NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCILLOR'S REPORT AUGUST 2026.

BUS ROUTES.

I have in the last year or so been asked about the possibility of Arriva bus route's being adjusted to take in places where there is a need by residents for the service. The X26 and X27 could for example detour via the houses on Scurrah House Lane. One resident here advised me that he often has to walk to Skeeby using the A6108 which doesn't have a pavement for most of the route. Traffic is more often than not, fast moving as it has a speed limit of 60mph. He has been picked up by the police recently who were very concerned for his safety.

Another often requested diversion is for the same service to go through Middleton Tyas village, rather than simply going directly to Barton from Scotch Corner. In both cases Arriva have said that this is not possible because of the need to keep to a timetable. The fact that the bus may have to stop to pick passengers up or drop off on Scurrah House Lane may add a couple of minutes to the journey time. The actual additional mileage covered by this detour would be minimal.

I accept that Middleton Tyas would be more difficult as it would require buses to negotiate the right angle turning opposite the village green. But wasn't this the bus route until recent years? Arriva have come back saying that this is not possible under their current timetable. I must say that I can't help thinking that bus companies see passengers as an inconvenience, rather than the reason for their being in existence.

However, a service which residents may not be aware of is the Richmondshire and Catterick Volunteer Car Scheme. This is targeted at retired people, but anyone over the age of 18 can use the service. To use the scheme, where the car drivers are volunteers, you must first register. The telephone number is 01748 327037. The charge for the service is then £2 plus 55 pence per mile from the driver's house to pick up, then the final destination. Hospital visits and shopping trips are the norm and the passenger must pay the driver cash, no cards. Also, if anyone can't get in or out of the car unassisted, they will have to have a carer with them.

CHILDREN IN CARE.

Between 2023/24 and the projected position for 2026/27, overall spend on homes for children has increased by approximately £30 million. A large proportion of this increase is attributable to children whose packages of care cost at least £500,000 per annum. There are a small number of placements where the cost is in excess of £800,000 per annum and the highest cost is one child costing £1.5 million per annum. This has had a significant impact on the NYC where an overspend of £10 million is projected in the

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current financial year. Just about every County Council in the country will be in an overspend position.

NYC has always tried to keep children with their own birth families, where it is safe to do. When children do come into NYC care, then wherever possible they are placed with NY Foster carers. If a child does come into NYC care, the authority has no option but to find them a place. But, as outlined above, the cost can often be eyewatering.

The Josh MacAlister review is now coming into sight. It is thought that this will, when implemented, bring regulation to the cost providers can charge and make them register with Ofsted in order to trade.

A66 UPGRADE.

There is still much uncertainty as to when the A66 Upgrade will commence in North Yorkshire. On 30th June, Hannah Coates, National Highways Senior Project Manager, said she is expecting both schemes in North Yorkshire (Steven Bank to Carkin Moor duelling and Scotch Corner roundabout), to be paused potentially for 2 years before design work is resumed in preparation for construction.

It appears that A66 schemes within Durham CC's boundary are in a similar position. Durham CC wer expecting to hear more news in August ie. last month. The original plan under the last Government was that the work would be done simultaneously along the entire route. National Highways intends to phase delivery, with the dualling between M6 junction 40 and Temple Sowerby now underway. This west to east prioritisation targets the longest remaining single-carriageway sections first.

And as for the Designer Outlet, who knows.....

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT.

The papers for the PIR ie. Post Implementation Review, of the new policy which came into effect two years ago, are due to be published next Tuesday 8th September. I have, as stated many times, severe reservations regarding this policy and only voted in favour of it because of the promised financial savings it would produce given the exponentially expanding Home to School Transport cost under the catchment system, which was becoming totally unsustainable.

I shall reserve judgement until I have had a chance to go through the recommendations in what I am told, is a very lengthy document of over 100 pages. One of the suggestions which I put forwards is that for the purposes of school transport is that SFX and Richmond School should be treated as one.

One comment which a number of residents have put to me, and I have until now always resisted the temptation to mention party politics in these reports, is it is very evident that the Liberals at a local level have made much of the hated H to S Policy, yet Liberal

controlled Westmorland and Furness Council have now agreed an almost identical new H to S Policy to come into force in September 2027. The reason for this they say, is that the catchment system is unsustainable.

The savings, if any, will be a critical factor in my decision as to where to go from here. And also, of course, how these savings are accounted for.

PLANNING.

I reported in June that the Government appears to be determined to get rid of Planning Committees by starving them of the oxygen of work. The National Scheme of Delegation is a mandatory change which all councils must adopt by 31st October 2026 at the latest. The Government say that the aim is to increase clarity and consistency. But quite clearly, the ability of locally elected members, parish councils and residents to feed into the planning process will be severely curtailed and this is a deliberate act by the Government.

THE NEW LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN.

A consultation is open to everyone and closes on 4th November. A consultation event is to be held at The Station, Richmond on Thursday 17th September, between 10am and 2pm. We should realise that the Local Transport Plan provides all the hooks to bring in funding for the future. It is therefore very important that we as residents have as much of an input as possible. It will impact on rural growth, rural communities and our carbon footprint.

Best wishes,

Angus Thompson.

2nd September 2026.