



Buzzing - A Popular Asset to the Town
(Wed. at 3.30 - most tables taken)

Our Efforts
to Improve
the Town
Continue in
2026

**Not For Profit
Citizen
Journalism**

WETHERBY
ISSUE 87 until Feb 2026

**Free
Press**
Est 2021 Facts & Integrity

Why It Should Not Be Called the 'Wetherby News'

Our letter published nationally in the influential Private Eye showed what little news about Wetherby, Boston Spa & villages our local paper reported in 2024 (see Issue 86). Here are the figures for 2025:



**51 papers - 57 News Items
One News Item Costs £1.96!
3 Letters about the Area**

Here is just one example of low standards when it does manage to include a Wetherby area story. This image of the old building was published **8 days after new Spoons opened!**

Image of
Sant
Angelo

spoon pub op
er £2.9m refurbish

not the new
Angel Inn!

more about
Wetherby News
on P10



Original
stone
made
powerful,
interior
including
beams, flag
flooring, bar
panelling and
tiling.
Historical
local history
artwork and
characters
area are
displayed
out the pub.
A landscaped
garden with
a seating
area.

more about
Wetherspoons
on P12

Moores Collapses

Moores Furniture Group on the Thorp Arch estate has gone into administration with a loss of 147 jobs. Their customer list and other intellectual property assets have been sold to Wren



Kitchens. They hope to provide alternative employment for the 336 remaining staff. This large furniture company has supplied kitchens to housebuilders since 1947. This is sad news for the

staff and our area - we wish those affected all the best.

Full Issue at www.pkmarketing1.com/wetherby-free-press

We cater for the 1000s of **DIGITALLY EXCLUDED** with a **Full Copy at Library, Phoenix Café**
& 400+ promo copies at *Morrisons, Pubs, Cafés, Dentists, Care Homes, Churches, Hairdressers, Shops*

Shop Front Competition

WINNER

**NOT JUST FOR
CHRISTMAS**



Like owning a dog, our competition is not just for Christmas - it's for the whole year round. It is for the shop owners who make a big effort throughout the year to promote themselves (and help to attract shoppers to the town).



Paws Grooming on Crossley Street has always impressed us with their attractive and eye-catching displays. We thank business owner Vanessa for cheering us up with all her efforts. She tells us that it's a family effort and the older generation, families and children seem to appreciate it most.

Wetherby Business Association (Chair Jamie Hullah) has an annual 'Christmas Window Dressing Award'. They promoted it on their Facebook page before Christmas but we looked in vain for the winner. There was no information on their website either. The only 2025 news was 'Xmas Lights Switch On' with 'details to follow' - the details did not follow. *We cannot take them seriously, especially compared to Otley & Ripon Business Improvement Districts (BID).*

CONGRATULATIONS!



**British
Empire
Medal
for charity
work**



More on page 7

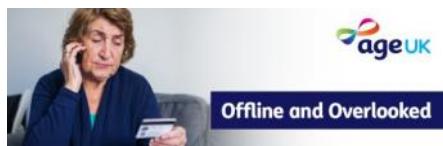
Thank You to our 1000s of Readers

Please send your News, Views & Events to:
WetherbyFreePress@PM.me



Don't Miss Out - Join our Large Mailing List by emailing: WetherbyFreePress@PM.me

Our Campaign continues



We **Don't Forget** the many 1000s of people who are offline - those who do not have (or want) internet access or a smartphone.

We ask all organisations to include a phone no. and put information on PAPER eg leaflets

Age UK have a similar campaign.



room for saying Jim Morrison was a terrible musician. Sorry, but we do not slam The Doors in this house.

* One of my New Year's resolutions this year is to be less passive aggressive. Unlike **SOME** people.



Couch Potato



* As a teacher, people often ask me why I prefer to teach maths instead of English. I tell them it's because fractions speak louder than verbs.

* Human: So I get anything I want? Devil: Yes. Human: And all you want is my shoe? Devil: Just the bottom part, but yes.

* What do you call a bee that can't make up its mind? A maybee.

* Lettuce all take a moment to appreciate salad puns

Back Home after a Morning Walk



More funnies on back page

As well as the *Wetherby Free Press* page on [facebook](#) there's the *Wetherby Deserves Better* page too.

Both are independently run from the newsletter.



