

WELCOME FROM **Richard Flinton, Chief Executive**

This feels like a big week for our county with two major Government announcements, which no doubt will have long-term implications for the way we live and work in North Yorkshire.

The first is the Prime Minister's road map out of lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions, which Boris Johnson set out on Monday.

The second is the announcement by Secretary of State RT Hon Robert Jenrick MP that the consultation on local government reorganisation in North Yorkshire begins this week. There are two proposals on the table and the opportunity for residents, businesses, voluntary organisations and statutory bodies to give their views and feed into the Government's decision making begins now.

So by mid-summer we can hope for two things. The first is that with the majority of adults vaccinated and Covid infection rates dramatically reduced we can return to some kind of normality, socialise with friends and family and our shops and hospitality and other businesses can open up and start to get back on their feet. In the immediate future, we can look forward to all our children returning to school on March 8 and our schools are busy getting ready to open their doors to teaching and learning for all pupils. We want to thank our teachers and school staff for all their hard work in keeping schools open for the children of key workers during lockdown, for supporting home learning and for all the preparation needed for the regular testing of staff and secondary age pupils once schools are fully open. It has been and remains a mammoth task.

The second hope is that following consultation, the Government will decide on a form of unitary government for the county later in the summer. We can then move forward with simpler, stronger organisation for delivering excellent services, underpinned by local action and greater accountability. This takes us much closer to a devolution deal with all the power and money that goes with it for North Yorkshire and York – critical to levelling up for our rural region and to our recovery from the ravages of Covid-19.

So there is much to look forward to but also a great deal to do before we reach sunnier times.

Although Covid infection rates are falling significantly in North Yorkshire, and are below the national and regional average, in nearly every district they are still three to four times higher than they were last September when Selby and Scarborough were put on the Government watch list.

Although we might be thinking about summer holidays and planning for when we can be together once again with friends and family and for social events beyond June, we must remember that the speed at which we come out of lockdown will depend on data not dates. It's been a very long winter of restrictions, but we have to give it one last push and keep going. We must carry on, therefore, with all the social distancing and safety measures, wearing masks, washing hands, staying local and not mixing indoors to get the rate down as much as we can.

The vaccination roll-out is progressing very well across the county and again we must give thanks to the many volunteers who are part of Team North Yorkshire and are helping to make this happen as smoothly and efficiently as possible. We also welcome the fact that the Government has opened up its national booking line to make it easier for frontline social care workers to get a vaccine and we are appealing to all who work in care settings to book a jab as soon as possible.

The situation, however, is undoubtedly improving and if we continue to make good progress we can look forward to slowly unlocking - good news indeed for our retailers and the hospitality trade and the many other businesses so important to our beautiful county and its visitor economy.

The ability of our county to recover from Covid will be boosted by simpler, dynamic unitary government and future devolution.

Westminster has said we must get rid of two-tier local government in North Yorkshire and replace it with unitary councils. This will unlock the door to a devolution deal as a combined mayoral authority and all the money and powers that go with it.

The Government this week begins a consultation on how vital services such as adult social care, children's services, roads and transport, planning and waste management will be delivered in North Yorkshire. There are two options open for consultation.

The county council proposes a single council for the whole county. We believe this would build on the county's strengths and identity to give a powerful voice, speaking up regionally and nationally for North Yorkshire.

Six of the seven district councils propose splitting the county in two, east and west. You can read both proposals at: <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/northyorkshire/>

Our proposal is for a new single council that will unite the whole county and provide a strong, powerful voice in the North. It will work in close partnership with the City of York, which gives full backing to this deal. It will accelerate recovery, avoid unnecessary costs and the disruption of key services at a time when they are needed most.

