

WELCOME FROM **Richard Flinton, Chief Executive**

We have made it to half-term, the worst of the weather has passed at least for now, and we have a ray of light on the covid front, so I want to thank every resident, family and business in North Yorkshire for their sterling efforts, patience and resolve.

Today we have the welcome news that the rate of infection in the county as a whole is the lowest it has been since October last year, and whilst we are not out of the woods, I want to salute that achievement in what is without doubt a difficult time.

This journey we are making together as part of Team North Yorkshire is testing our bodies and minds, but the spirit our county is famous for is undaunted and now there is light ahead. The vaccination programme here in North Yorkshire is further cause for hope. Thanks to the huge effort by our NHS colleagues and many wonderful volunteers, it is progressing at pace. The initial four priority groups have been vaccinated and the programme is now moving into its next phase. Groups five and six are people over 65 or anyone considered to have a medical vulnerability which leaves them more at risk of developing the serious symptoms. If you are in these two groups, you can expect to be contacted by your GP surgery when it is your turn. I would encourage you to take this opportunity unless there is a reason you cannot. The success of this initiative is absolutely critical as part of our road map out of lockdown so that we can be together again and see our businesses and communities thrive once more.

Please forgive me for repeating a message from last week, but it is so important. If you were in the first four groups and you initially decided not to have the vaccination BUT you have changed your mind – it's NOT too late. Please use the national system on this link to book yourself in <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination>

Equally, if you don't have access to the internet you can call 119 and book in over the phone.

**The NHS in North Yorkshire is clear they do not want anyone left behind.**

So, there is more to do, the rates need to come down further but your efforts are not going unnoticed and those few people still breaking the rules are paying the price – at least financially. Two people on the coast were hit in the pocket twice in one night last weekend. Once for a gathering in a town centre and again a few hours later when they were caught at a house party. While we applaud the efforts of the vast majority – it's also right we repeat the words of our police colleagues today who are out there trying hard to protect us all. Blatant breaches of the health protection regulations will not be tolerated. If you come to North Yorkshire without a permitted reason, or break the rules here, expect to encounter a police officer and expect enforcement.

Like you, we await the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday regarding how we will move as a nation, out of the lockdown. We are confident our schools will be ready to reopen and we will support them to do so at the appropriate time. I would like to pay tribute now to our head teachers, teaching staff, support staff, parents, pupils and governors for everything they have done so far during this pandemic to support learning and stay connected. As part of that support can I also say a big thank you to everyone who has donated us their unwanted laptops and tablets. Our tech teams are busy wiping them and reconditioning them to get them out to families most in need. If you have any items like this you don't need and would like to help someone else, please donate them to us – there is a wealth of information on how here <https://rebootny.co.uk>

Before I go, I just wanted to mention the upcoming Government consultation on how local government should be delivered in the future for York and North Yorkshire, which we believe will start next week. Ending the county and district, or two-tier system which exists currently, is a prerequisite to pave the way for a devolution deal and a mayoral-led combined authority. Never has there been a more important time to ensure that our county remains united and strong to drive economic recovery and opportunity for everyone. The alternative proposal seeks to split the county into a West North Yorkshire and East North Yorkshire and York arrangement. The City of York is already a single or unitary council and is clear it does not want to be part of that proposal. We believe North Yorkshire is stronger together and we have worked very closely with York to bring forward proposals we believe benefit all communities. Here are six things you need to know about our proposal

**A single new North Yorkshire Council will:**

**Unite North Yorkshire for better and integrated services.**

**Be a strong voice in the north, speaking out nationally for rural and coastal communities.**

**Protect and build on the global North Yorkshire brand.**

**Deliver maximum savings and maximum benefits, operating excellent services at scale for businesses and people across the county.**

**Keep the county and its services together at a critical time rather than breaking them in two, causing seismic disruption.**

**Drive a revolution in localism by empowering communities.**

There is much more information here on our proposal and our supporters.

[www.northyork.gov.uk/StrongerTogether](http://www.northyork.gov.uk/StrongerTogether)

Until next week, please 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 14 February 2021, there have been 27,230 positive tests since 3 March 2020, with 1,275 new cases reported in the past two weeks. The weekly rolling average of new cases is 103 cases per day, allowing for incomplete data in the most recent days. The seven-day rate for North Yorkshire is 98.5 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**

Right now, COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out at pace across the UK. People from priority groups are being vaccinated every day and the aim to vaccinate 15 million of the most vulnerable people by mid-February has now been met. For more information about how the priority list has been organised and the role of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), please visit [this link](#).

