

News

Communications Unit
County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD
media@northyorks.gov.uk

‘Strength built on knowledge and expertise’ and ‘local Government at the heart of North Yorkshire’s communities’

The Case for Change

North Yorkshire County Council today unveiled its bid to secure the strongest possible devolution deal for North Yorkshire and York and get rid of unnecessary waste in the existing two-tier system of local government.

National government has been clear that ending the two-tier structure of local government will pave the way for a mayoral-led combined authority and deliver the best available settlement for the region, without delay.

The North Yorkshire proposal promises to deliver high-quality local services to every single person and business in North Yorkshire and to drive a revolution in empowering local communities.

Revealing the county council’s case for change today, leader Cllr Carl Les said: “We deliver nationally acclaimed services to every home in North Yorkshire and our bid for a single council to serve all our residents and businesses draws on a wealth of local knowledge and experience. Our case for change has been developed in collaboration with the public, our partner agencies, the county’s businesses and the community and voluntary sector.

“Our unique understanding of the needs of the whole of North Yorkshire is based on decades of providing high-quality services to every single person here and our extremely effective partnerships at grassroots level. Our bid for a new unitary council for the whole county is built on knowledge and expertise and places local government at the heart of North Yorkshire’s communities.

“It would save at least £30m a year through cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary senior manager and elected member costs. Over five years it has the potential to transform public services and save £252m to plough back into local services. Alongside this, we propose a revolution in empowering residents and businesses with the voice and resources they need to secure what matters to them. Our bid sets out how 25 community networks would enable this change. We are also working in partnership with town and parish councils to further devolve power and resources to some community services and assets, to better suit local people.

“To ensure the public can access local advice and services in person and online, our proposal includes providing offices in every district alongside more than 30 access points. It also preserves the very many local delivery hubs we already have in place.”

Chief Executive Richard Flinton said: “We know North Yorkshire is a good footprint to deliver great countywide services, because we already do it, and our bid sets out how a new single council

would replicate that across all services. Our children’s services are outstanding and adult services nationally acclaimed. The alternative proposal would break these services up, which would be hugely disruptive for our most frail and vulnerable residents as well as to the education of thousands of pupils.”

This view is supported by the education sector. Ian Yapp, chief education officer at the STAR Multi-Academy Trust and chair of the North Yorkshire Schools Forum, said: “Given the turmoil within the education system caused through the past few years by funding, exams changes and COVID-19, I would consider it indefensible to create deliberate upheaval to our education system, especially over the coming months when recovery must be our focus. Our current education structure within North Yorkshire County Council is there and ready to move forwards.”

Richard Flinton continues: “Strong local services need to be delivered at scale to be resilient in the toughest of times and to secure our county’s recovery. We have two national parks, three areas of outstanding natural beauty and many very sparsely populated areas. To effectively serve all communities you need to understand them all individually and in the context of the whole county. Ours is the only proposal that offers this insight based on experience and we have demonstrated repeatedly our ability to move at speed to support the county during emergencies like the current pandemic, flooding and many other significant weather events.

“North Yorkshire has one of the strongest identities of any English county. Our identity is recognised all over the world for its remarkable culture and sense of community, its landscapes and its brands. This needs to be protected and a single council can maximise this value, while protecting our natural assets. We know residents and businesses value, and feel a sense of identity, with North Yorkshire and we feel strongly it should not be broken in half.”

The county council’s proposals have won the backing of the business community, including Bryn Sage, chief executive of Inhealthcare, the Harrogate-based provider of national digital health services. Commenting on the bid, he said: “Like technology, local government needs scale to succeed and deliver responsive services to growing businesses like ours. Recent weeks have shown the importance of having a strong voice on the national stage. We fully support the county council’s plans for a single unitary body to best serve the interests of both North Yorkshire’s residents and business community. Now is not the time for unnecessary disruption or delay.”

Gordon Gibb, CEO of Flamingo Land Ltd, added: “As one of the UK’s most popular visitor attractions, we know the value of the North Yorkshire brand and its importance to the regional economy. We continue to invest in the future of our business and see the single unitary authority as essential for developing the next generation of talent for our workforce.”

The full proposals can be read here

<https://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=18&meetid=4459> and will now go before the county council’s executive on November 3 and full council on November 4. It will be for Government to examine which bids meet their criteria and to consult the public on those that do.

Ends

Pictures show:

1. At Flamingo Land are (from left) Ian Yapp, Gordon Gibb, CEO Flamingo Land Ltd, Nicky Riddell, park executive at Flamingo Land, and Cllr Carl Les
2. From left, Gordon Gibb, Ian Yapp, Nicky Riddell, and Cllr Carl Les



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Press contact: media@northyorks.gov.uk