Six things you need to know about our proposal:

A single new North Yorkshire Council will:

- be a strong voice in the North, speaking out nationally for rural and coastal communities
- bring together the best services for residents and businesses, make them even better and save money by reducing duplication
- keep the county and nationally acclaimed services together at a critical time rather than breaking them in two, causing seismic disruption
- unite North Yorkshire to operate at scale and sustainably, driving recovery from the pandemic, rather than creating two competing councils
- create a revolution in localism so communities have the funding and power to take action on what matters to them most in their area
- protect and build on the strong identity and global brand of North Yorkshire and what makes our county so great

We need to pull together, not spilt apart, and operate at scale to face all the many challenges ahead.

So it's been a momentous week and we have a lot to do. We believe that as we ease out of lockdown and look to opening up everyday life and our economy again, local government reorganisation into a strong single council for North Yorkshire, unlocking devolution, is the right way to help our county move forward.

Keeping in touch

NYCC's website has a dedicated area for all the latest news, see links below:

- Covid-19 related news: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-and-information>
- Stronger Together: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/stronger-together>

Follow us on social media: @northyorksgov on Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Public health and social care

North Yorkshire Coronavirus Data

At 21 February 2021, there have been 27,756 positive tests since 3 March 2020, with 1,032 new cases reported in the past two weeks. The weekly rolling average of new cases is 78 cases per day, allowing for incomplete data in the most recent days. The seven-day rate for North Yorkshire is 84.3 per 100,000 people, which remains below the England seven-day rate. Work continues to ensure effective monitoring of all areas, with support for incidents being provided across a range of settings, which are reviewed daily.

Further information on North Yorkshire data provided at county, district and local area level can be found here: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-data>.

Coronavirus Update

In Monday's press conference, the Prime Minister outlined a four-step road map out of the current national lockdown. There will be a minimum of five weeks between each step: four weeks for the scientific data to reflect changes and for these to be analysed; followed by one week's advance notice of further easements. For now, we all need to stay at home as much as possible. The full plan can be found [here](#).

Step One:

Priority is to ensure that all children and students return safely to face-to-face education in all schools and colleges from 8 March. Childcare and children's supervised activities can also resume.

People will be allowed to leave home for recreation and exercise outdoors with their household or support bubble, or with one person from outside their household. Care home residents will also be allowed one regular visitor.

From 29 March, when most schools start to break up for the Easter holidays, outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either six people (the Rule of Six) or two households will also be allowed.

Outdoor sports facilities such as tennis and basketball courts and open-air swimming pools will also be allowed to reopen, and people will be able to take part in formally organised outdoor sports.

The 'stay at home' rule will end on 29 March, but many restrictions will remain. People should continue to work from home where possible and minimise journeys. Travel abroad will remain prohibited, other than for a small number of permitted exceptions.

Step Two

Step 2 will see the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres.

Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms will also reopen (but only for use by people on their own or in household groups); as will most outdoor attractions and settings, including outdoor hospitality venues, zoos, theme parks, etc. Self-contained accommodation, such as campsites and holiday lets, where indoor facilities are not shared with other households, can also reopen.

Hospitality venues will be allowed to serve people outdoors and there will be no need for customers to order a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks and no curfew, although customers must order, eat and drink while seated (table service). Wider social contact rules will still apply in all these settings to prevent indoor mixing between different households.

Funerals can continue with up to 30 mourners. The number of people able to attend weddings, receptions and commemorative events such as wakes will rise to 15.

Step Three

As part of Step 3, the Government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.

This means most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of Six or two households will apply - it will be kept under review whether it is safe to increase this. By no later than Step 3, advice will also be updated on social distancing between friends and family.

Most businesses in all but the highest risk sectors will be able to reopen. In all sectors, Covid-secure guidance will remain in place and businesses may not cater for groups bigger than the legal limits.

Indoor hospitality will reopen. As in Step 2, venues will not have to serve a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks, nor will there be a curfew. Customers will, however, still have to order, eat and drink while seated.

Other indoor locations to open up in Step 3 include indoor entertainment venues such as cinemas and children's play areas; the rest of the accommodation sector, including hotels, hostels and B&Bs; and indoor adult group sports and exercise classes.

The Government will also allow some larger performances and sporting events in indoor venues with a capacity of 1,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number), and in outdoor venues with a capacity of 4,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number).