### **What role does a vaccine play in ending the pandemic?**

Effective vaccines are a vital part of ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Through vaccination, we can stop those most at risk from getting the virus, meaning a reduction in hospitalisations and fewer deaths. However, a vaccine is not a 'silver bullet' and won't stop the pandemic immediately.

It will take time and a continued combination of all the things we know help reduce spread, such as social distancing and washing hands, a vaccine and a deeper understanding of the virus that only comes with time. Better treatments will help reduce deaths in hospitals.

### **How does a vaccine work?**

Vaccines contain either a weakened or dead version of the virus, or a part of the virus, which cannot harm the recipient.

When we receive a vaccine, it stimulates our immune system to produce antibodies like it would if we were infected with the actual virus. These antibodies remain in our body so if we are exposed to the virus in future, we can quickly fight off the disease before we become ill. [For more information, please refer to this video.](#)

### **What about COVID-19 variants?**

We are continuing efforts to understand the effect of the variants on vaccine efficacy and there is currently no evidence to suggest that vaccines will be ineffective.

We know that the vaccines currently in use are likely to have at least 50% protection against the variant first identified in South Africa, which is very encouraging. This is equivalent to flu vaccination.

We will learn more about this as the population is studied in South Africa throughout their vaccination programme.

There are a number of studies taking place at the moment, including an AstraZeneca trial taking place in South Africa, and we will continue to monitor the situation.

### **Why are we now leaving up to 12 weeks between doses of the vaccine?**

Both the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine provide high levels of efficacy after the first dose. By giving as many people as possible the first dose of the vaccine, we are giving a greater number of people significant protection from the virus at a greater pace. This protects those who are most vulnerable and likely to suffer the worst effects of COVID-19. Simply put, every time we vaccinate someone for a second time, we are not vaccinating someone for the first time.

### **Why is it important to keep following the rules once you have been vaccinated?**

The information we have so far on the vaccines in use are that they are highly effective. However, they are not 100% effective, so there is still a chance you can get infected with COVID-19, but it's highly likely to be much less severe.

We don't yet know if the vaccines stop you from passing the virus onto other, so while they will offer significant protection to the individual, you could still pass on COVID-19 to someone who has not been vaccinated. It is therefore important that even if you are vaccinated, you continue to follow the national guidelines to keep others safe and that if you are asked to or someone in your household has symptoms or tests positive, you still self-isolate.

## 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 18 February - Whitby** - Whitby Marina Car Park, Langbourne Road, Whitby, YO21 1YW
- **Thursday 18 February - Malton** - Wentworth Street Car Park, Smithson Ct, Malton, YO17 7BQ
- **Thursday 18 February - Leyburn** - Harmby Road, Car Park, Leyburn, DL8 5EE
- **Friday 19 February - Sherburn in Elmet** - Pasture Way Carpark, Sherburn in Elmet, LS25 6LY
- **Friday 19 February - Stokesley** - Stokesley Sports Club, Broughton Road, Stokesley, Middlesbrough, TS9 5JG
- **Friday 19 February - Richmond** - Round Howe Car Park, Reeth Road, Richmond, DL10 4TL
- **Saturday 20 February - Selby** - South Entrance, DRAX Power Station, New Road, Selby, YO8 8PH
- **Saturday 20 February - Settle** - Greenfoot Car Park, Settle, BD24 9RW
- **Saturday 20 February - Filey** - Filey Country park, Church Cliff Drive, Filey, YO14 9ET
- **Saturday 20 February - Thornton Le Dale** - North York Moors National Park Authority car park, No.5. Chestnut Avenue, Thornton Le Dale, Pickering, YO18 7RR
- **Sunday 21 February - Scarborough** - Scarborough Park and Ride, Seamer Road, Scarborough, YO12 4LW
- **Sunday 21 February - Richmond** - Round Howe Car Park, Reeth Road, Richmond, DL10 4TL
- **Sunday 21 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](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/testing)

## Supporting our schools and childcare

This week is half term for schools. We ended last week with little snow disruption so the majority of schools remained open to vulnerable children and children of critical workers. We have seen 19% attendance, which translates to around 6% in our secondary schools and around 26% in primary schools.

We have had a really positive start with the Reboot North Yorkshire scheme, which aims to donate unwanted laptops, tablets and smartphones for children who are remote learning and socially isolated adults who do not have regular IT access. I would encourage anybody with spare hardware to get in touch as we can make use of it. Please visit the website at

<https://rebootny.co.uk/>

We are awaiting next week's announcement from the Prime Minister. Previously, the PM stated that schools will commence reopening from March 8, but the circumstances and what happens from there is speculation. However, I am confident our schools will do whatever is required of them as we all want to welcome children back into classrooms to enjoy learning with their friends once more.