Follow & Don't Get



Next Wetherby Town Council Mtg

Tues 10 Feb at 7pm

www.wetherbytowncouncil.gov.uk

If you go, please tell us your views on it.



Statement on X98/99 from New Operator Go-Ahead

Ben Gilligan is Managing Director of *East Yorkshire Buses (Go-Ahead)* responsible for *Procters* of Leeming Bar, who run the X98/99 to Leeds. He asked us what we meant when we said that "Go Ahead's attitude is poor" in Issue 86.

We wrote back:

“ Dear Ben, Please remember that I have been campaigning for better bus services in Wetherby for over 20 years now. I have often criticised the poor work done by Metro/WYCA on behalf of bus companies because they wouldn't / daren't do so. And possibly because they have no real interest in the passenger, just the bottom line (profit). Wetherby would not have a Boxing Day service if it was not for me. We have a *Town Council* who doesn't give 2 hoots about buses and never have done (no permanent agenda item at any meeting, not interested in the bus blocking issue etc).

We promote bus use and praise good quality bus companies, like Go-Ahead. We were delighted when *Transdev* introduced 'Sky Class' to the X98/99 and promoted it as much as we could (Town Council did nothing). We got on great with Alex Hornby initially but unfortunately his company could not accept any criticism, all of which was completely justified. We are not the '*Wetherby News*' and print their PR guff without question. When passengers (like myself) suffer we tell the public. So they ignore us, which is unprofessional and immature.

We promoted you as a quality company too when you won the contract. I hope *Go Ahead* do not react in the same way as *Transdev* to criticism. I am not going to go into all the reasons why I think the company's attitude has been 'poor' but it is based on my wife's experiences, friends too and what I've seen on social media, and not least your attitude to my pointing out the situation at the library and your own response suggesting I ask places to get in touch with you. I would do it with pleasure if I was paid the same as the person in your company whose actual job it is to promote the route. I checked today and there are still out-of-date *Harrogate Bus Company* timetables in Wetherby library with **WRONG** times for the X98/99. You should have contacted them by now and asked them to remove or replace them with their new ones.

I respectfully suggest you write a statement about your first 3/4 months for us to publish. Come clean to your X98/99 passengers - admit there's been difficulties, tell us what they are, apologise for shortcomings and provide some indication that you will do your best to improve. And give your own email address to contact for any further problems. People respect accountability and honesty and we will acknowledge that. If you want, the statement could include why you disagree with our opinion that your attitude is poor. It will be published unedited and we will not comment on it, unless there are factual inaccuracies.

It should also include * clarification of your main methods of communication with passengers eg which accounts on X/Twitter you use when there are delays * which stops you use / miss out when there are city centre demonstrations or events like fun runs etc * why you use the Eastgate roundabout route into Leeds instead of Byron Street, which can avoid 10 - 15 mins delay * why drivers stop to drop people off but are very reluctant to let people on when the bus is very late, makes no sense at all and frustrates a lot of people.

Finally, you should bear in mind we had a, what I would describe as, a 'good' service when First ran it in their final, say, 5 years. Yes, most of their drivers had no customer service skills but as long as the bus turned up within a few minutes of the timetable most passengers are happy. Reliability is the most important thing. Their tickets were good value too with such a big West Yorkshire network. Every single bus on the route was a double-decker with a *Metro* newspaper, usb etc. At the moment *Go-Ahead* with your all single-decker operation is not as reliable, especially at weekends. Your buses and drivers have to come from Leeming Bar every day, don't they? We wonder how long it takes for a replacement to arrive when one breaks down.

We prefer to take the bus but have used our car more recently. That is a shame, and we will not be alone. As *Transdev* proved, if the service is attractive, new passengers get on board (they claimed 20% increase after 1 year of Sky Class).

Let's hope for better things in 2026.

Best Wishes, ””

Ben's Statement:

“ Paul, As I am sure you can imagine, this has been a major mobilisation for the team at *Procters* who have worked hard to deliver a quality service. In September, we had a number of issues with drivers who had been due to join us not being suitable for the service which we have had to react to fairly quickly. This has seen a number of drivers recruited and trained to the extent that the rota is now fully staffed. Given the general challenges of being a bus driver and recruiting in North Yorkshire this is no small feat and a credit to the team.