In the largest outdoor seated venues, where crowds can be spread out, up to 10,000 people will be able to attend (or a quarter-full, whichever is lower).

Up to 30 people will be able to attend weddings, receptions and wakes, as well as funerals. This limit will also apply to other types of significant life events, including bar mitzvahs and christenings.

Step Four

By Step 4 the Government expects to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact.

It hopes to reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs, and ease the restrictions on large events and performances that apply in Step 3.

This will be subject to the results of a scientific Events Research Programme to test the outcome of certain pilot events through the spring and summer, where it will trial the use of testing and other techniques to cut the risk of infection. The same Events Research Programme will guide decisions on whether all limits can be removed on weddings and other life events.

As we move through each of these phases in the roadmap, we must all remember that Covid-19 remains a part of our lives. As we progress through the steps, we must:

- carry on with 'hands, face, space';
- comply with the Covid-secure measures that remain in place at different stages;
- meet outdoors when we can and keep letting fresh air in;

- get tested when needed;
- get vaccinated when offered.

If we all continue to play our part, we will be that bit closer to a future that is more familiar.

Working together towards recovery

Testing

Testing sites in North Yorkshire, as elsewhere in England, are operated and managed by the Department of Health and Social Care and private contractors employed by them. We try to help the department by promoting the mobile testing site locations and hosting information on how people with symptoms can book a test via the national government portal.

We do not manage the national booking system or laboratory testing process.

Indications are that lab testing capacity is improving but, if you are unable to book a test at a local site straight away, please keep checking as availability varies during the day.

We are also supporting the Department in asking the public only to get a test if they are directed to do so by NHS Test and Trace or other NHS services – OR – if they have symptoms, to ensure that those people who need tests the most can be prioritised.

Before you attend, you must book a test. Tests can be booked from 8pm the night before.

Testing sites operated and managed by the Department of Health and Social Care will be running at the following locations over the coming days between 11am and 3pm:

- **Every day - Harrogate** - Dragon Road Car Park, Dragon Road, Harrogate, HG1 5DB
- **Every day - Scarborough** - William Street Car Park, Scarborough. YO12 7PL
- **Every day - Northallerton** – The Forum, Bullamore Road, Northallerton, DL6 1LP
- **Every day - Selby** – Portholme Crescent Car Park, Selby, YO8 4YR
- **Every day - Skipton** - Cavendish Street Car Park, Skipton, BD23 1RP

- **Thursday 25 February - Whitby** - Whitby Marina Car Park, Langbourne Road, Whitby, YO21 1YW
- **Thursday 25 February - Malton** - Wentworth Street Car Park, Smithson Ct, Malton, YO17 7BQ
- **Thursday 25 February - Leyburn** - Harmby Road, Car Park, Leyburn, DL8 5EE
- **Friday 26 February - Sherburn in Elmet** - Pasture Way Carpark, Sherburn in Elmet, LS25 6LY
- **Friday 26 February - Stokesley** - Stokesley Sports Club, Broughton Road, Stokesley, Middlesbrough, TS9 5JG
- **Friday 26 February - Richmond** - Round Howe Car Park, Reeth Road, Richmond, DL10 4TL
- **Saturday 27 February - Selby** - South Entrance, DRAX Power Station, New Road, Selby, YO8 8PH
- **Saturday 27 February - Settle** - Greenfoot Car Park, Settle, BD24 9RW
- **Saturday 27 February - Filey** - Filey Country Park, Church Cliff Drive, Filey, YO14 9ET
- **Saturday 27 February - Thornton Le Dale** - North York Moors National Park Authority car park, No.5. Chestnut Avenue, Thornton Le Dale, Pickering, YO18 7RR
- **Sunday 28 February - Scarborough** - Scarborough Park and Ride, Seamer Road, Scarborough, YO12 4LW
- **Sunday 28 February - Richmond** - Round Howe Car Park, Reeth Road, Richmond, DL10 4TL
- **Sunday 28 February - Thirsk** - Millgate Car Park, Marage Road, Thirsk, YO7 1PE

Watch this video to find out what to expect and how to prepare for the test:

<https://youtu.be/QawyKwllfKQ>

See the latest dates and locations, find out more and how to book at

www.northyorks.gov.uk/testing

Supporting our schools and childcare

Schools in North Yorkshire are now preparing to welcome back all students to the classroom next month. Secondary and special schools and colleges will have a staggered return from March 8, to allow students to be tested at least once for coronavirus before they return to school by March 15.

