

Leader of the Council, Cllr Claire Douglas

Our City, Our Community

It was a great honour to attend alongside the Lord Mayor, veterans, other councillor colleagues, local military representatives, local community representatives and His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Yorkshire Mrs Johanna Ropner the service to commemorate and reflect on the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2. This is a tremendously important year with regard to World War 2 with key dates commemorating the ceasing of hostilities in May and August. Many of us have parents, grandparents or other family members who served for our country across the world in 1939 to 1945. We must all take the time to remember their service and sacrifice and reflect on the devastating impact of war on civilian populations both then and in current conflicts across the world.

There has been an amazing buzz around the city as we've welcomed the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 to York during August and early September. The Welcome Ceremony for the national teams of Canada, Fiji, New Zealand and Spain was a joyous event starting the tournament off in fine style in mid-August. The Lord Mayor and I had the pleasure of welcoming the team captains from each team along with an exchange of gifts. It really has been a fantastic show of the skill, team spirit and competitive drive of these world class female athletes.

I've since attended both the games between Canada v Fiji and New Zealand v Spain. Both amazing and highly energising spectacles. The York Community Stadium was abuzz with families and spectators from across the world. Many of them travelling thousands of miles to support their teams. York has since hosted a further 4 group games and welcomed 10 international teams in total. I'd like to thank World Rugby and the RFU for choosing York as a venue for the group stages of the tournament, it is without doubt an event that our city will remember for years to come and has stimulated a surge in women and girls taking up the sport or attending live rugby games for the first time.

July saw the fantastic news that York Museums Trust (YMT) and particularly the Yorkshire Museum secured funding from both the National Heritage Memorial Fund and public donations to acquire the Melsonby Hoard. A collection of over 800 Iron Age artefacts dating back to 2,000 years ago, found by metal detectorists in a North Yorkshire field. I would thoroughly recommend that everyone visits the Yorkshire Museum to see some of the items and learn more about this nationally significant find that has been secured for our city and the nation. Thank you to everyone across YMT and other supporting organisations for your collective work and expertise that has made this acquisition possible.

You may recall that I reported via Full Council in July the initiation of a network of York based residents and organisations active in humanitarian work in Ukraine. We have recently met for the second time. The network has been named the York Ukraine Bridge. Members are frequently visiting Ukraine and particularly Lviv. Working with local representatives and civic leaders to support in the rebuilding of the country and getting resources to support medical and civilian life on a day-to-day basis. If anyone in York, involved in humanitarian work in Ukraine is interested in joining the group please let me know and I can introduce you to our network of exceptional volunteers and professionals.

York Central Development Update

Following the opening of the impressive travel routes through the development in July adjustment from both cyclists, pedestrians and road users has gone well. Homes England are working with the Council's highways teams to permanently close a section of Leeman Road. This will enable the National Railway Museum to start constructing the long awaited and much anticipated new Central Hall. McLaren Arlington, the York Central developers, have been holding public engagement events with local communities over the summer. This is in preparation for the submission of the Reserved Matters planning application for Phase 1 of the development. Network Rail also continue to make good progress towards the submission of the planning application for the new, accessible Wilton Rise Bridge. Both planning applications are pivotal for the successful delivery of the project and are expected to be submitted to the Planning Authority in the coming months.

York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority

In July two important funds were approved by the members of the Combined Authority. They both sit within the Mayoral Investment Fund and drive delivery of the Combined Authority's Economic Framework. They will be launched for applications over the coming months:

Movement, Activity and Sport Investment Fund

The £2.75m programme has been co-designed by a steering group of sector experts and specialists and sets out a series of proposals to drive positive change through sport.

The steering group explored a wide range of options to arrive at a recommended approach to seize the opportunities from movement, activity and sport in York and North Yorkshire in driving economic regeneration of the region. The fund has a focus on ensuring the readiness and welfare of the workforce and improving the health of residents to remain or become more economically active. In the wider community setting this work aims to support community cohesion, mental wellbeing, youth engagement and positive diversion away from anti-social behaviour and crime.