The buses were obtained at short notice and we are due to take delivery of brand new Volvo single deckers in February that have been bought specifically for this contract. They will provide additional capacity with further seats available for customers.

We do acknowledge there were a number of customer complaints in the early stages of operating the service but these have gone down significantly and we have had no penalties levied by *WYCA*. Positive comments from customers have been frequent.

In terms of communications, it is not helpful to send them directly to the directors of the business as we are too remote from the day to day operation. All our services are important but we have 400 vehicles and nearly 1000 staff across our businesses and under our devolved model we encourage our depot teams to be accountable and trust them to manage the issues of the day (both good and bad). Customer contacts is via our call centre:

<https://help.eastyorkshirebuses.co.uk/hc/en-gb/categories/360002708339-Contact-us>

We do encourage customers to download our app as we provide service updates through this and these can be tailored to customers' individual stops. We are shortly due to go live with our *Go Ahead West Yorkshire* website which will move away from the slightly more generic *East Yorkshire* one.

Running buses can be challenging but that is what we are employed to do and I believe we have done a good job mobilising the X98/X99 in a short space of time. We have started to build up some proper operating data which will allow us to improve the timetable compliance and I am confident that the service will improve further now that traffic conditions have eased. It is easy to be critical without seeing the full operating circumstances and I have witnessed first hand some of the efforts made to reinstate service when there has been disruption on the network.

Kind Regards, ””

Decide for yourselves whether Ben's response contained humility and addressed the issues adequately



Cllr Lamb Finally Responds to Bus Issues - Worth the Wait?

Conservative Cllr Alan Lamb is a board member of the **West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA)** which is responsible for public transport aka **Metro**. He is one of 3 Leeds City Councillors for Wetherby area. In Issue 86 we printed his response to 5 of the 11 issues we put to him.

Here are the remaining ones:

Cllr Lamb's responses are in blue. Metro / WYCA wording is shown in red. Our comments in green.



Cllr Lamb

Cuts To Local Bus Services

6 In Issue 73 we highlight the fact that you inform your social media followers of upcoming bus changes throughout West Yorkshire. But you do not comment on them in your posts, even when there are large scale cuts happening. Do you not think Councillors in your position on the board of WYCA / Metro should have an opinion on large cuts in services? It is particularly surprising as you could make political points against the Labour Mayor. Please inform us why do you not speak out against these cuts in your posts? Cllr Lamb: "As a WYCA Board

Member, my role is to scrutinise and influence policy, not to politicise operational decisions. I focus on constructive engagement to improve services rather than public commentary. The board meetings are held in public and you could attend in person or watch online at the time or later on. I think all those copied in would confirm that I regularly provide challenge to Mayor Brabin and WYCA officers. I am still of the view that franchising will prove to be a very, very expensive way of not improving buses. I truly hope I am wrong about this as we all went to see better buses. I am always trying to improve my social media output. I don't have a team to help me, it's just me and I do as much as I can with the time that I have."

Free Press: Disappointing that Cllr Lamb does not wish to tell us when there are large cuts taking place or give an opinion on them. It seems he either does not read the list of changes or does not want us to know about the cuts. Cllr Lamb has plenty of political opinions / criticisms of Labour councillors and policy on other issues but refuses to state the obvious in his social media posts. Instead he complains about franchising which is not asked about or relevant.

7 Bus blocking at Wetherby bus station exit. Just a matter of time until it happens again, inconveniencing many hundreds of passengers. Just this morning there was a disabled badge holder parked on Castlegate, close to blocking it for buses. Been going on for 4 years and literally nothing has been done to resolve it. Not even a sign on nearby property windows or LCC cones as a temporary measure. Please tell us why you have not introduced any of these temporary measures, that we keep suggesting? Update too please. We will agree to differ that an unwanted / unnecessary yellow box junction which was painted very close by was pure coincidence and not a big Council mistake. A traffic regulation order is currently being progressed by Leeds City Council which will prohibit any parking, even for blue badge holders, in this area. At the moment, traffic enforcement officers can issue a ticket to cars parked on double yellow lines, where a vehicle is blocking the highway (with or without a blue badge), the police are the authority who have the power to act in this situation. On the occasions when the issues have been reported to them, they have tried to attend and address the issue, including having 2 vehicles removed. I will reiterate what I have said to you many times, it would be helpful if you would encourage people to report every incident to the police. Telling Facebook or publishing it in your newsletter 2 weeks later is not helping, particularly when you actively discourage people from reporting. We have also worked hard locally to secure additional traffic warden provision, and they have been paying more attention to this area. Unfortunately, enforcement officers and the police cannot be there 24/7. Even with new measures, I suspect there will still be inconsiderate motorists who will park there while they collect their pizza or fish and chips or whatever. It is hugely frustrating but then crucial that people report it right away. Publicising some tickets and cars being towed away may just help to get the message across.