How, and when, the tests happens will vary from school to school, depending on factors such as the size of the school, the different available spaces for testing and transport arrangements for getting children in and out of school for the tests.

The tests are voluntary, and pupils will not be prevented from receiving face-to-face education if they are not tested, but they should provide families, pupils and staff with added reassurance as students return to school. They are designed to be an additional safety measure to the updated risk assessments and measures already in place in the county's schools, including teaching children in bubbles, good ventilation, social distancing and frequent hand washing.

Parents will hear from their school over the coming days about the date that their child can return to school.

There are no national plans to test younger, primary-aged pupils for coronavirus in school and they will be back in school from March 8. Wrap-around care in the form of after-school and before-school clubs is also expected to resume.

New Government guidance also recommends that students of secondary school-age and above wear face coverings in lessons, as well as communal spaces, but this will not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example PE lessons.

We've spoken to headteachers and staff across the county and know they are all keen to welcome children back into school again. We also know that many pupils want to be back in the classroom again, learning, meeting their teachers and socialising with their friends and we'll make sure that happens in a safe and calm manner.

Teamwork to support our residents

Up to 14,000 people in North Yorkshire will receive a letter from the NHS this week, advising that they are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus and asking them to start following national shielding guidance until 31 March at the earliest. People who are shielding should not attend work, school, college or university and avoid visiting shops or pharmacies, only leaving home for medical appointments, exercise or if it is essential. We will be contacting people who have been added to the shielding list to make sure they have support in place.

North Yorkshire residents who are being asked to shield can also complete a form online to let us know how we can help and a link to the Government guidance at www.northyorks.gov.uk/shielding. As well as specific health conditions, other factors that are known to increase a person's risk of becoming seriously ill from Covid include ethnicity, weight, age and prescribed medications. If people have any questions or concerns about why they have been asked to shield they should contact their GP.

This week we will also see our Salt of the Earth campaign switch to Team North Yorkshire. In January 2020 when we launched Salt of the Earth to celebrate the power of kindness, we could not have foreseen what the impact of a global pandemic would be or just how much communities would need to pull together. One positive to come from this crisis is that incredible Team North Yorkshire response. People have reached out to support their neighbours and a network of volunteers have helped us to create a safety net of support for anyone without family or friends to lean on. Since January last year, we've shared almost 80 stories of people making a difference in their communities, inspiring others to get involved and showing people that it's okay to ask for help. We'll continue to celebrate that kindness through our Team North Yorkshire campaign throughout the year. Look out for stories online, in the press, on the radio and social media.

People without local support networks who need help with shopping and other essentials, or anyone concerned about the welfare of someone else, can contact our customer service centre on 01609 780780 seven days a week 8am to 5.30pm. People can also complete an online form to let us know what help they need at www.northyorks.gov.uk/covidhelp

To find local businesses offering food deliveries and takeaways, go to the Buy Local directory at www.northyorks.gov.uk/buy-local. People can also find details of other local voluntary and community groups offering support at www.northyorkshireconnect.org.uk.

We're urging people to keep checking on neighbours and those in their communities who might need help and support. Find advice on how to help safely and information about volunteering with a local organisation in your community at www.northyorks.gov.uk/helpingduringcovid.

For information about the help available, including a link to the latest Government advice for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, go to www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Growing our local economy

Have your say on £31m plans to improve travel in Skipton, Selby and Harrogate

Brand new entrances to railway stations, new public spaces linking the station to the town centre and better access to education and employment sites are all included in detailed proposals to transform the area around the railway station in three North Yorkshire towns.

