

WELCOME FROM **Richard Flinton, Chief Executive**

Today I would like to start by remembering the 108,000 people who have lost their lives in this country, the millions around the world who have done likewise and the 963 people who have sadly died in North Yorkshire due to COVID-19. Once again, over the last week alone the county has lost another 46 people to this really horrible virus.

I am extremely sorry to have to confirm that we have lost our first county council officer colleague this week and our thoughts and condolences go to their family and friends at this time.

On behalf of North Yorkshire County Council, I would like also to remember Captain Sir Tom Moore, a Yorkshire legend, who captured the hearts of the nation. He did so much to raise not just many millions of pounds for the NHS and NHS charities but also to motivate others to do likewise and to inspire people to find a way through these toughest of times.

This is so very important – now more than ever – as we have also now seen the first confirmed cases of the South African variant of COVID-19 here in North Yorkshire.

The news was announced this morning by our Director of Public Health, Louise Wallace, who said:

“Today I can confirm that North Yorkshire has its first confirmed cases of the South African variant of COVID-19. This involves two cases linked to international travel. These cases are NOT linked to community transmission, as is the position in the high profile news coverage we will all be aware of nationally.

“These two cases are in the Scarborough borough area.

“The people involved have done all of the right things since returning home from abroad and self-isolated in line with the guidance. As such, there is NOT considered to be any community risk associated with them and we will NOT therefore be sharing any additional information about them. We would ask you to support Public Health England’s request to protect the identity of the people involved.

“At this time, we are not aware of any community cases of the South African Variant of COVID-19 in North Yorkshire. It is however, the case that there are a number of variants of the virus in circulation at any time – by their nature viruses evolve and so it is absolutely vital that everyone continues to stick to the national lockdown rules. We must all stay at home, making essential journeys only and maintaining social distancing at all times, wearing face coverings where advised.”

So please keep going North Yorkshire. Keep playing your part. It is so tough for everyone but we are right here with you every step of the way. You will hopefully have received a letter signed by myself and Louise Wallace over the last two weeks about COVID-19. The purpose of this is to make sure that no one here is alone in this unprecedented crisis. Indeed this has helped identify a number of people who needed help and now have that.

This feels an appropriate moment to pause and thank the thousands of you who are still regularly helping friends and neighbours and who have been for the best part of a year. We are incredibly grateful to every single one of you in Team North Yorkshire still delivering food, picking up prescriptions, walking dogs, staying in touch with people who may feel lonely and keeping the county going. Keep going North Yorkshire – it is a slog there is no doubt – but we will get through this.

The vaccination programme is advancing well and gives us real hope. Almost all, if not all, people over 80 and care home residents have already had, or been offered, a first dose. Sadly, the number of care homes and settings with cases or outbreaks is still too high with 77 of the total of 235 having single cases or outbreaks. Together with the backdrop of new variants being highlighted nationally, it all points back to the need for us all to keep sticking to the lockdown restrictions rigorously.

To that end North Yorkshire Police colleagues will be supporting the vast majority of you who, despite the sacrifices you must make, are doing the right thing. Where people are not doing so, the police were clear today they will enforce the regulations. In fact they are increasing their visibility in areas of the county where people are still leaving home without a good reason and even hosting parties indoors in some cases. Once again, last weekend the force issued 143 fixed penalty notices, that's up significantly on the previous weekend. As many as 86 of those were issued to residents and 57 were issued to visitors. So, rest assured those who put others at risk will feel the force of the law.

I wanted also to ask you all for your help to support a new campaign we have launched to help reuse unwanted laptops and get them to families most in need to help them with studies. Under the Reboot North Yorkshire programme we will collect unwanted tech and wipe it clean and revamp it for new use. There is a shortage of laptops nationally so reusing all and any with life left in them will be a big help. You can find out more about it here: www.rebootny.co.uk

Until next week, please continue to look after yourselves and your neighbours and stay safe.