The steering group has determined four key priority actions/interventions:

Behaviour Change Campaign:

Developing and implementing a behaviour change campaign to promote the use of movement, activity and sport as a mechanism for improving well-being and reduced inequalities. Additionally, to influence decision makers, policy makers and funders (those who have the potential to effectuate and perpetuate long-term, sustainable change). Creating a shared narrative and building a broad campaign around 'Healthy and Thriving Communities', with an emphasis on the movement, activity and sport ambitions within the identified priority groups. Elevating and amplifying what is strong and available at present.

Additional Support for Police Fire and Crime Community Funds:

Enhancing the Community Fund and the Community Safety/Serious Violence Fund with a boost to their annual grant funding investment - supporting a targeted call for projects relating to prevention and early intervention that are routed in 'movement, activity and sport.

Open Grant Programme – supporting early intervention and prevention (health), participation for women and girls, rural isolation and disability sports and inclusion. Supporting traditional and non-traditional settings to increase and develop sustainable opportunities for priority groups to engage.

Workforce Development – A programme of workforce development will be developed to ensure inclusion is maintained beyond the lifetime of the fund, supporting traditional and nontraditional settings - encouraging collaboration and the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience.

And:

Men's Mental Health Investment Fund

The £715,000 programme has been co-designed by a steering group of sector experts and specialists and sets out a series of actions to drive positive change through men's mental health awareness raising and additional interventions. National and local research data reports the leading cause of death for men under the age of 50 as suicide (and 3 in 4 suicides being men), and men's mental health being the principal cause of male sickness absence.

In York and North Yorkshire poor mental health among men is also a major contributor to long-term sickness absence, reduced workforce participation, and increased pressure on local NHS, criminal justice, and social care systems. Four key areas of work have been identified, that inter-relate and will explore and extend understanding and contribution to improving men's mental health across the region.

- 1) **Mapping what's out there:** An early and rapid exercise to identify what provision exists (formally and informally).
- 2) **Behaviour change campaign:** Utilise behaviour change campaign methodology, and an influencer led campaign to encourage local dialogue, breakdown cultural barriers and ensure the region is given a distinctive voice in shaping the national strategy by demonstrating regional leadership in this area.
- 3) **Testbed and Innovation:** Leading by example. Proposal for a workplace pilot within the CA (and possible roll-out of a framework to other major public sector employers). Ensuring the CA is maximising its potential to learn from its own 'male dominant workforces,' for example within the police or fire services, in the first instance.
- 4) **Investing in Men's Mental Health:** Responsive Grant Fund. Considering the developments above, a grant pot has been ringfenced to support interested organisations make transformational change to their practice and offer - designed to invest in infrastructure changes and opportunities to embrace positive, sustainable actions/activities that support and strengthen the collective male workforce.

Chief Executive Recruitment Update

Recruitment of the new Chief Executive of the Council, who will come into post in April 2026, has begun. It goes without saying that this is a hugely important appointment for the Council and our city. Applications for the role have now closed and with almost 40 applications it will prove to be a highly competitive process. Interviews, assessments and panels will be taking place across September and October. I hope that by the time of my next report I will be able to make a recommendation to Council for an appointment.

Delivering for our City

The following seven Executive Member reports highlight the breadth and depth of work going on across the Council to deliver for the citizens of York on a daily basis. Many thanks to all the council officers who support this programme and deliver programmes, projects and services tirelessly day in and day out. None of this would happen without you.

Executive Member for Economy and Culture, Cllr Pete Kilbane

The economy of York continues to outperform most other parts of the UK. This was confirmed last week when York topped the table of 50 UK Cities in the Demos-PwC Good Growth Index¹. The report looked at a whole host of economic indicators including thriving high streets, housing, transport, and access to skills. It describes these as “factors that make a place feel invested in, future-focused and full of opportunity”. It says successful cities create “the conditions and public priorities that can inform these choices, and the principles that help put place-led, inclusive growth into practice.”

We are pleased that the strategic direction of our administration has helped create the conditions for economic success, but we understand that the real work is done by the businesses, networks, civic institutions and council staff who, day in and day out, deliver for our city. My thanks go out to all of them.

As Keynes pointed out, our “animal spirits” drive business growth as much as cold hard analysis. Given the success of the city, in the face of some national trends, it is incumbent on all Members to help maintain confidence in our economy by continuing to be positive about the future. The temptation some may have to talk York down for short term political gain must be resisted for the long term good of all our residents. With this in mind, we continue to work hard to ensure everyone living in the city benefits from its economic success.