North Yorkshire County Council, Harrogate Borough Council, Craven District Council, Selby District Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) have succeeded in a bid to secure a total of £31m for three separate projects in Harrogate, Selby and Skipton town centres from the Department for Transport's Transforming Cities Fund (TCF).

In each town, a major package of investment will improve opportunities for sustainable travel and link transport hubs with centres of education and employment – all essential to getting back on track after the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a once in a generation chance to totally redesign parts of the town centres, with investment that will help to fire up the engine on the journey to recovery.

These transformational projects are scheduled to be completed by 2023.

We want to know what you think about the early stage proposals and we'd like as many people, businesses and organisations as possible to take part.

Read more here: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/public-invited-give-views-ps31m-plans-improve-travel-towns>

Read the proposals, attend an event, and complete the online survey about Skipton, Selby or Harrogate at www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/northyorkshire

LEP News: COVID Business Support

In his road map announcement on Monday, the Prime Minister indicated that an update on business support packages would be included in the Chancellor's Budget announcement on Wednesday, 3 March.

As things stand, the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) (furlough) is available until 30 April 2021 and the [Coronavirus Loan Schemes](#) are available until 31 March 2021.

[Use this link to find financial support schemes businesses may be eligible for.](#)

National Love Local Day – business nominations

Businesses in York and North Yorkshire have been nominated as most loved as part of national Love Local Day. The event recognises the UK's most loved local businesses as well as those most loved within their local and wider areas. The event has been championed by ShopAppy.com – a digital platform and shop local campaign. Read the nominations [here](#).

The York & North Yorkshire Growth Hub is offering eligible businesses 12 months fully funded membership to ShopAppy.com – find out more [here](#).

Our upcoming webinars:

Celebrating the work of entrepreneurial female leaders: The future of our city, our region: 8 March, 1pm

In partnership with the University of York and delivered by five speakers, this free webinar will showcase the stories and experience of five inspirational women, their entrepreneurial journey and their reflections on how times of economic and social change could make entrepreneurship more accessible for the next generation of women.

In this webinar, delegates will learn:

- How to make entrepreneurship more accessible for the next generation
- How accessible entrepreneurship could provide new opportunities for all

Booking link: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/celebrating-the-work-of-entrepreneurial-female-leaders-the-future-of-our-city-our-region/>

Leadership Series: Building resilience and supporting team wellbeing: 9 March, noon

Ideal for business leaders and HR professionals, this online session with Michelle Mook will provide tools and techniques to build resilience and increase positivity within teams.

In this workshop, attendees will learn:

- Importance of your own resilience and wellbeing
- Ways to boost both your and your team's resilience
- Ideas for looking after your own and your team's wellbeing

Booking link: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/leadership-series-building-resilience-and-supporting-team-wellbeing/>

Start-Up Business Basics Series: How much? - The Art and Science of Pricing Your Product

10 March, noon

In partnership with business coach, Gareth Allen, this webinar will provide guidance on cost-based pricing, calculating costs before deciding an appropriate margin and how to price during a recession.

This one-hour webinar will help delegates to answer the following questions:

- What is your pricing policy?
- What is your margin?
- Do you have different tiers of product / service?
- Where are you positioned in your market?

Booking link: <https://www.vnygrowthhub.com/events/a-guide-to-setting-your-prices-at-the-right-level/>

Social Media Series – Planning and creating great content: 11 March, noon

In this webinar, digital marketing experts Intandem Communications will focus on how you can create and plan great social media content for your business. This webinar is ideal for those who are looking to further their social media skills.

Delegates will learn:

- the type of content for each platform including style and tone of voice
- how to use hashtags, emojis, video, photography etc.
- the kinds of things you could talk about and sources of inspiration
- creating a content calendar
- how to positively deal with negative feedback

Booking link: <https://www.vnygrowthhub.com/events/social-media-planning-and-creating-great-content/>