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>
- Devolution/Stronger Together: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/stronger-together>

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

Public health and social care

North Yorkshire Coronavirus Data

At 31st January, there have been 25,889 positive tests since 3rd March, with 2,161 new cases reported in the past two weeks. The weekly rolling average of new cases is 150 cases per day, allowing for incomplete data in the most recent days. The 7-day rate for North Yorkshire is 163.9 per 100,000 people, which remains below the England 7-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 the county, district and local area level can be found here: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-data>.

Mental Wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic

Children and young people across the UK have had their lives turned upside down by the pandemic, mental wellbeing has suffered and many are struggling to cope. Extra support for those who need it has never been more important.

[Child Mental Health Week](#) is taking place on **1-7 February 2021**, with a theme of 'Express Yourself'.

Expressing yourself is about finding ways to share feelings, thoughts, or ideas, through creativity, such as art, music, writing and poetry, dance and drama, photography and film, and doing activities that make you feel good.

There is a wealth of [free resources](#) available for parents, carers, schools and youth groups, which will help children and young people to explore what it means to **Express Yourself**. All of the ideas can be adapted for use in school, for home-schooling, online lessons or independent learning.

Further support is also available at **The Go-To**, the home of wellbeing and mental health for young people in North Yorkshire. For more information visit <https://www.thegoto.org.uk/>

Better Health - Every Mind Matters

There has never been a more critical time to talk about mental health for everyone, as the challenges brought by Covid-19 continue to affect us all. Research shows that since the start of the pandemic there has been an increase in a range of mental health conditions for adults, from low wellbeing, sleep problems and anxiety to depression. But there are things that people can do to support their mental health and wellbeing at this time.

The Public Health England campaign Better Health - Every Mind Matters is there to support the nation's mental wellbeing with the encouragement that "*When things aren't so good out there, make inside feel better*". The campaign is aimed at adults, but weighted towards those most at risk of mental health problems, with the key message of encouraging people to create a free NHS-approved '[Mind Plan](#)'. Based on your answers to 5 quick questions, the plan provides simple ideas on how to start making positive changes and improve your mental wellbeing. Find out more about the campaign and how to create a plan by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>.

Vaccination advice

The roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine continues at pace, with the aim of offering a first vaccine to everyone in the most vulnerable groups by the middle of February. The programme will aim to expand so all adults can be vaccinated by the autumn.

Remember - even if you've had the COVID-19 vaccine, you must continue to:

- Follow national restrictions.
- Follow social distancing guidance.
- Wear a face covering in places where it's hard to stay away from other people.

To find help and support available during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic please visit <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/help-you-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

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

Families on low incomes, or struggling financially due to the pandemic in North Yorkshire will receive continued support over the half-term through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

The county council, schools, nurseries and colleges have joined forces to distribute food vouchers.

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme provides food voucher payments to ensure parents and carers hit hard by the pandemic can continue to provide the essentials, by helping meet the cost of food during the school holidays.

The scheme was rolled out successfully over Christmas, when approximately 17,000 vouchers were distributed to parents in North Yorkshire within four weeks of the national initiative being announced.

The supermarket vouchers were distributed with the help of schools, academies, early years settings and post-16 colleges. The County Council also provided vouchers to care leavers.

Schools were given funding not just to those in receipt of Free School Meals, but other families who they had identified as being in need, in recognition of the fact that some families are finding themselves newly struggling as a result of the pandemic.

The County Council is currently allocating further grant funding to schools, academies, care leavers, nurseries and other education settings before the start of the February half-term holiday.

Any families not eligible for Free School Meals who are struggling financially can apply to the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund, which makes emergency awards for food or utility vouchers. The County Council has increased its award entitlement for emergency provision for a temporary period to help those hit hardest by the pandemic.

