

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

10 OCTOBER 2007

STATEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR HELEN SWIERS

TRADING STANDARDS

On Friday 31 August, following a prosecution bought by North Yorkshire County Council Trading Standards and Regulatory Services, York Crown Court ordered Jonathan Paul Mills, of 20, Millside, Norton, Malton, to pay £115,000 by way of a confiscation order under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

Mills, 36, was prosecuted for supplying and offering to supply counterfeit DVD's which contravened the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Mills was arrested in January 2006 following a search at another property in Norton, Malton. Computer equipment and counterfeit discs were later found dumped in a neighbour's garden.

The confiscation order was the first of its kind obtained by the Service. As a result of the Incentivisation Scheme run by the Home Office, the County Council will receive £38,500 of the £115,000, once it has been paid by Mills.

NO COLD CALLING ZONES:

The number of requests from North Yorkshire residents for No Cold Calling Zones to be created shows no sign of abatement with the 100th zone due to be launched within the next few weeks. Zones covering whole villages near Selby, which have suffered a number of distraction burglaries in recent months, have been created recently in partnership with the Parish Councils and local police. Filey Town Council has expressed interest in several zones being created to cover areas in the town which house a high proportion of older residents. Two recent prosecutions have been brought against doorstep traders who defrauded 70 and an 85 year old residents.

AGE LIMIT FOR SALE OF TOBACCO AND KNIVES RISE TO 18 YEARS:

Legislation which will increase the legal age for the sale of tobacco, from 16 years of age to 18, comes into force on 1st October. Retailers are being provided with new point of sale notices via the NYCC contact centre. The notices not only advise potential purchasers of the change in age restriction but also remind shop staff of the new age limit.

Again on 1st October, the legislation relating to offensive weapons is being amended, in order to raise the age limit for the sale of knives and axes from the present 16 to 18 years of age. Although this amendment has been overshadowed in

the media by the tobacco legislation, traders will be made aware of the new rules by advice visits and press releases in the coming weeks.

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAK:

On Friday the 3rd August 2007 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) confirmed that there was a case of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) on a farm in Surrey. As a result DEFRA introduced a number of disease control measures including a national livestock movement ban and protection and surveillance zones around the infected premises in Surrey. A further case was confirmed on the 7th August 2007, again in Surrey and only a short distance from the first infected premises. On the 3rd September 2007 all of the disease control measures in place were lifted, including the national livestock movement ban.

On the 12th September 2007 DEFRA confirmed a new case of Foot and Mouth Disease on another farm in Surrey about 30 miles from the original outbreak. DEFRA again introduced protection and surveillance zones around the infected premises and put in place a national livestock movement ban which prohibited the movements of all susceptible animals except under licence. At the time of writing there has been a total of eight confirmed cases of Foot and Mouth Disease in the Surrey area.

There has also been a number of suspect cases, for example in Lanarkshire, Norfolk and Solihull. In each case a temporary control zone was put in place when suspicion was raised and upon confirmation that tests for FMD were negative, the control zone was removed.

Movement restrictions have been lifted on a piecemeal basis. Currently the only permitted movements markets are for cattle, goats, pigs and sheep moving to slaughter only. The intention is, should the disease situation remain the same, further movement restrictions will be removed on 4th October, to allow store markets. There are some further exemptions for farm to farm movements.

The County's Trading Standards and Regulatory Services have been working with North Yorkshire's farming community to ensure compliance with the movement restrictions and to provide advice and guidance on all the changing rules affecting them. Officers of the Service have attended authorised livestock markets for slaughter animals and abattoirs and have carried out mobile patrols to ensure compliance with the movement restrictions.

At the time of writing we can confirm that the only reported cases of Foot and Mouth Disease are in the Surrey area and there are no confirmed cases in North Yorkshire. Members will only too well remember the devastating consequences of the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001 on the County. This disease is highly contagious and very difficult to eradicate. Members are assured that all is being done to ensure that it does not reach North Yorkshire again.