Deprivation, poverty and inequality can be found in many parts of York. We are currently engaging on our anti-poverty strategy and are clear that growth in our economy needs to be inclusive. The public consultation is open until 29th September and we encourage all residents and organisations to have their say.

As another successful summer in the city, with many cultural highlights, draws to a close we look forward to an exciting autumn. Haunted York is already upon us and the York Food Festival starts tomorrow. In November, running alongside the globally renowned Aesthetica Film Festival and UNESCO EXPO, will be the UK Film Production Summit. Over 100 major UK production companies (e.g. Paramount, BBC, ITV, Channel 5, Channel 4, Aardman) will all be here, showing that we mean business for the creative industries in York. This presents an enormous opportunity for investment in York and North Yorkshire and further bolsters our status as a UNESCO City of Media Arts.

Thanks go out again to Cherie Federico and Aesthetica for organising all these great, and internationally relevant, events which has York teeming with artists and creatives from all over the world. We are a city that welcomes strangers and celebrates diversity. At a time when many are trying to divide us by ethnicity and create conformity, creative culture smashes down those walls and highlights, probes and celebrates everything that makes us all human.

¹ <https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/good-growth.html>

Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People, Cllr Bob Webb

Since the last report there have been several opportunities to celebrate the excellent work of our young people and partners.

Firstly, towards the end of July, York Youth Festival took place in Rowntree Park. This event was led by York Youth Council and was the result of the 'Make Your Mark' campaign and vote that takes place in schools across the country. Children are asked to vote for their top priorities and in York young people voted to prioritise culture, leisure and sport. The event included live music provided by young people, sports activities and, of course, free food.

July concluded with a visit to St. Nick's and the Forest School to see the brilliant work they are doing to link very young children with nature. This event was co-produced with Parent Champions and the Parents Forum. It was a hugely successful example of the Council listening to local people with lived experience and giving them the support to make events happen in the community.

At the beginning of August, we saw the annual celebration event for Children in Care and their carers. It was certainly the best attended so far and thanks go to the Community Stadium for hosting and to council staff who worked tirelessly to make a great day for the young people and their family, friends, foster carers and loved ones.

SEND Hub

This weekend will see the launch of the SEND Hub based at the Clifton Family Hub. This is another example of co-production that we should all celebrate. Working with the Parent Carer Forum, Charities, Young People, Health, Education and other partners we are in the position to open a space to help parents and young people find the support they need, all in one place.

This is a great example of how this administration has brought different bodies together for the good of people in York. I hope that if local councillors receive concerns about SEND, they can direct residents to council staff and to the support available through the SEND Hub.

Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency, Cllr Jenny Kent

Beautiful York for people and pollinators

We made a commitment to take meaningful action on our Pollinator policy in 2023. I am really delighted to report that our sustainable planting has continued to prove its worth; it looks great, it has survived both the wettest Spring in 2024 and one of the hottest, driest Summers on record, it has helped feed our precious pollinators which sterile bedding plants do not, and it has saved money and carbon emissions by cutting vehicle use to repeatedly plant and rip up plants twice a year, not to mention the importation and green housing of the plants themselves, and the additional watering they required.

<https://www.york.gov.uk/environment-animals/buzz-york#:~:text=The%20'Buzz'%20About%20York'%20initiative,and%20the%20difference%20we%20make>

And how beautiful are the wildflowers on Station Rise? We continue to see people stopping to admire them and take photographs. I want to thank the Bar Walls team, St Nicks, The Grand Hotel, York Cares, the UoY for the fantastic collaboration that produced our York Walls in Bloom wildflower display, and the many volunteers who will come back to help scythe the area shortly, in preparation for another burst of colour next year. We have been contacted by local schools and people wanting to do the same thing; I look forward to seeing projects like this crop up all over the City.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn862vnq36po>

<https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/25298366.drought-puts-pressure-york-bar-walls-wildflowers/>

Climate

The wildfires on North York Moors have affected 25 square km of precious natural habitat. Huge thanks and gratitude are due to the firefighters who worked continuously to put these fires out and avert further damage. But this is a grim reminder that our climate is already changing and makes every step we take to reduce emissions and restore nature around us, so important.