To find out more information on the NYLAF, visit; www.northyorks.gov.uk/nylaf

Teamwork to support our residents

Less than a year after it formed in response to the coronavirus pandemic, Skipton Step into Action (SSIA) has been awarded charitable status thanks to the tireless work of volunteers. Since March the team at SSIA have been helping people with shopping, collecting prescriptions and other everyday tasks, working alongside the community support organisation for the area. Most recently, volunteers from the SSIS team have stepped in at Skipton General Hospital vaccination clinics.

Local County Councillor Andy Solloway is a trustee and volunteer coordinator for SSIA. He said: "We are over the moon to become a registered charity which opens up new funding opportunities. Our passion to provide the best possible support to local people drives a commitment to continually evolve and to utilise the skills, knowledge, connections and enthusiasm of the volunteers for the benefit of the community."

With help from the County Council's stronger communities team SSIA have been able to part fund a project manager and invest in equipment and technology to improve communications with volunteers.

Project Manager Charlotte McKeown said: "Stronger Communities have offered invaluable support from the outset and have played an integral role in our opportunity to ultimately register as a charity. I can't thank them enough."

SSIA has assisted in school meal deliveries and its Christmas elves scheme was well supported by businesses and local people who donated presents to vulnerable families. They now offer a befriending service which can include one-to-one help with shopping, technology, having a cup of tea and a chat, accompanied walks or just a phone call.

Befriending volunteer Sarah said: “Helping people who are lonely and isolated is very rewarding. It’s great to know you are making a difference to people’s wellbeing throughout these difficult times.”

Andy Solloway added: “The pandemic has caused so many residents to feel isolated and lonely – particularly for those who were struggling in the first place.”

People who need support with shopping and other essentials are encouraged to contact family, friends, neighbours or groups they belong to. North Yorkshire residents without those local networks, or anyone concerned about the welfare of someone else, can contact North Yorkshire County Council’s 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 which can be found at www.northyorks.gov.uk/covidhelp

To find local businesses offering food deliveries and takeaways in your area, 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

Buy Local: North Yorkshire businesses praised for Covid-safe trading

Businesses in North Yorkshire are being praised for following the lockdown rules and continuing to trade in a Covid-safe way.

Many are offering Covid-safe delivery or collection during lockdown, and bending over backwards to help their communities.

Whatever you need, whether it’s a plumber or a box of veg, search for it on www.northyorks.gov.uk/buylocal

More than 850 businesses serving the county are registered on the site.

County Council Leader Cllr Carl Les said: “We would like to thank those businesses who are continuing to trade in the constraints of lockdown to keep themselves and the public safe. Many are providing a lifeline for isolated residents by delivering services or goods to their doors.

“We realise that this is an extremely difficult time but it’s important both businesses and customers continue to follow the rules so we can fight this virus together.

“That’s why we encourage all eligible traders and businesses to register with Buy Local to help us to create a comprehensive one-stop shop for residents. There has probably never been a more important time to support local businesses.”

Louise Wallace, North Yorkshire’s Director of Public Health, added: “We know how difficult this lockdown is for our local businesses and we are grateful to all who have continued to trade in a Covid-secure way. Although the Covid infection rate in the county is falling, it is still very high compared to what it was in the summer and we cannot afford to be complacent. With the new transmissible variant everywhere in our county it wouldn’t take much flouting of the rules to send the rate shooting back up again. This costs lives.

“The more we follow the regulations of staying at home and not mixing socially, of keeping local, maintaining a social distance, wearing face masks and washing hands regularly, the quicker the rate will fall and the quicker we can come out of lockdown. That is the way forward for all of us.

“There is light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccination roll-out so we all just have to keep going and do our bit and follow the regulations. Buy Local is a great and safe way of supporting the businesses on your doorstep through this challenging time.”

Neil and Judith, owners of Spring House Farm Shop on the Bedale to Northallerton road (A684), signed up to Buy Local.

Neil said: “When customers started to rely on us we had to adapt to the new circumstances and began offering a collection service whereby people would pay over the phone. We have seen new customers use the shop, some from further afield, and have grown a base of loyal supporters.”