BLUETONGUE VIRUS:

Bluetongue Virus is an insect born viral disease to which all species of ruminants are susceptible. The virus is transmitted by a small number of species of biting midges.

The midges prefer to feed on large animals, with sheep being infected when cattle are not present or the midge population is high. Peak populations of the midges occur in the late summer and autumn, so this is the time when Bluetongue is most commonly seen.

Bluetongue is usually a disease of the tropics and sub-tropics, but since 1999 there have been widespread outbreaks in Greece, Italy, Corsica, Balearics, Bulgaria, Croatia and Yugoslavia. It is estimated that the midges can travel 1.5 to 2km a day, but that dependent on the weather conditions, (e.g. moderate winds) the midges could be transported far further. The Bluetongue virus poses no threat to human health.

Visible characteristics of the virus include fever, mucous lining the animal's mouth, nose and eyes and excessive salivation and frothing.

The case of bluetongue discovered in Suffolk on 22nd September is the first in the UK. At the time of writing, a further 10 cases of bluetongue have been confirmed since that date. On the 28th September, DEFRA confirmed that the virus is circulating between the midge population and animals in East Anglia. On 30th September 2007, further disease control measures were introduced effecting East Anglia, South East England and areas in the East Midlands.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Significant progress is being made in identifying potential areas within the county which could qualify for LEADER funding. This is funding for community led economic development. Four broad areas within North Yorkshire are being pursued – North York Moors and Coast; Wolds; Yorkshire Dales; and South Selby. Expressions of interest have to be submitted to Yorkshire Forward by the end of October. A decision is expected on which areas will go forward to the European Union by the end of the year. Funding is allocated on a regional level but we have an expectation of securing around £8 million of EU rural funding for North Yorkshire. An Executive decision has been taken that the County Council will be prepared to act as Accountable Body for North Yorkshire LEADER areas, based on our expertise and systems developed for current programmes.

The County Council hosted a Yorkshire and Humber regional seminar on 27th September to promote opportunities for European funding under a new Interreg programme. This is designed to encourage transnational cooperation between member countries. The seminar had a number of national and regional speakers outlining opportunities. Areas within this Region, including North Yorkshire, will need to explore such programmes which rely on joint working between member states to obtain funding as previous European Union funding has been shifted to the new European Union states.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

New guidance has recently been issued by the Home Office requiring a countywide agreement between statutory partners for crime and disorder related issues. This agreement will identify the key priorities for the county that will be addressed by partners. The new guidance also requires that I as the County Council Portfolio Holder attend future meetings of the York and North Yorkshire Safer Community Forum to help oversee the preparation of this agreement.

I look forward to the work that will be undertaken in the coming months to pull the countywide agreement together. A considerable amount of work has already been done in this regard which has identified alcohol and domestic violence as two key priorities that will feature strongly in any new agreement.

In relation to alcohol a new countywide strategy is being developed and is soon to be launched across the county, the County Council has been heavily involved in its development. This strategy is an exciting development which will tackle one of the main causes of a range of crime and disorder related problems. In particular the strategy will bear down on alcohol related violence, seek to reduce alcohol related admissions to hospital and to improve support and to identify vulnerable young people who are experiencing difficulties as a consequence of alcohol abuse, either by themselves or within their families.

The North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership has recently concluded a consultation exercise on its future structure. There was broad agreement that the Partnership was effective and a range of changes were agreed which would enable the Partnership to be more inclusive and open to influence by a broad range of partners from across the county.

The North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership has been heavily involved in developing the countywide Local Area Agreement and has just completed the first monitoring stage of that agreement. I am pleased to report that this mechanism operated smoothly with all partners providing information to update our overall performance against specific targets. The Government has issued new guidance in respect of Local Area Agreements and the Council is now focussed on refreshing the Local Area Agreement, with the involvement of all partners, in line with this new guidance. A key aspect of the development of the LAA will be to establish a Sustainable Community Strategy for the county, identifying the key issues that the county faces over the next five to ten years. Partners are currently engaged in consultation to identify these key issues and I look forward to be able to report on progress in the coming months.

County Councillor Helen Swiers
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