Cllr Lamb again emphasizes what the public should do, instead of focussing more on his actions as a Councillor. He provides unnecessary comment and information instead of answering the very simple question - why hasn't he introduced the simple temporary measures we suggested? It is disrespectful to ignore questions. We note he does not tell us one thing that he has done to resolve the problem permanently. It is, of course, nonsense to say we have discouraged people from reporting offenders. We live in the real world and have said that you cannot expect the public/passengers to report it when most would assume the driver has done so. You would think reporting incidents to your local Councillor would be encouraged but no, strangely that is not suggested by Cllr Lamb.

8 Bus stop flags in Wetherby. Nothing since Metro / WYCA made an almighty mess of putting new ones up. So now there is half the old type, half the new. I share your concern and have raised with the relevant officers. Cllr Lamb has not copied us in to any correspondence or updated us on progress. Why should we believe what he says? It's been 2 months since he wrote to us and we've not heard anything.

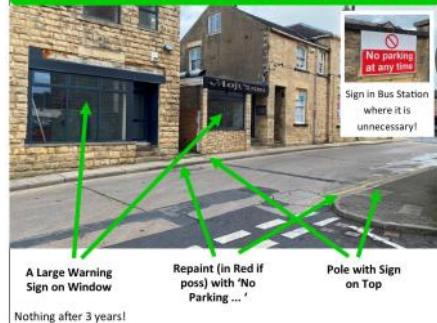
9 Maps at Wetherby bus station. As I have informed you, Metro / WYCA produce very useful maps of the 7 West Yorkshire areas containing all the bus routes. Of course, they do not print any so it is very difficult to plan a trip on a computer screen. These maps promote and encourage bus travel - why is the Wharfedale one not displayed at Wetherby bus station. And Leeds one in Leeds Bus Station etc? It is unbelievable such simple basic things are not done. Your opinion and actions please.

I agree maps are helpful and will ensure this is raised with WYCA officers. No action specified. Why is that so difficult for him? It's called being accountable. Again, we have no proof that he has 'raised' it with officers because he refuses to copy us in to his emails. It's been 2 months since he wrote to us and we've not heard anything.

Plenty of Room for the Wharfedale Route Map

Cont'd on next page

Bus Blocking - Obvious Suggestions



Nothing after 3 years!

A Large Warning Sign on Window

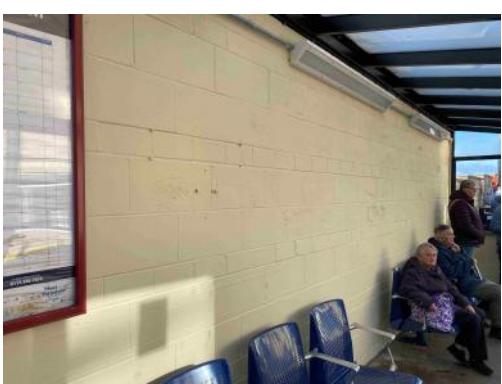
Repaint (in Red if poss) with "No Parking ..."

Pole with Sign on Top

Ignored by All Cllrs & Organisations - Oct 24



Still got old & new. Years since any improvements



cont'd Cllr Lamb Finally Responds to Bus Issues - Worth the Wait?

