

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**18 February 2015****STATEMENT OF THE LEADER
COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WEIGHELL****Devolution**

This continues to be a hot topic both locally and nationally and the opportunity to devolve responsibilities to a local level is something that I firmly believe in. However, I also believe that it needs to have to two particular qualities. Firstly, it has to be real and meaningful with control passed down to a local level. In order to be effective that control must include of tangible and important issues that will make a difference to local people. Secondly, devolution should not be complex and bureaucratic and bring with it confusion and extra cost. Some of the current debate plays into these concerns. Outside of Manchester, devolution to combined authorities has been modest and in some parts of the country the propositions coming forward look bureaucratic and messy with splits between districts and county areas. I believe there are potentially real opportunities from devolution and there is an opportunity prior to the general election for areas such as North Yorkshire to consider what are the most advantageous partnerships arrangements that we can put in place. I firmly believe that it is important for the county area to stay together in any future devolved arrangements. We have a system of two tier governance and whilst that exists it would be a nonsense for both tiers not to be working together in the same partnership. It is appropriate that we use the few months that we have before the general election to discuss the issue with our partners ready for any future decisions that may follow.

Local Enterprise Partnership

The North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership has been successful in securing an additional £12.1 million of capital funding from the Local Growth Fund. This takes the total capital investment secured over the period 2015-21 up to £122.5 million. Projects have been identified to benefit from this funding. Indeed the LEP has committed all of its investments in line with the Governments desire to utilise the funding to help deliver local growth.

Tour of Yorkshire

In recent weeks the final route of the tour of Yorkshire has been announced. The County Council has been very proactive in engaging with Welcome to Yorkshire around the developing of the race. The County Council will also make a £100,000 contribution to the hosting fee for the event.

The Tour de France was an amazing success for North Yorkshire but it was always a regret that the route did not extend further to the East of the County. We said at the time we would try to work with Welcome to Yorkshire to address the situation. I am consequently delighted that Scarborough, Whitby, the North Yorkshire Coast, the Moors and Selby will all be important features of the inaugural Tour of Yorkshire event due to take place on the 1st – 3rd May. It is once again an opportunity to showcase to the world the fantastic scenery and landscape of North Yorkshire.

Local Government Yorkshire and Humber

Many members' will be familiar with Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH). It is a membership organisation for local councils, natural parks, police and fire services, which has been in existence for many years but has more recently struggled to find its role in amongst a more cluttered landscape of combined authorities and the sub regional groups. A decision has now been taken by the member councils to wind up the organisation. Moves will be taken to achieve this during the course of the next year and to look at how the employer's function of the organisation can be retained and hosted by one of the member councils. There are some complex issues to be determined in relation to employees, pension liabilities, assets and reserves and these matters will be dealt with over the coming months when I would anticipate an official end date to be announced.

County Councillor John Weighell
Leader of the Council