Over the summer we have:

- 1) Approved the outline business case for a green energy park at Harewood Whin to progress to a full business case. This is a flag in the ground for York's journey to becoming an energy independent City, protected from market shocks and the whims of leaders across the world who may not have York's or the UK's best interests at heart, and a step towards reducing energy costs for York people. It also showcases the benefits of devolution, and partner working with the Mayor of York and North Yorkshire. I want to thank the careful, detailed thinking of the team, who have ensured that all future development is externally funded and at no risk to CYC.
- 2) Launched the sale of passivehaus homes at Duncombe Place. The scheme was developed by the previous administration, and we have changed requirements so that all future development on council land will be both Passivhaus standard and 100% affordable, but the reduced cost of energy bills, comfortable temperatures, self-generating energy from solar pv and air source heat pumps, and continuous freshly filtered air which will make pollutants and mould a thing of the past, alongside tree planting, community green spaces and vegetable gardens, is a legacy to be celebrated. We are excited to continue with the largest Passivhaus development projects in the UK across our other sites, for 100% affordable housing.

- 3) Been granted an additional £205k from Mayoral DESNX funding for solar, battery/EV. This is in addition to funds to decarbonise Yearsley swimming pool, Acomb Explore library and Joseph Rowntree School, and a tribute to the team's efficiency and timely completion of previous projects and will be applied to St Marys, Wigginton and Elvington Primary schools, York Crematorium and Moor Lane Youth Centre.
- 4) Welcomed the White Rose Forest and representatives from across the country to York at England's Community Forest conference in July. We showcased the York Community Woodland, local volunteer and school tree planting, our tree walks and our six county Champion Trees in the Museum Gardens. These are the biggest examples in Yorkshire identified by the Tree Register and are between 80 and 150 years old.

Environment and Place

York has had another busy summer and the environmental services teams have worked hard to keep the city looking good. I look forward to bringing news of our new Neighbourhood Caretakers Team, who will be out and about in our communities shortly, in the next Executive Report.

We are shortly launching 'For Your Convenience', a refresh of the 'Take a Seat' initiative, in partnership with local businesses and organisations, and sponsorship from our toilet contractor Healthmatic and the York Bid. 52 participating spaces will display a sticker in their window describing accessibility, step free access, seating and toilet provision, free for those that need them. Huge thanks to our accessibility team who have done painstaking work to get this right, the Toilet Stakeholder Group and Place Scrutiny Committee who helped inform this, and equally huge thanks to our City businesses who are helping make York an easier place to spend time, for everyone. The list of partners can be found here:

<https://www.livewellyork.co.uk/FYC> and we would love to hear from any organisation who would like to sign up.

I also want to mention our **Environmental Protection** team. Complaints of noise and odours often rise in the summer months, and this year was no exception. We have a very small team, who, despite summer holidays, have pursued resident concerns with dedication and professionalism.

In total, we have the three original applications:

- Yearsley Swimming Pool
- Acomb Explore Library
- Joseph Rowntree School

with a total grant allocation of £216,000 and five supplementary sites that we've applied for:

- St Mary's Primary; Wigginton Primary; Elvington Primary; York Crematorium; Moor Lane Youth Centre, with a total ask of £205,000.

Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion, Cllr Katie Lomas

Quarter 1 Monitor

The financial monitor shows that we have a projected overspend and Officers are working hard to realise savings to prevent this. The ongoing work to manage spend and transform the organisation is vital to ensure that we can eliminate the overspend by the end of the financial year.

Transforming an organisation is not easy but we are determined to do this in a transparent and efficient manner.

Major Projects

I am grateful to the work of scrutiny in exploring some of the issues relating to the Station Gateway project, and also to Officers for finding solutions that have allowed us to move forward towards completion of the project, despite the delays and increases in costs.

Amended plans for the revised Castle Gateway Project have been submitted to Planning following work to reprofile the scheme to achieve the aims set out by the Executive including more green space, sustainable planting, accessible play and seating areas and retaining Blue Badge holder parking spaces to protect access to the city centre. The design is sympathetic to the historic setting as well as the sensitivities of aspects of the site including Clifford's Tower and the former women's prison.

Financial Inclusion

The recent Welfare Benefits Outturn demonstrated the excellent work being done by the Council and partners across our city to support those who need it most.

We continue to use the data provided by the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) platform to directly target residents who could be in need of more support. All those who seek or are approached for help are offered the benefit of holistic support including debt management advice, benefits advice and support and other support that makes it far more likely that the financial assistance will help them to resolve the difficulties they are facing.