## Teamwork to support our residents

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Many of the community support organisations helping people during the pandemic close over weekends and bank holidays to give their regular volunteers a rest, but any urgent requests that come in during these times are picked up by our Team North Yorkshire volunteers. More than 100 people who would normally be volunteering with other council services such as waste prevention and countryside access signed up to be available and are providing a fantastic and much-valued resource as part of our response to Covid-19.

Tony Dyer has been volunteering for a variety of services for more than 30 years, and when the pandemic hit felt he could put his skills to good use to support people in need.

Tony said: "It makes you feel good yourself. A small thing, such as getting shopping, is a major thing for someone else. One day, hopefully, someone will do it for me, but in the meantime it makes you feel better that you contributed to society. This situation is nobody's fault and no-one wanted it, but we have got to deal with it and we have got to help each other. If you look back and think yeah I did a good job it makes you feel better."

Heather Perkins is another member of Team North Yorkshire. Heather helped those in need in her village by picking up prescriptions, food shopping and keeping her neighbours spirits up. During Christmas, Heather and other volunteers set up window decorations across the village to spread positivity. Heather said: "I live in quite a rural area, but people are very isolated. If you feel you're doing something, you feel like you're making a difference."

Heather added: "I think volunteering is a good thing. This country would grind to a halt without volunteers. Volunteering is the backbone of this country and Covid has brought it to the frontline for most people. I think everyone should do some volunteering, because it helps your own spirits as well as others."

North Yorkshire residents without local support networks who need help with shopping and other essentials, 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 at [www.northyorks.gov.uk/covidhelp](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus).

## Growing our local economy

### LEP News: Digital investment will help rural areas reach their potential

A £3m investment has been approved to provide digital technology to support recovery and growth for communities and businesses across North Yorkshire.

North Yorkshire County Council will implement three projects to enhance connectivity, particularly in rural areas, following the award of funding from the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership as part of its allocation from the Government's Getting Building Fund.

Read more: <https://www.businessinspiredgrowth.com/news/digital-investment-will-help-rural-areas-reach-their-potential/>

### Mental Health Support for Businesses

As a business owner in 2021 you're busy caring about your own family, your colleagues and your supply chain. The best way to take care of them is to take care of yourself.

Feel Real York is here to show you that it's okay not to be superhuman and to talk honestly and openly about your mental health and difficult emotions.

Talk to your peer networks, colleagues, or organisations like FSB or Chamber of Commerce.

- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) 'It's okay to talk about mental health' resources for small business owners and the self-employed : <https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign/it-s-okay-to-talk-about-mental-health.html>
- Hints and tips for emotional fitness, and access support for you and your colleagues at <https://www.livewellyork.co.uk/FeelRealYork>
- York and North Yorkshire Growth Hub resources: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/a-guide-to-maintaining-positive-mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

### Our upcoming webinars:

#### Leadership Series: Is emotional intelligence important in leadership?: 24 February, 12 noon

Join employee engagement expert Michelle Mook for a free one-hour webinar in which she will explain why emotional intelligence is key to creating high-performing teams and building relationships with individuals.

**Delegates will learn:**

- A model of emotional intelligence
- Tools and techniques to use to develop emotional intelligence, including empathy and interpersonal relationships
- Ideas to apply personal strategies for development

Booking link: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/leadership-series-is-emotional-intelligence-important-in-leadership/>

**Visitor Economy Series: How to create and convert traffic for your website: 25 February, 11am**

In this interactive workshop, Susan Briggs, Director of The Tourism Network, will help tourism businesses to understand how to create and convert website traffic into real customers that decide to visit or book.

**Delegates will learn:**

- The three main ways anyone will find your website
- Visitors – what's in their minds and how can you influence them
- How to improve the words on your website so search engines find you and visitors love you
- The two most important steps to converting lookers into bookers

Booking link: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/how-to-create-and-convert-traffic-for-your-website/>

## Creative lockdown ideas

**Let the zoo come to you this half term**

The virtual zoo tours are back at Chester Zoo. They have been going live on their Facebook & YouTube pages for a whole day of amazing animal antics. Packed full of fantastic facts, it's the perfect way to learn, all from the comfort of your own home. For more information, visit: <https://www.chesterzoo.org/virtual-zoo-2/>

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