

North Yorkshire Councillors report November 2025

Warnings after confirmation of bird flu in North Yorkshire

Bird keepers across North Yorkshire are being urged to help prevent the spread of avian influenza after three cases were confirmed in the county. Sites in Hackforth, near Bedale, Tholthorpe, near Easingwold, and Knayton, near Thirsk, have been affected by the disease since the start of October.

The outbreaks have had a serious impact on poultry farms, with culls carried out and strict biosecurity measures enforced. The virus, which spreads from wild birds to domestic flocks, tends to surge in the colder months due to migratory patterns, putting the county's farming sector, and particularly its commercial operations, at increased risk.

In response to the outbreaks, North Yorkshire Council has activated its Notifiable Disease Action Plan. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is managing infected sites, carrying out culls and deep cleans, while the council's animal health officers are working with local communities to ensure compliance with control zone requirements.

Residents will notice road signs and public information posters marking bird flu control zones where applicable. The disease control zones require bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity rules, maintain records of any poultry egg transportation, not organise or attend bird gatherings and keep any birds housed.

In addition to local control zones, Great Britain remains under an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ), requiring bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity rules. From today (November 6) mandatory housing will apply across England for anyone keeping 50 or more birds, or any number of poultry kept for the purposes of selling or distributing eggs, poultry products or live birds.

If people keep fewer than 50 birds and their eggs or poultry products are for personal use, they are not required to be housed. However, strict biosecurity measures still apply. For more information, visit www.gov.uk/bird-flu.

The risk to public health from the virus is very low, and properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat. However, it is important that people do not pick up sick or dead birds.

Members of the public can report dead wild waterfowl, such as swans, geese, ducks, or other birds such as gulls and birds of prey to Defra on 03459 33 55 77 or online at www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds.

NYC Council plan – Economic Development

The North Yorkshire Council Plan 2025-2029 sets out a corporate vision based around four key themes

- support thriving places and empowered communities that live, work, visit and do business in North Yorkshire
- develop more sustainable and connected places across North Yorkshire
- ensure the people of North Yorkshire are safe, healthy and living well
- maximise the potential of North Yorkshire's people and communities

The work of the Council's Economic Development, Regeneration and Tourism services delivers against all four of these key themes but is largely focused on delivering corporate priority actions that support thriving places and empowered communities that live, work, visit and do business in North Yorkshire.

The Council also has a corporate Economic Development Strategy (adopted October 2023), a Destination Management Plan (adopted October 2024) and a number of place-based plans and visions which also make up the strategic framework underpinning the Council's work to support thriving businesses and thriving places.

New staffing structures were implemented for the Council's Economic Development, Regeneration & Tourism (EDRT) teams in Summer 2024. In May 2025, these teams were then brought together with the Council's Planning Services under a single Assistant Director for Place-shaping & Growth - to more closely align the Council's resources and work to proactively plan for and enable economic growth (jobs and homes) and thriving places across North Yorkshire.

Since Local Government Reorganisation, there have also been significant levels of legislative, strategic and structural change in relation to national and regional economic development, regeneration and tourism agenda's – most notably the expanding role for Combined Authorities through increased devolution of powers and funding to regions.

The establishment of a York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (YNYCA) in 2024 has brought about significant changes to the strategic, funding and operational context within which we now operate. There is an increasing need to work proactively and collaboratively with the YNYCA to ensure that our evidence base, strategies and priorities for economic growth in North Yorkshire are positively aligned (where possible) and to ensure clarity of roles and effectiveness of delivery mechanisms, and to maximise future funding opportunities and positive economic benefits for North Yorkshire.

Notable successes include:

- Securing c. £131 million of external funding for delivery of economic growth priorities in North Yorkshire
- Delivery of the North Yorkshire Small Business Grant Scheme Programme - securing c.£3.3m of public/private investment into c.400 local businesses, helping to create c. 50 jobs and safeguard a further c.150 existing jobs
- Delivery of the inaugural 'North Yorkshire Business Week', with c.750 people attending 34 events across 5 days of business-facing activity
- Whitby Maritime Training Hub capital project (£10m) commenced on site and on target for completion in April 2026
- Catterick Levelling-up capital project (£21m) - construction of a new community hub commenced on site and on target for completion in November 2026
- Town Deal Programmes in Scarborough and Whitby (£37m) progressing well and on target to complete project delivery by March 2027
- £1.2m secured from YNYCA to develop Town Investment Plans (TIP's) in 32 settlements across North Yorkshire, to help create shared visions with local communities and support future funding applications for local priorities
- North Yorkshire Destination Management Plan launched and a wide range of visitor economy activity underway, including a successful high-profile media campaign 'There's more to North Yorkshire' launched for Autumn 2025.

These are just a sample of some key headlines rather than a comprehensive list of everything that has been done, giving a flavour of positive economic activity being delivered by the Council.

Public Conveniences

Following the most recent indication of further substantial budget cuts from central Government to the County Council, a deep dive service review of all council functions has been underway, with particular focus on non-statutory services.

As a result the Council is reviewing their Public Convenience estate, both in terms of need and cost base.

As part of that process an approach made to Settle Town Council (STC), who currently hold the cleaning contract for the Whitefriars facility in town, to look at how the cost of the contract could be reduced with the introduction of automated locking systems, revised working practices or alternatively complete adoption of the facility to be run by STC. This was unsuccessful in addressing the concern raised and as a result the Town Council have given notice to terminate their contract.

This does leave the prospect of NYC property services looking for alternative solutions which could include reduced/seasonal opening hours at best, or at worst complete closure.

My own preference is of course to keep them open at all costs, but as the options initially pitched were unsuccessful, we are now in the position of their future being shared with that of the wider network. The work to assess the future operations model has come to the TEEE Overview & Scrutiny committee, of which I am chairman, in the form of a working group who will make recommendations for consideration by the Councils Executive later this year. This will be a difficult challenge given the financial pressures, but I am confident a suitable and more importantly sustainable model of operation can be formed to protect the service and hopefully improve it.