citizen assemblies to discuss policy issues, and set up a young person's forum with direct access to the mayor
- His vision for regeneration is through a Green Industrial Revolution and nature through the lens of eco-tourism and rewilding.
- First thing he'd do as Mayor is write a 'Bill' setting out all the funding that the region should've received from central Government over the last few years.
- As an independent mayor he wouldn't engage in 'pork barrel politics' and would instead mediate between the party politics split across the 4 constituent authorities (Derby City, Derbyshire County, Nottingham City, and Nottinghamshire County Councils).
- His emphasis is on embedding the environment into all elements of decision making, and integral to the governance structure of the combined authority.
- Whilst the mayor doesn't control all levers, they have a broader role in, leadership (i.e. setting up charters of best practice) and lobbying of central Government.
- Even if he's not elected, Frank pledged to be the first into the Mayor's office to hold them to account on environmental issues.

Clare Ward (Labour)

Here's a reminder of the round table discussion between Clare Ward and local environment group representatives.

- Clare outlined her commitment to the region - living locally in North Notts and working within the local community - including as Chair of Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust.
- Committed to establish a Youth Panel to ask for their opinions about future growth including whether people want to stay and why the region has the lowest retention rate in the country. Getting people to understand how decisions are made can politicise them and engage them in democracy.

- She is frustrated by the lack of use of potential in our region and feels strongly that the Authority is about leadership to bridge the gap between strategies and communities - embracing community expertise.
- She feels that whilst many have strong family links to the region more should be done to ensure those leaving to study wish to return and to retain students who choose to study here.
- We need to take people on a journey about the identity of the region
- Believes there is an opportunity to view development and transport investment through a biodiversity lens - Biodiversity shouldn't be siloed.

Participant comments:

- o Mayor should include biodiversity in vision for the environment and what's important is having a vision for a place. It all needs to be integrated which is a huge challenge. Local government has been so savagely cut so we need to have the staff to actually write and enact strategies, deliver education and engagement. There's something special about the local authority structure that protects democracy and long term funding. Revenue funding is so different to capital investment and you cannot prioritise the latter without improving the former.
- o Frustration that Councils won't admit they have no money, which is limiting their thinking to be radical and make the scale of change required. Community vision needs to be at the heart of this radical vision for change
- o Focus on development should always include green infrastructure and the Mayor should drive up standards in this area.
- o Leadership and governance oversight is needed from mayor in overseeing private sector investment into nature recovery.
- o There might be a culture change required to bring communities fully into decision making structures

Since the Round Table - Clare has informed us that because of the discussion she intends to create some form of nature/environmental advisory group. We will push for further detail, but thought you'd be pleased to hear about this positive development - thanks again for all your input.

Kind regards,

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