The table below shows a summary of the schemes operated and the value of the support as well as the number of awards made:

Discretionary support schemes	Spend 2024/25	No of awards
YFAS scheme	£231,036	408
HSF 5 & 6 Discretionary Grants Scheme	£162,439	1,114
HSF 5 direct payments working age CTS customers	£507,840	4,545
HSF 6 direct payments working age CTS customers	£398,130	3,426
Food & Fuel Vouchers 24-25	£203,598	3,294
Total	£1,503,043	12,787

The Government has announced that the Household Support Fund (HSF) will end and be replaced by the Crisis and Resilience Fund which will also incorporate other funds and grants. We do not yet have the details of this fund.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

The draft strategy is currently being consulted on, following an extensive process of consulting with organisations across the city to put the draft together. The Anti-Poverty Strategy will pull together work being done across our city to address both causes and symptoms of poverty. The strategy has three objectives, to help people struggling right now, to make sure fewer people end up in poverty and to make York a more equal and affordable city for the long term. The consultation ends on 29 September.

Human Rights and Equalities Board (HREB)

The public meeting of the Board will happen on 3 November. This is an important event in the HREB Calendar, where partners from the Board will share the work being done to advance Human Rights and respond to elements of the Human Rights City Network Indicator Report. This year the meeting will focus on the pay gaps that exist across employers in the city, healthy life expectancy and perception of Human Rights.

Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, Cllr Lucy Steels-Walshaw

City of York Council accepts £1 million from the Trailblazer programme

City of York Council has accepted £1m as part of the Trailblazer programme to support people who are not working due to health-related issues into work. This fund will support people who have been unable to work and unpaid carers with routes into employment. Joining up systems through health, skills and employment shows a commitment to creating workplaces that value wellbeing and diversity. There are 15 identified schemes ranging from mentoring to mental health support where people will be provided with support tailored to their needs. Employers will also be supported to create inclusive workplaces, as well as receive support around inclusive workforce development which will advise on adaptations and additional requirements in the workplace. Working to reduce isolation will lead to healthier outcomes across the whole city.

Strategy launched to support Autistic and ADHD residents

‘A City That Works for All’ was released in draft form earlier this year. This strategy is about working with people with ADHD and Autism and moving forward with embedding the strategy across the city. I was really pleased to see that strategy taking into account views and situations from a wide range of residents and the amount of co-production that has gone into creating the draft strategy. This report sets the vision for an increase in an inclusive, supportive and understanding York.

The strategy has been developed with neurodivergent residents, families and organisations. The draft public consultation was open throughout Summer with a range of opportunities and ways for people to feed into this. From the consultations there are over 200 comments and the final version which takes these into account will be available this Autumn. This strategy sets the way for the whole city, we are aware that there is a huge underdiagnosis in people with Autism and ADHD and want to create a city that works for everyone, for those both with and without a diagnosis.

A Health Needs Assessment – Telling the Story of Women’s health in York

At the July Health and Wellbeing Board the Women’s health needs assessment was discussed. This assessment presents a strategic overview of women’s health in York, shaped around six key themes to promote gender equity and wellbeing. While women tend to live longer than men, they often experience poorer health outcomes.

Historically, healthcare systems and treatments have not fully accounted for women’s specific needs. The Board focussed on where City of York Council and partners can influence change through commissioning, funding, and collaborative action.

This assessment is a starting point, not a final answer. Data gaps hinder full understanding of unmet needs. Immediate care and long-term physical and mental health challenges require sustained attention. We remain committed to listening to women’s voices in York, deepening our understanding, and working collaboratively to shape services that reflect the lived experiences and which support the health and wellbeing of women.

Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities, Cllr Michael Pavlovic

Council will be pleased to hear that the process to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which was proposed during the development of the Local Plan, is now close to being finalised. Following an extensive consultation, the public hearing with an independent inspector took place earlier this month and we are now waiting for the report of his findings. Hopefully the recommendation to introduce CIL in York for the first time will be presented to a future Full Council shortly. It will see significant additional funds coming into the city for infrastructure projects and will be used by not just the council itself but also by Parish Councils, areas with a Neighbourhood Development Plan and non-Parished areas. Details of the proposals will be announced as soon as the Inspector's Report is received.

