

Flood Schemes Underway

Flood alleviation work on course across the district

SCHEMES funded by both Hambleton District Council and North Yorkshire County Council are progressing in Northallerton, Romanby and Brompton.

And analysis of a consultation exercise carried out in Thirsk this month on plans to ease the Market Town's problems is underway.

Phase one of work for Northallerton, Romanby and Brompton has already seen work completed. A new inlet grille has been fitted at the Applegarth Car Park culvert, work carried out at Quaker Lane and an overflow route to improve Fullicar Lane Bridge constructed.

On top of that work on

straightening Willow Beck near Chantry Road, a new protection wall and bund behind Chantry Road, a new bridge at Woodenhill Lane (to replace a temporary structure built last year) and improvements to Brompton Beck are underway. And at Easter protection works for Brompton Primary School should begin.

Phase two work will see large scale water holding tanks constructed above Brompton and the Sun and Turker Becks in Northallerton. A storage tank near the Friarage Hospital and improvements to Sun Beck are also being explored. Residents were able to check out the proposals at an exhibition in Northallerton last month.

Members of the Hambleton Flood Forum will be updated on all the schemes at their meeting in April.

● The preliminary findings of a feasibility study into potential alleviation work in Thirsk are on display at Thirsk Library from February 23 – March 4. Local householders and business owners are being asked for their comments on the proposals for the town centre and Springfield estate. They range from building wall and earth embankments to the creation of a flood storage reservoir. The plans will also be available via the councils website www.hambleton.gov.uk until March 19 – comments can also be logged this way.

Discounts Dropping

Discounts granted to owners of second homes and empty properties throughout the district are being reduced from April 1.

Currently owners of furnished second homes enjoy a 50% discount on the full Council Tax - granted under legislation introduced when Council Tax began in 1993.

Recently the Government devolved the setting of the discount to Local Authorities following pressure from some areas because of the high volume of second homes within their districts. This pressure has been particularly high in tourist 'honey pots' - the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales - and has pushed up local house prices and driven local people out of the housing market.

Hambleton - which has about 350 second homes in the district - has decided to reduce the discount to the minimum 10% allowed for in the legislation. "The Council felt that it was inappropriate to be giving discretionary discounts for second homes, which would then put additional pressure on affordable housing in the district," said Councillor Mrs Susan Latter, cabinet spokesman.

"Funds generated from the reduction of these discounts will be spent on local schemes identified by local people, thereby supporting community-based activities".

The discount for empty properties has also been cut by the Authority.

It will drop from 50% to zero from April 1.

Long term empty properties within the district - of which there are about 200 - have been identified as a problem for the Council in helping to meet its housing needs.

"Research conducted as part of the Local Government Bill consultation indicated that reducing the discount for long term empty property would act as an incentive to let or sell unoccupied property," added Councillor Barker.

"It is important that as much of the district's housing stock as possible is properly utilised, whether in owner occupation or letting. We believe removing this discount will reduce the incentive to keep unfurnished empty property for speculative reasons and in time reduce the pressure on housing in the district."

Flushed with Success

HAMBLETON is flushed with success!

For the District Council's 'superloo' has been crowned 'most accessible' in England in a national competition.

The £130,000 facilities in Northallerton also won a Five Star rating in the annual 'Loo of the Year' contest.

And in the 'Attendants of the Year' arm of the competition the loos took one of the commended entries.

The competition sees loos across the country vetted anonymously - judges check that not only do they look good but that they are well cared for.

"This is a wonderful achievement for Hambleton - we built this toilet block from scratch with an in-house team of designers overseeing it," said Cabinet Spokesperson on Environmental Health, Councillor David Blades (pictured right with attendant Alf Caygill).

"They were built to a very high standard and have been very well received by the public. To be singled out for praise in this competition is wonderful for the Council and for the band of Attendants who keep them in pristine condition."

The Applegarth toilet block in Northallerton opened last year replacing a 27 year old facility. It is the first block operated by the Council to be Attendant operated - a 20p charge is levied for each visit.

Featuring a disabled loo, shower (50p charge) and baby changing and feeding accom-



modation, the block was built using the latest in sustainable features. It has reclaimed roof slates, light conservation measures and rainwater is used to flush the toilets and urinals.

Awards also went to

Council run toilets in Market Place, Thirsk; Swainby; Osmotherley; Bridge Street, Bedale; High Street, Stokesley and Park Square, Great Ayton.

The 'Loo of the Year' awards are promoted by the British Toilet Association.

