

North Yorkshire Councillor report – June 2026

Launch of new strategy to protect nature for future generations

A major new strategy has been launched to help to address the decline of nature across North Yorkshire and York, for everyone, from landowners, farmers and local business owners, to environmental charities, residents, and community groups.

Every county in England is required to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as, in recent decades, there has been a decline in the health of the natural environment. Despite some successes, the populations of most of our species have been in decline, frequently linked to the loss of the habitats they rely upon.

This marks an important step in our commitment to map nature and safeguard it for future generations, with the strategy identifies priorities for nature recovery, such as increasing woodland cover or creating wetlands. It will map a network of nature-rich sites that are bigger and better managed, creating proposals for improving the region's habitats and our wider environmental goals.

North Yorkshire and York support a diversity of landscapes and wildlife, from ancient woodland and chalk hills to large expanses of open moorland and historic parklands. The county is also home to five protected landscapes.

As both North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council share a common landscape and river network, the Government has asked both authorities to work together, in partnership with other organisations with a keen interest in nature recovery, to produce a strategy for North Yorkshire and York.

The strategy has been produced following feedback from businesses, key organisations and groups, residents and local farmers and landowners, along with a number of face-to-face events and workshops to gather vital feedback.

Information and data on North Yorkshire's habitats and species from a wide range of national and regional organisations and experts has also been invaluable for the creation of this strategy.

The strategy can be viewed at www.northyorks.gov.uk/lhrs-documents

Call for volunteers to lead music themed reading challenge

Young volunteers are being encouraged to inspire the next generation of literature lovers as part of an annual reading scheme over the school summer holidays.

North Yorkshire Council's library service is running the Summer Reading Challenge, organised by the Reading Agency in partnership with Universal Music Group UK.

Alongside library staff, volunteers aged between 13 and 24 are needed to help run and promote the challenge, which encourages children aged between four and 11 to read six library books over the summer holidays.

This year's theme is Read to the Beat, inspiring children to explore the connection between stories and songs, discovering how reading and music ignite creativity. The book collection features musicians, characters discovering music, cultural traditions, rhythm and creative expression.

Volunteers will register children onto the challenge, help them to choose books, talk to them about the books they have read, award prizes, and assist with library activities.

To find out more about volunteering and to apply, go to or contact your local library. For more information on the Read to the Beat challenge, visit the website at www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

Increase in shoppers being duped by AI 'High Street' scams

Shoppers hunting for online bargains are being duped by sophisticated scam websites that convincingly pose as well-known UK high street retailers, North Yorkshire trading standards officers have warned.

The fake sites often feature polished images of smiling customers and familiar-looking shopfronts in London and other UK towns and cities. But behind the professional appearance lies AI-generated imagery, overseas sellers and, for many victims, lost money and worthless goods.

Trading standards officers in North Yorkshire have seen a growing number of complaints from residents who believed they were buying from legitimate UK businesses after seeing photographs of supposed physical shops and happy customers. In reality, the images and website text are generated using artificial intelligence, and the goods are being sold by overseas traders - primarily based in China.

Residents are being urged to carry out simple checks before clicking the 'buy' button:

- Businesses selling goods online must provide contact details. Check these carefully - if they are missing or cannot be verified, trading standards' advice is not to proceed with the purchase.
- If a shopfront image is shown, check it using online street maps.
- Read reviews and comments on social media posts carefully.
- Check when websites and social media accounts were set up; scam sites are often newly created.
- If a business claims to be a limited company, check its details on www.gov.uk/business-and-industry, which will confirm who operates it and when it was set up.

Trading standards officers are now receiving complaints from around 20 residents every month who thought they were buying from genuine UK businesses, instead, many have either lost their money entirely or received poor-quality, and potentially unsafe, goods. Frequently they then discover it is virtually impossible to return the items or obtain a refund. So it is always worth spending a few minutes confirming who you are buying from and how legitimate the business and the products it sells look.

Anyone who wants to report a website or get advice about faulty goods or non-delivery can contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133, or via web chat at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer.

Libraries launch book collection to inspire business growth

Budding entrepreneurs are being encouraged to take advantage of a new book collection available at libraries across North Yorkshire.

The county's library service has teamed up with colleagues in economic development to curate a bespoke collection appealing to either those in business or anybody looking to set one up.

It is perhaps worth remembering Libraries are the perfect place to start or grow your business, with free Wi-Fi and access to computers and essential services such as printing, scanning and photocopying. They also offer support to anybody using technology, with friendly volunteer IT buddies ready to help.

The books are free to reserve from your local library, on the libraries app or on our website.

Library members can use the online database, Complete Business Reference Advisor, which allows access to start-up guides and ideas on more than 350 different types of businesses. There is information on business support in your area, market and sector guides, as well as business rules and regulations.

Full details of the resources on offer at libraries can be found at www.northyorks.gov.uk/libraries

Business North Yorkshire, which is part of North Yorkshire Council's economy and tourism team, provides free, impartial support to help local businesses to succeed.

Advisors provide trusted, practical guidance, supporting North Yorkshire businesses from first ideas through to established businesses looking to grow and thrive. For more information, email business.nyc@northyorks.gov.uk

Enriching holiday activities and healthy free meals to continue

Thousands of lower-income families will continue to receive the support which they desperately need during school holidays for another three years as new figures have revealed the scheme's major benefits.

North Yorkshire Council has announced that a new three-year deal has been signed with North Yorkshire Together to deliver its vital FEAST programme.

Funded by the Department for Education, FEAST is the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme for North Yorkshire, which gives children from financially vulnerable households across the county access to free nutritious meals, fun activities and the chance to learn new skills in a safe and supportive space during the school holidays. Statistics have shown the scale of FEAST's impact with 98 per cent of children who attended activities between 2023 and 2025 said they would "come again".

Since the FEAST programme began in 2021, more than 200,000 free healthy meals have been served to children who might otherwise go without. Demand has grown significantly too, with spaces increasing by 80 per cent between 2021 and 2024. With the confirmation of continued investment from the Government and the contract for North Yorkshire Together extended, FEAST will now run until June 2029.

The FEAST holiday programme is open to children aged five to 16, with free places available for those who receive benefits-related free school meals. It offers a wide range of activities, including sports, outdoor adventures, computer programming, dance and animal care. During Easter, 43 providers offered nearly 10,000 funded

places across 75 different activities in North Yorkshire, giving a lifeline to many households across the county.

More about the FEAST holiday programme can be found at:

www.northyorkshiretogether.co.uk/FEAST