

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) Community Grow Policy
June 2026

Introduction

North Yorkshire is the largest rural Council in the UK. We are proud of our natural spaces and how this enables our communities to lead healthy and thriving lifestyles.

In order to support all members of our communities to enjoy and interact with natural spaces, this policy gives a clear direction as to how the Council will manage enquiries related to community grow initiatives on Council owned land.

Supporting communities to develop their local spaces fulfils the Council's ambitions to support thriving places and empowered communities.

The policy also supports the following strategic priorities:

- Food for the Future in North Yorkshire Framework for Action: Produce food with nature; Secure nutritious affordable food for all; Shape local spaces for healthy food communities; Creating an eatwell culture through valued nutritional education. See <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17978637> to view the Framework for Action.
- Localities Service: by fostering stronger community connections, building local capability, and enabling residents and organisations to take an active role in shaping their places.
- Property Service: aligns with the strategic priorities detailed within the Corporate Property Strategy.

Definitions

What is community growing?

Community growing can include a range of activities that communities may want to utilise local spaces for. For the purpose of this policy, 'community grow' is identified as any form of plant, flower or food cultivation and production.

The size of community grow spaces is not defined within this policy, but it is anticipated to be smaller areas of uncultivated land within the Council's ownership. Inclusion in this policy will be dependent on the location and nature of the identified space.

For the management of larger spaces of council land, and consideration of transfer of council land or property please contact localdevolution@northyorks.gov.uk

What do we mean by community?

A 'community' which wishes to obtain a licence to grow on a piece of land under this policy will generally mean one of the following types of groups with a local connection:

- A City, Town or Parish Council or other Parish Sector Organisation
- An organisation registered as a charity with the Charity Commission
- A charitable incorporated organisation registered with Companies House and with the Charity Commission
- A company limited by guarantee registered with Companies House, with charitable status that is established for benevolent or philanthropic purposes, and which does not distribute any surplus they make to their members
- A community interest company registered with Companies House, limited by shares or guarantee and which does not distribute any surplus they make to their members
- A community benefit society registered by the Financial Conduct Authority

- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)
- Community and social enterprises
- An unincorporated community group or organisation, or an unincorporated association that is:
 - established for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes
 - has a governing body with at least three members
 - has an inclusive membership policy
 - has a governing document
 - can provide accounts for the last two financial years
 - has its own UK business bank account
 - can hold land or property and enter into contracts either by itself or via trustees

Any group under this definition must be capable of entering into a licence and be able to hold Public Liability and any other relevant insurances required.

Commercial organisations would not be considered under this policy and should contact estatesteam@northyorks.gov.uk.

Benefits of Community Growing

North Yorkshire Council wishes to support communities to develop community grow spaces in recognition of the benefits it can have for community life. These include (not exhaustive):

- Supporting community cohesion and pride in place
- Supporting food resilience and cost of living issues
- Increasing social connection and reducing isolation
- Supporting physical and mental health and well-being
- Promoting skills development and increasing self-efficacy and motivation to prepare and consume nutritious food.
- Enabling and inspiring communities to have a better understanding of the nutritional value of healthier food
- Increasing environmental awareness and connecting people back to nature
- Promoting sustainable practices of land that improves biodiversity, regeneration and better captures and stores carbon.

Scope of the Policy

It is recognised that there will be many individual factors that mean a space is appropriate or not for community growing. In general, the following would be considered **out of scope** of this Policy:

- Sites identified for development or service delivery within the short-term
- Sites protected under legislation such as Allotments, etc. Please visit - [Allotments | North Yorkshire Council](#)
- Education or Residential premises
- Property that is subject to ongoing discussions or already has a Lease or Management Arrangement in place

- Sites identified as part of any ongoing devolution/Community Asset Transfer proposals
- Management of livestock
- Any water related asset
- Adopted Highway

Length of agreement

The land will be offered to the community on the basis of a licence agreement.

The length of the term of the licence will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending upon site specific conditions.

Size of Identified Land

It is anticipated that the area of land would be a small, underused space that would benefit from being more actively managed to provide community benefits in-line with section 3.

This policy covers land owned by North Yorkshire Council only. Should a community identify land in other ownership, it is the community's responsibility to determine such ownership.

Roles and Responsibilities

This policy will be managed by the North Yorkshire Council Property Service.

Decision as to whether the Council enters into an agreement with the community will be made by Property Services and the Localities team. The decision is final.

Due to the individual nature of each piece of land to be potentially identified, there will be several service areas that would need to be involved in the agreement to develop community grow spaces, namely:

- Highways department - review of immediate safety and appropriate location
- Legal Services – agreement of any specific licence conditions
- Planning Department – land searches, permissions
- Localities department – community group support
- Environmental Health – for any immediately identifiable issues such as contamination
- Any relevant service – for land which impacts specific service delivery (i.e. housing, social care)

It is the community group's responsibility to ensure that the land is ultimately appropriate for the type of cultivation that the land would be used for. The Council accepts no liability for any loss, damage, injury, or harm arising from the use, management, or cultivation of the land.