Feed the birds ... but watch out for rats!

Rat infestations in gardens are on the increase.

Householders feeding birds over the winter months are unwittingly attracting these unwanted visitors.

Pest Control Officers have seen an upsurge of visits to homes across Hambleton in the past few months as the rats dine out on bird scraps.

Now they are urging everyone to keep feeding the birds but to take extra care.

Scraps thrown onto the lawn - bread and cake crumbs - are a magnet for rats. Only small quantities should be left out for birds in this way - and if not eaten quickly removed.

The safest - and least attractive option for rodents - is to use a bird table or to hang bird feeders from trees and bushes.

And rats can also be unearthed in compost heaps left idle over the winter.

"They use the warmth and shelter of the compost heap as breeding grounds - and the bird food as nourishment," said Richard Shuttleworth, Environmental Health Technical Officer.

"We don't want people to stop feeding the birds or not to recycle using compost bins. But they must make sure they are taking precautions to prevent an infestation of rats. These

vermin are a problem not only in the countryside but in the towns as well. "Simple steps can be taken to keep them under control and we urge people to follow them."

He said anyone with a rat problem should call the Pest Control Section of the District Council on (01609) 767100.

Treatments of rats and mice in domestic premises are free.

For more details on bird feeding check out www.rspb.org.uk.

Art Stores

An equipment bank has recorded a successful first year.

The 'In2arts' hire scheme run by Hambleton Arts has dealt with more than 60 bookings over the last 12 months.

Set up with funding from Hambleton District Council and Arts Council England, the scheme aims to make it easier for small organisations to stage arts events.

"Before 'In2arts,' small rural organisations often found it hard to stage such events," said John Stokes, Chairman of Hambleton Arts.

"A lack of basic equipment such as staging, lighting and sound equipment was holding a lot of organisations back from staging events. We aim to plug that gap - providing this type of equipment at a fraction of the cost professional hire companies charge."

The equipment available to hire includes modular staging units that are totally adjustable, stage lighting, sound equipment and display boards.

For further details contact Linden or Jean Purvis on (01609) 775507 or in2arts.hire@virgin.net

New priorities drive Hambleton forward

New priorities to drive Hambleton forward over the next four years will be finalised by Members later this month.

They will be shaped with the help of a recent consultation exercise when members of the public listed their key priorities.

They were also asked whether they were willing to pay more to achieve those priorities or trade service improvements for reductions elsewhere.

More parking provision; improved recycling, street cleaning, safety and leisure facilities; and improved flood prevention measures are now being prioritised. Dealing with Housing Benefits will be speeded up and the introduction of concessionary fares for the 14 -18 year olds and greater support for community transport will be explored.

"Last year we committed additional funding of between £300,000 and

£800,000 to support flood alleviation schemes in the District - to be used if other funding is not available," said Cabinet spokesman Councillor Mrs Susan Latter.

"On top of this we are also looking at these new schemes. Whilst 82% of the public said they were willing to pay an additional Council Tax of between £12 and £18 to have these extra services we are conscious all the time of the balance between what people say they want from us and the price they are willing to pay.

"The final stage of the process is for us to set our budget in the light of this additional support for improved services - when I fully expect us to maintain our position as one of the lowest taxing Councils in the country."

Full details of the Council's new priorities, budget and Council Tax will be published in the May edition of the "Hambleton News."

Awards for best of Hambleton



An awards scheme to celebrate Hambleton's prime food and drink producers will hand out its first prizes this autumn.

It is part of a new initiative to forge stronger links between tourism operators and food producers across the district.

The scheme will include annual recognition for best restaurant, tearoom and breakfast as well as food producer, village shop and specialist retailer of the year.

Residents and visitors will be asked to nominate their favourites, which will then be judged by a panel of experts.

The awards will be featured in a brand new Herriot Country eating out guide - 'Flavours of Hambleton' - which will hit the shelves at Easter.

The District Council guide will include details on

child and disabled friendly eating houses, non-smoking policies and the use of local produce.

"Food and drink accounts for 50% of all day visitor spending in the countryside, so it is important we make sure what they get in Hambleton is the best it can be," said Vice-Chairman of the Council, Councillor Mrs June Imeson (pictured).

"We have specialists working all over the district and we want to show them off. We hope that the awards scheme will encourage them to create a distinctive local cuisine to bring even more business into the area."

And Ian Deans, Regional Director of the Countryside Agency (also pictured), added: "Yorkshire hospitality makes Yorkshire special and it is only right that we celebrate the products we have to offer."