

Statement by the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Health

10 April 2012

Asset Transfer

The Forum User Group (FUG) has now completed a business plan for the first three years of operation. They have kept the public informed via a public meeting held on Thursday 15 March. The next step is for FUG to complete its business plans and report is expected to Cabinet in May.

Olympic Torch Relay

As part of the marathon relay around the UK, the Torch will be carried through Thirsk, Northallerton, Bedale, Aysgarth, Leyburn and Richmond on Wednesday 20 June.

Details of this journey have now been officially released, along with the names of some of the Torch-bearers that will carry it on its 8,000 mile journey around the country.

The two District Councils are planning a day of celebrations to mark the special occasion. They are working with local organisations, tourist attractions, North Yorkshire Sport and voluntary groups to stage sport demonstrations, parades and guards of honour. Richmond School will host teams of children from schools across the County for a special North Yorkshire sports games. It is also hoped there will be a special fly-past by jets from RAF Leeming across Bedale. Local people are being invited to line the streets to greet the Torch.

The Torch arrives in Thirsk by steam train from York. From there, it travels past the race course into the town market place, passing The World of James Herriott before heading for Northallerton. Once in Northallerton, it will go along Thirsk Road, East Road, High Street, South Parade and Boroughbridge Road, passing through the market where a host of sports demonstrations will take place in the town square.

It enters Aiskew and Bedale on the A1 and passes through the town centre on its way to Aysgarth. The Torch, which will be accompanied by a cavalcade of vehicles will only be carried by Torch-bearers in the confines of the towns. On its journey between Market Towns, it will be in convoy mode inside a vehicle.

A series of meetings are being held within schools, sports clubs and parish councils, to help develop plans to celebrate the day.

The Big Swim

Following the launch of the Big Swim in January 2012, that saw the new look Swim Timetables launched at each of the four Leisure Centres, incorporating a brand new layout and updated sessions, we have seen a usage increase in nearly all areas that had previously been identified as low use.

To encourage parents and children to swim together, all four Centres now offer a family swim ticket. Since they were introduced in January, we have sold 384 tickets, equating to over 1,500 swims.

In the lead up to the Olympic Games, each Centre is also offering a "2012 Swim", a designated session each week where everybody can swim for just £2.12. These sessions alone have attracted nearly 250 swimmers into the pools at times that have historically been the quietest at all Centres.

In February, we hosted a "Big Swim 2012 Challenge" in support of Help for Heroes. The approved fundraising event was open to swimmers of all age and abilities with three challenges to choose from:-

- Gold = 20 days to swim 12km
- Silver = 20 days to swim 12 lengths (6km)
- Bronze = 20 days to swim 1,200 metres (1.2km)

We have had over 50 people sign up to the challenge, ranging from 8 year old children, through to a 60+ swim group. The challenge was very well received and we have raised in excess of £2,500 for the charity.

Next on the agenda is a Big Swim Open Week, this will coincide with the Olympic Torch crossing our district in June and end with Big Swim Open Day on the Saturday. During this week, we will be targeting specific groups to encourage people to try new aquatic activities in all four of our pools, as well as offering incentives on all our membership options.

Overall, swimming use seems to be on the increase again. For the first six months of this financial year, swimming was showing a decrease of 5.9% on previous years. Whereas to date, in the second half of the year, we have seen an increase of 10.5% in swim usage compared to last year.

South West Sowerby Development

A new recreation project will be lead by the Council in South West Sowerby using land and funding provided by the developer of the new parish site. The project is engaging local sports clubs, the Parish Council and the local secondary school.

Healthy Business Scheme

The Environmental Health Team are about to introduce a Healthy Business Scheme across Hambleton. This is a purely voluntary scheme aimed primarily at small businesses which do not have the resources to deal with such issues. The schemes look to assist businesses by:-

- Offering practical advice on Health & Safety issues
- Using the opportunity to inform staff on healthy lifestyle issues
- Advice food businesses how to achieve high standards in food handling/preparation to help give them access to national contracts
- Sign posting to other organisations that can provide advice on energy and water efficiency, waste management, environmental awareness, etc. to help businesses reduce cost and improve profitability. This work will be carried out wholly with existing resources by refocusing existing routine work.

Taxi Rank

A district-wide survey is underway on taxi ranks asking taxi users, drivers and businesses whether the existing provision of tanks is adequate. Ultimately, the Licensing Committee will be asked to consider the results of the survey and decide whether we need any change to ranks or indeed additional ranks. The survey forms are available on the Council website and runs until the end of April.

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Cabinet Member for Leisure and Health