The farm shop began selling take away hot food, including Sunday lunches, and, due to the increase in demand, even stocks cleaning products and hand sanitiser. They went out of their way to source what people were requesting. Such Covid-secure customer-friendly trading has won them an entry in the national 2021 Farm Shop & Deli Awards.

If you own a business, register now at www.northyorks.gov.uk/buylocal

It is quick, easy and free to set up a profile. If you know someone who owns a business, tell them about Buy Local. Follow @northyorksc on social media and look out for Buy Local updates.

LEP News: York & North Yorkshire Intelligence Update on COVID-19 and Brexit Transition

The latest regional intelligence update is now available with contributions by representatives from County & District Councils, businesses organisations (such as the Chamber, FSB & CBI), key high street organisations (i.e. local BIDs) and DIT.

The report can be accessed via <https://www.businessinspiredgrowth.com/yny-covid19-intel-report-27-01-21/>

Call for local SMEs to benefit from ‘green’ business support

The [York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (LEP) has launched a business support programme to help local businesses make significant cost savings, whilst also saving the planet.

The **Grow Greener** programme has been specifically developed for SMEs in York and North Yorkshire with the aim of helping them to reduce their costs and energy consumption, whilst also helping them to lower their carbon footprint.

The programme is free to take part in, with 20 places available. Interested businesses need to register by Monday 22nd February via <https://www.oakdenehollins.com/sme-circularity>

SMEs who trade business-to-business (B2B) excluding those in agriculture can take advantage of the **Resource Efficient Business** programme, or **REBiz**, set up by York & North Yorkshire LEP and West Yorkshire Combined Authority. **REBiz** can help businesses reduce energy usage and cut down waste. Find out more via <https://www.the-lep.com/resource/?dm>

Top courses for businesses affected by Covid-19

Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) have released details of the **top five** most popular SSW courses that businesses have accessed during Covid-19:

- 1) Industrial Environment Awareness
- 2) Digital Promotion and Social Media
- 3) Leadership and Management
- 4) Awareness of Mental Health Problems
- 5) Business Improvement Techniques

Click [here](#) for more info or to book a skills need assessment, [get in touch](#).

Upcoming York & North Yorkshire Growth Hub business support webinars

- Thursday 4 February at 12pm: [How Much?- A Guide to Setting Your Prices at The Right Level](#)
- Tuesday 9 February at 12.30pm: [How to leverage apprenticeships to build back better beyond COVID-19](#)
- Wednesday 10 February at 12pm: [Holding Honest Conversations](#)
- Thursday 11 February at 12pm: [Understanding Your Market – Unlocking the potential of your business](#) This is specifically for businesses in the tourism sector.

York & North Yorkshire LEP launch 5 year Skills Plan

The York & North Yorkshire LEP recently hosted its largest ever skills conference to present the new [‘Plan for Skills 2021-2026’](#).

The skills vision for the region in the next five years is that **people are empowered to achieve their potential in a greener, fairer, stronger economy**. Access the recording of the full session [here](#) to find out more.

BREXIT UPDATE: DIT ‘How To’ Videos

The Department of International Trade has produced videos for two online tools. [Check How to Export Goods](#) and [Trade with the UK](#) .

HMRC Support

HMRC is running a series of webinars for traders in the UK

- [Trader responsibilities when using an intermediary](#)
- [Importing: What you need to know about Staged Controls](#)
- [Exporting: what you need to do to keep your goods moving](#)

It has produced a [playlist of videos](#) outlining the new trading processes and requirements from 1 January 2021.

BPT Toolkit

The Government's Business Partnerships Team has produced a toolkit available [here](#) to help businesses take action on the new rules and encourage others in their sectors and supply chains to do so as well.

Virtual e-Commerce Elevenses

For businesses looking to get ahead in online selling to overseas markets, join the Department of International Trade for a virtual discussion with industry experts in e-Commerce, e-Marketplaces and Digital Marketing.

For North Yorkshire businesses, these will be on 16 & 17 March. Register [here](#).

