

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

13 November 2024

STATEMENT OF CLLR CARL LES

Woodsmith Mine Update, Anglo American

Following the slowdown of the Woodsmith Mine Project by Anglo American, it is expected that there will be a further 450 job losses between now and mid-next year bringing the total project workforce to approximately 800. Everyone who has, or will be, impacted is aware of their situation. In total, the number of job losses of York and North Yorkshire residents resulting from the slowdown began will be approximately 170.

The employment support programme has now engaged almost 300 people to access training or business start-up support and many people have successfully found alternative employment. In addition, contractors have been successful in redeploying 200 people to work on other projects.

With the size of the Anglo American team working on the Woodsmith Project significantly reducing, Anglo American have taken the decision to consolidate their team at one location at Woodsmith Mine on a temporary basis during the slowdown. From the middle of December Anglo American will no longer operate from Resolution House in Scarborough, or from the site office at Wilton International. The decision has been taken in consultation with all the people that will be impacted.

In all there are approximately 40 people based at Resolution House that this will affect and Anglo American will be running a free and flexible park and ride service for them to ensure the company adheres to their traffic conditions within the National Park. Anglo American are retaining ownership of the Resolution House site and plan to return when the project ramps back up.

National Planning Policy Framework and Housing Targets

Cllr Crane is dealing with the detail of this, but it is such an important issue to this Council that I want to mention it in my statement too. The government concluded their consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes at the end of last month. Many elements of the proposed changes have been generally supported by the Council. In summary, this was to establish the position and treatment of national housing land supply positions. It also focused more on the strategic infrastructure needed to support economic growth and provide greater clarity on the national planning policy position on onshore wind, which proposed changes to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). It seeks ensure that plan-making bodies explore previously developed land with the Green Belt which also judged to make a limited contribution- and provide a new definition for this land as 'Grey Belt'. It seeks to remove the reference of 'beauty' to design, which is judged to be too subjective.

However, important to us is that the consultation also set out proposed changes to the Standard Method, which is the method by which the starting position for housing need is established. It seeks to make the requirement a mandatory starting point. It also seeks to undertake a 'rebalancing of housing supply' by the removal of the 30% urban uplift with a greater distribution of the housing supply to the North of England. The resulting outcome is that for North Yorkshire the proposed new housing need figure would be 4,232 homes per year. This is a figure which is not just significantly higher than what our existing local plans collectively seek to deliver (by close to 2000 homes a year), but even higher (by close to 900 homes) than our most buoyant annual delivery rates in the last decade. This raises concerns

to the Authority that such an approach is simply not deliverable. We have argued that at this level of housing we are being expected to deliver (in conjunction with the operation of policies around land supply) will result in development, which is not coordinated with strategic infrastructure and will, ultimately, undermine wider objectives of our plans. We have been making our case to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government, and the outcome is awaited.

Both the revisions to the NPPF and the confirmed position on the Standard Method are expected to be published before the end of the year

York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (YNY MCA) Business Board

The membership of a new YNY MCA Business Board formed of diverse business leaders has been recruited. Board members will provide a strong and independent business voice to advise the YNY MCA on economic strategy and policy decisions, help bid for fresh investment and engage with businesses, opinion formers and policy makers to help generate economic growth. Their expertise will enable action to support businesses and shape delivery of wider issues such as transport, housing and skills.

112 applications were received, with a shortlist of 27! invited for interview. I was impressed with the quality of the applicants, and it was difficult to arrive at a final list of 10 so we have enlarged the size of the board by two. There is a good gender balance, a mix of sectors, and a good geographic spread including the Coast, York, Harrogate, Northallerton, Ripon, and Skipton. One common theme however is that they are all achievers in their businesses.

I am delighted that Jennifer Wood, from Ripon, will be the inaugural chair.

An official launch is planned for 12 November 2024 after all new Members have undertaken the required governance training. The first meeting is scheduled for 22nd November 2024 and thereafter meetings will be quarterly in different venues around York and North Yorkshire. The first meeting will likely cover the current context and planned opportunities allowing the board members to take up their new roles and focus on areas of interest.

The Leaders of both authorities will sit on the Board, along with the portfolio holders for economic development.

North Yorkshire participants in the Paris Olympics and Para Olympics

We should all recognise and applaud the achievements of our Olympians and Para Olympians, and I list them individually below. The Chairman wanted to host a celebratory tea party for them, but it was not logistically possible as although they are all North Yorkshire bred, their training centres are spread far and wide, one Olympian actually training in the United States.

Olympians

Scott Lincoln - Shot Putter - Northallerton

George Mills - 1500m runner - Harrogate

Jacob Fincham-Dukes - Long Jump - Harrogate 5th place

Charlie Tanfield - Track Cycling - Great Ayton Silver Medal

Jack Laugher - Diving - Harrogate - Bronze Medal

Charlotte Fry - Equestrian Dressage - Scarborough 2x Bronze

Lucy Hall - Shooting - Malton

Para Olympians

Lottie McGuinness (powerlifter) Harrogate

Faye Rogers (swimmer and gold medallist) Swims a Stokesley Leisure Centre from Teesside – Gold

They did us proud!

Update on Progress following LGR

As we pass the half-way point of year two of North Yorkshire Council it is worth reflecting on the progress being made and the challenges still ahead as we make the necessary changes to deliver the best council we can for the residents of North Yorkshire.

The majority of management restructures are now complete (over 63 restructures complete with over 2000 people affected). Some services are continuing to review structures and ways of working as the Council consolidates services and then looks to implement optimal ways of working. In addition, plans are well under way to plan for systems to be brought together and the priority areas are in planning, customer, revenue & benefits and a new finance system.

Good progress is therefore being made and the savings of LGR are already being delivered. It is worth noting, however, that mergers of eight organisations is a mammoth task and when I talk to fellow leaders of newly unitarized councils I am often told that the exercise is never quite finished. I am therefore grateful to all for the work that has got us here and I would especially like to mention Robert Ling who helped to deliver the successful transition to vesting day and then helped to shape much of the convergence work. Robert has now moved to Central Bedfordshire Council where he takes up a director post.

There will be many more challenges along the road I am sure but, as we have heard from government, its likely that there will be more structural changes to local government, so I am glad we got there earlier. I also expect we may be asked for some of our views and lessons learned given recent experiences.

COUNCILLOR CARL LES