

North Yorkshire Councillors report December 2023

As we approach the end of another year, it will be one to reflect upon a world full of challenges but also many positives because as our communities navigate their way through some difficult times.

I am constantly reminded of great strength of community spirit and cohesion that exists throughout our part of the world. Be it in the form of the many sports clubs and interest groups, the work carried out on behalf of residents by the numerous Parish Councillors to deliver a better place for us all to live in and enjoy, or the numerous community support groups and charities who work tirelessly across the Settle & Pen-y-Ghent division. All of these and the many individuals who go that extra mile for one another are a credit and an asset that contribute towards making this part of North Yorkshire a truly special place to live.

So I wish all a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Exciting multi-million pound scheme to upgrade outdoor education centres

A proposed £4.2 million investment to redevelop and modernise North Yorkshire Council's two outdoor education centres to enhance their appeal to future generations of school children is to be considered next week.

A range of improvements to breathe new life into Bewerley Park in the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and East Barnby in the North York Moors National Park are set to come under the spotlight.

At a meeting of North Yorkshire Council's executive on Tuesday next week (November 28), members will be asked to approve the first phase of investment at the flagship activity centres that have hosted trips for generations of children across North Yorkshire for decades.

Phase one proposes to provide a new accommodation block at Bewerley Park with 84 beds and to make improvements to East Barnby accommodation blocks and the dining room.

If given the go-ahead, detailed designs for the buildings' improvements will need to be developed, followed by a two-stage tender process. Work for phase one is estimated to cost up to £4.2 million. A separate decision on phase two is expected in 2027-2028.

The council's assistant director for education and skills, Amanda Newbold, said: "If given the go-ahead, we expect phase one to be completed by 2025. The new

buildings and improvements won't affect our visitors – in fact, we look forward to welcoming more visitors as the works take place.

“Our staff are passionate about what they do and look forward to enhancing everything they offer.”

Both outdoor learning centres enable visitors to develop life and social skills, enhance personal growth, resilience, teamwork and cooperation. The team brings subjects to life in line with the curriculum and improves environmental awareness.

A wide range of residential and day courses are on offer for primary and secondary schools, through to higher education, youth and adult groups. The centres are also venues for day trips and staff development. Those interested in visiting can find out more at www.outdoored.co.uk

Farm and construction drivers urged to keep roads mud-free

Drivers of farm and construction vehicles are being urged to play their part in helping to keep North Yorkshire's highways safe by avoiding leaving mud on roads.

Members of the public have been contacting North Yorkshire Council to report muddy roads, and the council is calling on drivers of agricultural and construction vehicles to be responsible when using public routes, for the benefit of all users.

North Yorkshire Council's executive member for highways and transportation, Cllr Keane Duncan, said: “We understand that this is a busy time in the farming calendar, and that this year the prolonged period of rain is likely to have made conditions worse than usual.

“However, that makes it more important than ever that if farmers or construction vehicle drivers do need to use public roads, they take their responsibilities seriously. Doing all they can to ensure mud is not left on our roads not only helps to keep other road users safe, but also protects those drivers from the risk of legal action.

“Most do act responsibly, but there are some that break the law. If mud on the road results in injury, damage to property, loss or inconvenience, legal action can follow, with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment.”

Farmers or construction vehicle operators must:

- Keep to their own farm roads whenever possible.
- Keep to low speeds and prevent mud from being deposited by removing any excess before driving on to roads.
- Be prepared to hire equipment to promptly remove deposits.
- Use authorised signs prominently positioned for road users to see.
- Clean the road as necessary during the working day and always at the end.
- Ensure that equipment and labour is available and is suitable for the soil and weather conditions.
- When using a contractor, ensure agreement is reached beforehand on who is responsible for mud on the road (signs, cleaning etc) and that suitable public liability insurance is in place.

