

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

15th May 2019

**STATEMENT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER -
LIBRARY, CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

COUNTY COUNCILLOR GREG WHITE

Library and Information Service

May is History Month

Stories of the long, fascinating history of North Yorkshire's places, people and events will be brought to life in the county's libraries during Local and Community History Month in May.

Talks, discussions and exhibitions will feature topics from the soldiers remembered on the memorial at St Wilfrid's Church, Harrogate, to the historic gardens of Hambleton, Northallerton prison through the ages, the archaeological work in Captain Cook's Memorial Garden in Great Ayton and fishy tales from Whitby.

The Whitby Fish and Ships Festival, May 18 / 19 sees a programme of displays, events and talks at the library celebrating the rich heritage of the town.

Skipton Library improvements

Work on much-needed improvements of Skipton library is to begin next month to provide a more up-to-date and flexible space, giving a better service to local people. The library will close at 1.30pm on Saturday, 4 May, and is scheduled to reopen in early July.

The new ground floor space will increase opportunities for the library to host drop-in services and activities at a safe, easily accessible venue in the town centre. These will include a new children's space, new books and space for community events and activities, including learning activities delivered by the County Council's Adult Learning and Skills Service.

Well-being bags

Members may remember my talking about the launch of the pilot scheme 'Wellbeing Bags' in November 2018. I am pleased to announce that the bags have been so successful a further 40 have been purchased to meet demand. The bags are being used by local health partners as well as individuals, and are available to reserve, free of charge, for collection at any library across North Yorkshire.

Wellbeing Bags are an easily portable collection of items, books and activities for individuals or groups to share at home, in the library, or out in the community, to promote and encourage people to practice self-care and enhance mental wellbeing. The bags will include resources and information such as colouring, recipes, puzzles, books from the Reading Well collections, and health information and advice from local services.

Work is starting to develop a similar bag for young people.

Volunteer celebration events

I am pleased to say that the Chairman of the County Council will be hosting thank you events for our library volunteers during Volunteers Week in June. This provides an opportunity to not only say thank you but also recognise the time, effort and energy that volunteers give to enable our libraries to continue providing an excellent service within communities.

Community Library Update

This should be our Award winning community library update.

As some of you may have already seen on ITV Calendar News, Newby and Scalby Community Library were voted a winner in the National Lottery People's Projects. Their prize is the £18,900 to enable the patch of scrub land behind the library to be transformed into a community garden with access for all. The vision is that it will be a calm, healing space to promote well-being, where people can connect with nature, recharge their batteries, or fire their imagination.

I am also proud to follow up on my previous statement with the news that the 3-D Printing Club held at The Globe @ Stokesley won the international "Meet and Code" Award. They were the only UK group to reach the finals.

Bedale Community Library has been honoured with the Community Award that is presented annually by Bedale Town Council. The award is presented for an outstanding contribution made to the local community, and will be presented at the next Town Council meeting

Grassington Hub have won a Duke of York's Community Initiative Award

Virtual Reality

Both myself and Cllr Robert Windass, enjoyed attending North Yorkshire's first pop-up "Digital Makey" at Harrogate Library. VIRTUAL reality and digital arts were all available to try out - including musical bananas! Visits for the day were up by 17% at 846, with the Virtual Reality fully booked.

Blue Badge applications

January saw the roll out of the new on-line application procedure for Blue Badges. For those requiring assistance our main libraries are offering appointments - 497 appointments have been attended in the first three months of this year.

Archives

The Record Office has been awarded a grant of £75,700 under the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Resilient Heritage scheme. The project, *Resilient Records; building a sustainable future for the County Record Office*, will help to define the future direction of the service. It will explore opportunities for maximising income; broaden and grow the user base of the service; strengthen its links with stakeholders and inform strategic planning for the audiences of the future. The grant will fund extra staff capacity whilst ensuring that existing staff acquire the skills necessary to take the service forward.

May is Local History month and the Record Office pop-up archive will once again be out and about around the county. This year, pop-up archives will be held in partnership with local heritage groups in Thornton Dale, Ripon & Coxwold and at Northallerton Library. These events help to promote the work of the office and are an opportunity for people to access advice from archive staff and to view a range of records relating to the local area. The Record Office will also be hosting its popular Archives at Dusk open evening. This year's theme is crime and the law giving visitors a rare opportunity to see behind the scenes and to discover stories of North Yorkshire's criminal past.

Registrars

As the uncertainty of Brexit continues it is important that all EU citizens currently working for the County Council and other employers in North Yorkshire are given clear assurances about their ability to continue to work for us now and into the future. They are an important part of our workforce and will continue to be so post-Brexit. EU citizens and their families are now able to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme, for free, to enable them to continue living and working in the UK after 30 June 2021. The deadline for applying is 30 June 2021, or 31 December 2020 if the UK leaves the EU without a deal. Further information is available at www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families

The application process requires the use of a compatible Android phone or tablet to scan identity documents and take photographs. The County Council's Registration Service has launched a scanning service which will allow anyone who doesn't have access to a compatible device to scan and verify their documents as part of their application. This is available by appointment, initially at the Harrogate, Northallerton and Scarborough and Harrogate registration offices.