The development at Duncombe Place is now being completed and is one of the largest Passivhaus housing projects in the country and the first in York. Whilst the development itself was instigated and contracted by the previous Liberal Democrat/Green Coalition Administration and therefore contains a number of market sale properties as well as the shared ownership and social rent homes, the project itself has enabled us to learn a great deal that we can apply to our future Housing Development Programme schemes. It was therefore both surprising, yet unsurprising to hear the Liberal Democrat Group Leader decrying the merits of the market sale homes at Executive recently, homes his administration instigated; a perfect example of why the public lose trust in politicians.

We commend all our incredibly skilled and committed teams who have worked on this and our other very exciting 100% affordable housing projects. They should be rightly proud of a beautifully designed and constructed scheme, where the social aspects of the community living there as well as health and wellbeing of residents have been the focus of the design.

The housing development at Burnholme is also close to being completed and will complement the design principles of Duncombe and shortly announcements regarding the Ordnance Lane, Willow Bank and other schemes and the pipeline of York's most ambitious affordable council housing for generations will be presented to the Executive shortly for approval. The need to not only meet the requirements of an ageing population, given the evidence we already have from the change between the censuses of 2011 to 2021, but the reduction in numbers of young people and families, mean the importance of delivering the homes people can actually afford is vital. We therefore make no apologies for ensuring that every project we commit to is deliverable within the budget and meets the needs of the community we serve.

Officers have also been working on the report for scrutiny on the Local Delivery Neighbourhood Model in which services and engagement with residents will be focused on where and when they need them. The cross-party support for this approach is very much welcomed during a number of earlier scrutiny meetings and we want to continue to discuss the proposals with all colleagues, external stakeholders and the public, not just during the preparation phase but also as it is rolled out.

Executive Member for Transport, Cllr Kate Ravilious

The transport and highways team have had a challenging few months with vacancies and sickness leave leaving the team thinly stretched. I'm really grateful to the entire team for stepping up to the challenge and keeping everything running smoothly during this period, and in particular to those officers who helped to cover some of the vacant positions. I'm glad to report that the team is now nearly back up to capacity and in August we were delighted to welcome Dave Atkinson into the role of Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services, and Joshua Singer as Head of Transport Projects. We are now confidently moving forward and have an exciting Capital Programme to deliver.

York Station Frontage continues apace and it's fantastic to see the new public realm emerging. This month work has begun on Tea Room Square, redesigning this area into a more pedestrian friendly space. The remaining bus stops are being relocated into their new area in front of the station. Everything is on track for this phase of the project to be complete by spring of 2026.

The City Centre Sustainable Travel Corridor plans will be going out to public consultation soon, but have been delayed due to some design challenges that needed to be resolved. I'm looking forward to introducing this exciting project to the city and listening and responding to the feedback we receive.

At my September Decision Session I'll be considering options for the Bishopthorpe village 20mph scheme. I'm delighted to see how successful this scheme has been in reducing traffic speeds and creating a safer village environment. The majority of residents have expressed support for the lower speed limit and report how they feel more comfortable walking, wheeling and cycling which is good to hear. We made a commitment in our Local Transport Strategy to make travel safer for pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists, and lower speed limits are a key tool in achieving this outcome. We're grateful to Mayor Skaith for funding a speed reduction programme in the most recent local transport settlement and we'll now be using our learnings from Bishopthorpe village to start delivering similar benefits elsewhere.

Throughout September we've been supporting 'Catch the Bus month', encouraging everyone to try the bus and enjoy some of the fabulous things to do and places to go in York. The longer operating hours for our Park and Ride services have gone down well and we're really pleased to see people embracing bus travel as a convenient way to get around. Working together with BetterPoints – a free mobile app rewards system for walking, cycling and bus travel – we're motivating everyone by offering extra rewards which can be used in high street stores and cafes, or donated to charity, when you travel by bus this month.

And if this isn't encouragement enough, we're also offering inspiration to get out and about in our wonderful city this month with the York Walking Festival. Running until 28th September, the festival offers over 30 guided walks taking place throughout the city and with routes suitable for all ages and abilities. The iTravel team have done a fabulous job in co-ordinating and promoting the festival and I warmly recommend joining a walk, discovering new places and making new friends.