10 After years of Leeds Bus Station leaking, we currently have the toilets out of action for weeks (at least 3), see photo below. Why does it take so long? Please update me with information (costs) on both these issues and whether or not you are going to follow up this and other issues above. Does anyone ever apologise to the public for these great inconveniences? **Metro / WYCA: "The toilets at the bus station are currently closed following issues in relation to structural issues with the ceiling and water ingress associated with the roof. Initial plans in the work required to complete the work underestimated the amount of damage to the facilities, and only upon removal of wall surfaces and tiling did it become apparent that more extensive, and hence time consuming repairs were required. Works are therefore still progressing to rectify the issues with the contractor JPB and are likely to be completed in December 2025. Current cost estimates for the work stand at around £100,000 and final costs can be shared as required once the work have concluded. In the interim, temporary toilet facilities are in place on site and we apologise for any inconvenience as a result of the essential work required."**



Toilets closed for months

No opinion on this appalling situation from Cllr Lamb. No intention to check on the situation and report back either. Was it completed last month, we wonder. Why was the build so poor in the first place and what lessons were learnt? At least there was some humility shown by WYCA/Metro in the form of an apology but no mention of the final cost the public will have paid for the roof and toilets problems, £millions?

11 Checking W'by bus station this morning, I see that Metro / WYCA have still not updated their timetables for the new X98/99. It is nearly 3 weeks since Go Ahead began running the service. Please could you look into why this is and when we can expect correct information all along the route. **"Unfortunately, there has been a delay with printing and posting of timetables due to a late registration from the operator. Updated timetables have been produced and given to our contractors to post on the GoAhead West Yorkshire X98 X99 route as soon as possible."**

So why was this information not given to the passenger? Instead we have been misled, which could cause great inconvenience. Go-Ahead and Metro/WYCA are BOTH responsible for the situation. No comment on any of this from Cllr Lamb.

On your request to be copied into every email: This isn't appropriate because many communications involve confidential casework or internal discussions that are not relevant to you. Again, I acknowledge that this is taken a long time to get to you and appreciate your patience. Many thanks.

We thank Cllr Lamb for his email but his responses are very disappointing. It is clear to us that he has little real interest in buses. His time and effort goes on populist issues, like his campaign to stop car owners from paying anything towards maintaining car parks, see below. There is no evidence that having Cllr Lamb on the Metro / WYCA board has benefited Wetherby bus passengers in any way. His lack of comment on many of these serious matters says it all.

He isn't even willing to copy us in to ANY (redacted) emails he sends or receives. Other Councillors do copy their emails to the people they represent. We therefore have no idea whether he is following up on any issue. As we have said, we can write direct to Metro/WYCA ourselves if he just gives us their quotes. What is the point of having Councillors if they don't (want to) take issues up?

If Cllr Lamb wants to convince us that he really does care about the bus passengers of Wetherby, he and his many Conservative colleagues should set up a campaign, like he has done for car park charges, see below. Or set up a group like Wetherby & Villages Clean River Group (WAVCRG) set up by his fellow Conservative Linda Richards. It could be called 'Better Buses for Wetherby' with slogans like 'Bring Back Saturday Buses to York & Otley'. We are not holding our breath but you never know.

Cllr Lamb's Campaign to Stop Parking Charges Continues



Councillor Alan Lamb
Leader, Conservative Group, Leeds City Council

LOOK NORTH

No Info Posted on Outcome of City Council Mtg

Cllr Lamb has been successful in attracting publicity for his campaign to reverse the decision to charge for car parking at the Wilderness and Station Road. Last week he was on both BBC Look North & ITV Calendar local evening news programs.

The BBC report was strange as there was no interviewer present and it looked like Cllr Lamb filmed himself as he looked directly at the camera and showed us an almost empty car park.

Being the cynics we are, we wondered if it was filmed on a day and time when you would not expect many cars there eg Xmas Day at 6am. Cllr Lamb provided the information after asking us why we wanted to know. But he did not confirm whether he filmed it himself so we assume he did. The BBC report featured many anti-chargers and did not seek out alternative views. Nobody was asked why tax payers should subsidise car owners when car parks cost money to maintain - the fundamental argument.

ITV Calendar produced a much more professional and balanced report. They asked people parking there, two of whom said they had no problem with it and expected to pay.

Cllr Lamb has told us there is a large amount of anecdotal evidence to show of the detrimental effect of parking charges in this one car park. We have no doubt there is. Making people pay more will always have an effect on behaviour. But we have not heard any clear statement on the alternative to charging ie how the money to pay for maintenance of car parks could be raised without burdening the general public.