To report mud on the road, visit www.northyorks.gov.uk/potholes-and-road-condition-issues

New Changing Places facility introduced after calls from community

Following interest from both residents and community groups in the area a new Changing Places facility has been opened at the Limestone View extra care unit in Settle to improve access for people who cannot use standard public toilets.

The new facility in the Limestone View complex, which is run by Housing 21 for North Yorkshire Council, includes specialist equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers. The project was funded with £49,200 from the Government's Levelling Up Fund and £7,500 from North Yorkshire Council, with Muscular Dystrophy UK providing guidance and support on the installation.

In consultation with local organisations, including Dementia Forward, Age UK North Craven, The Place Settle and Settle Town Council, Limestone View was deemed as a suitable venue as, along with having trained staff on hand, is a supported housing site, acts as a community hub, hosts the town's library, provides a range of community activities and is adjacent to one of the town's car parks.

I feel this project is an important statement by our community to those within it and those visiting who have need of such specialised facilities, that they are both valued and welcomed. It is a credit to the team at Housing 21 and the Limestone View staff

that they have enabled this facility and along with the existing services and facilities delivered on the site, will be a real asset to the town and surrounding area.

The facility is registered on <https://www.changing-places.org/find?toilet=2449>

North Yorkshire given £5m to fund health research

North Yorkshire Council has been awarded a total of £5 million in research investment funding by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) as part of a £55 million scheme covering 11 areas of England and Wales, for a project that will use research to identify the causes of health inequalities across the county.

It will enable the authority, in partnership with Hull York Medical School, the University of Hull and the University of York, to boost its research capacity and skills to help identify and address the issues affecting the health of the people of North Yorkshire.

Known as the NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration North Yorkshire, the five-year programme of funding will help to inform and shape how the council delivers its services.

Co-chief investigator for the Health Determinants Research Collaboration North Yorkshire, Dr Mark Pearson, of Hull York Medical School, said: “Research is an essential component of public health, helping us to understand the determinants of health, identify and address health inequalities and evaluate the impact of new approaches or interventions.

“We will work in partnership with North Yorkshire Council to share our research knowledge and expertise and support them to build capacity and capabilities in research, which we hope will facilitate improvements in health within the region.”

While the general population of North Yorkshire is in good health overall, the county includes diverse areas and communities and incorporates urban, rural and coastal districts. This means residents face differing and varied health challenges, depending on where they live.

The most recent English Indices of Deprivation report shows that one in 17 of North Yorkshire residents live in areas that are among the 20 per cent most deprived nationally.

Some communities live shorter lives and have fewer years of good health, due in the main to factors outside their control. One of the best ways to understand and improve these differences is through research.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Hull, Professor Dave Petley, said: “We are delighted to be partners on the NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration North Yorkshire.

“The partnership comes at a pivotal time to support the newly formed council’s larger remit and ambition to be research-driven and evidence-led and aligns with the University of Hull’s strategic ambition to deliver real-world impact driven by high quality research and innovation.

“Being based in a large and diverse region with significant social and economic deprivation, the university is committed to serve as an anchor institution, strengthening the region's health and well-being for socioeconomic benefit through responsible innovation and sustainable transformation.”

The academic lead at the University of York, Professor Helen Weatherly, said: “It’s a tremendous honour to be part of this exciting new grant.

“My colleagues and I look forward to working closely with North Yorkshire Council and the University of Hull and welcome the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of people in North Yorkshire.”

The Health Determinants Research Collaboration will be based within North Yorkshire Council and will see specialist staff employed to assist the authority to engage more in research. It will also help to attract funding for further research activities in the future.

The Director of the NIHR Public Health Research Programme, Professor Brian Ferguson, said: “We expect the Health Determinants Research Collaboration areas to engage actively with their local communities to listen to people’s views and involve them appropriately in shaping and undertaking research.

“By focusing on the wider determinants of health such as employment, housing, education and the physical environment, the areas we are supporting have a tremendous opportunity to make a lasting impact on health inequalities and wider deprivation.”

Work on the project is expected to start on January 1, 2024.