Land Ownership and Responsibilities of the Council

North Yorkshire Council will remain the landowner at all times and will reserve the right to manage, dispose of, or reclaim the property at any time. Roles and responsibilities will be set out in the licence agreements for each specific site.

North Yorkshire Council's decision on whether to release land for community growing is final. Officers will endeavour to work with communities to support initiatives as much as possible. However, there will be no appeal process for declined applications for land.

Impact and Outcomes

Property Service will keep a record of where land is managed under a community grow licence.

From time to time, Property Service may work with other service departments (i.e. Localities, Public Health) to promote examples of the impact and types of community grow initiatives on the health and well-being of our communities.

North Yorkshire Council will not seek to incur or attract financial impact from the execution of this policy. A peppercorn rent will be considered appropriate. In assessing a community grow expression of interest and the terms of any licence subsequently granted, the Council is satisfied it meets its duty to achieve best consideration. Costs related to the development of the land (i.e. legal costs) will be the responsibility of the applicant.

Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years and/or where a significant change is required (i.e. legislative changes).

Please see the Community Grow Procedures for further information on how the process will work.

Community Grow Procedures

The process will be as follows:

1. Community group identifies vacant land potentially within NYC ownership
2. Initial enquiry to Property team: estatesteam@northyorks.gov.uk.
3. Property Service response within 20 working days will provide initial indication of NYC ownership and whether land is potentially in scope for community use.
4. If looks to be in scope, Property services will complete initial suitability checks on the land to determine if proposed site is suitable for the proposed use (i.e. permissions, covenants, safe use). It will be the responsibility of the community group to consider any more in-depth assessments that may be required related to the intended use.
5. Where the land is considered out of scope or not appropriate for community use, this will be explained. The outcome will be at NYC's sole discretion. There is no appeal process. The site can be reviewed again in two years or where significant change in circumstance identified.
6. Where agreed to progress, community group will be asked by Localities team to complete Expression of Interest form and send to localdevolution@northyorks.gov.uk
 - a. Where there is multiple interest, the process will be completed on a first come, first served basis.
7. The Localities team will assess the application to ensure the community user has an implementable plan for the managing and sustaining the land for the proposed period.
8. Where an application is rejected, a reason will be provided to the applicant. The outcome will be at NYC's sole discretion. There is no appeal process. The site can be reviewed again in two years or where significant change in circumstance identified.
9. If an application is successful, a temporary licence will be offered to the applicant on reasonable terms to be agreed. Licences will likely vary depending upon the site, but the key principles will be as follows:
 - i. A peppercorn rent will be included in the agreement of £1 per annum.
 - ii. The Council can make no guarantee that any services can be provided to the land.
 - iii. If additional costs are incurred by the Council, then these will be re-charged to the community user. An example might be water supply, if available.
 - iv. The Council cannot commit to providing any funding to a community user to establish the project.
 - v. The land must be kept free from rubbish. No fires will be permitted on the land and no livestock can be kept on site.
 - vi. The community user must make good any damage caused to the land.
 - vii. There will be no right to add any fixtures, structures or buildings to the land without express permission. Community user to contact Estates team before adding any fixtures, structures or buildings. estatesteam@northyorks.gov.uk.
 - viii. The community group take responsibility for any site security and any other consents that may be required.
 - ix. The licence should be granted for a sufficient time during the growing season to enable crops to be grown and harvested.
 - x. If the Council requires the land vacating a period of 3 months written notice will be required. The community group may also serve a 3 month notice in the event they wish to terminate the licence.
 - xi. No activities will take place which put at risk the safety or security of the public
 - xii. At the point that the licence ends, the community group will remove all possessions from the land and will leave it in a clean and tidy condition. The application process will ask for details of the scheme planned for the identified site.

- xiii. Community groups will aspire to cultivate the land and prepare for growing within 3 months from the application being granted.
- xiv. Community groups are encouraged to apply regenerative and agroecological practices to the growing process in order to improve biodiversity, better capture and store carbon.
- xv. Community groups are not to use pesticides and chemicals on the land. Sustainable practices, such as biological control, must be applied to protect the natural environment.
- xvi. Community groups can sell produce grown on the land if this is in a not-for-profit way and support the sustainability of community and voluntary action.
- xvii. No rights to use the land will be established and the community group must vacate the plot at the end of the growing season in which notice to quit is given, or at the expiry of 3 months in accordance with point x above.
- xviii. Community groups should consider any risks that might be present on site and what insurance cover must be in place. As a minimum, public liability insurance (min £5M) and for any equipment/tools is likely to be required. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners has some guidance on this matter and some insurance products that could be considered.

10. The land will then be identified separately in the Asset Management System

11. Termination of the agreement

The agreement will be ended in one of the following ways:

- Expiration of the agreement
- 3 months notice given by NYC
- 3 months notice given by community
- Any breach of the agreement

The land is then returned to NYC management in a condition as agreed in the licence agreement.

Should the land be available for further community grow initiatives, any community group are then able to approach the council again to enquire.

An illustration of the procedure is presented on page 7.