Cllr Lamb says "All of the evidence is anecdotal because the council have not been measuring anything that would prove or disprove it." There is nothing to stop Cllr Lamb and his hundreds of Conservative party colleagues and supporters:

- * carrying out this research themselves. They should have measured usage before the charges were introduced to compare with 6 mths after.
- * trying to educate motorists and promote the positive - the still FREE parking available (Morrisons and almost every other car park in town).
- * promoting the town by comparing us to the higher charges in Knaresborough, Harrogate & York (with *Welcome to Wetherby*)

The Beauty of Nature on Our Doorstep - Goosemoor

We hope the start of the new year (and *BBC Winterwatch*) has inspired you to get out 'n about to places like wonderful *Goosemoor*. This nature reserve is down War Field Lane in Cowthorpe. It has 2 *Facebook* groups - Nature Reserve and Nature Reserve Group. The latter has more wonderful images like these.

It is a peaceful place to sit and watch some amazing wildlife. Not just a fantastic variety of birds but also bats, bugs, newts, moths, butterflies and small mammals.

If you would like to help out, they always welcome new volunteers. Details online or contact us if you aren't online.

Great
Spotted
Woodpecker



Thanks to Dave Ward

Bullfinch



Thanks to Mick Lockwood



Boston Spa, Wetherby
& Villages
Community Green Group

usual opportunities to learn, watch & read.

There's also your last chance to petition for a free **daily electricity allowance**, don't miss out".

January newsletter at:

www.bostongreengroup.co.uk

Adrian Balcombe Chair

adrian.balcombe@bostongreengroup.co.uk

Boston Spa, Wetherby and Villages Community Green Group is non-politically affiliated and is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Registered Charity Number 1204438)

"There's lots of opportunities to have your say, encourage our MP & share your thoughts on where Leeds Council should spend their budget in this month's newsletter on our website.

Reflect on the positive stories of 2025, catch up on the expert speakers at the recent 'National Emergency Briefing', as well as the



'Members of the Community Group celebrating local impacts at the Crown in Boston Spa'

Note to Adrian and others that send us information like this to publish.

We will gladly do so but please show some good manners by not sending massive image files of over 1MB (files of less than 200KB are too small so plse don't send them either). Also, plse do not expect us to go online to find information because you have not put it in the email. We ask you to send us ALL the information so that we can quickly and easily copy and paste it.

It is frustrating when these basic requests are not taken notice of. It is surprising too because we are the only publication that can get your message to those offline - the many thousands who are digitally excluded or not on local social media groups.

Groups like this one do great work that readers should know about so it would be a shame to stop publishing it.

'Welcome to Wetherby' Not Promoting Our Great Town

In the last 3 issue of the *Free Press*, we took Cllr Lamb to task for saying that *Wetherby Town Council's Welcome to Wetherby (W2W)* committee was doing an 'excellent job'. He has still not provided us with a single piece of evidence to back up his claim.

Nor has he responded to the articles in Issues 85 & 86, which provided clear examples of just how poor this committee has performed.

Welcome to Wetherby is chaired by *Cllr Dean Buckle (Con)*, see front page. His BEM award was clearly not for his Council work on this committee (we asked for details of his charity work to publish, but he did not reply).

Nor has he responded to our criticism or any of our suggestions to improve Wetherby. We think he should resign and let somebody with creativity, marketing ideas, imagination, writing skills and higher standards do the job.



Here are the final examples of why we think *Welcome to Wetherby* are the opposite of 'excellent':

Rarely on local TV for events (compared to Otley & Knaresborough) * No enthusiasm to bring back Wetherby Show * No interest in promoting Wetherby having the best fed ducks in Yorkshire / UK / World (4,000 bags of duck food sold a year raising £1000s for charity) * Failed to take advantage of national publicity for Tinsel Town (unlike Knaresboro') * Often nothing about the W2W ctte is discussed at Full Council meetings * Lost opportunity to promote the town creatively with a dull Mayor's 2025 Xmas card * Ignoring our campaign to Brighten Up Wetherby

A Visit Britain report just released shows UK tourism is worth £147Billion. How much do you think Wetherby is getting?

Very Unpleasant Email Attacking Councillors

We received an email before Christmas from a woman who praised our councillors from one particular party (without stating any facts to back up her opinion).

She then continued to write a lengthy email of vitriol against two councillors from a different party.

She did not want her email to be published.

Why was that we wonder? Because she knew it was nonsense and defamatory?

Here is some of the language she used:

* snivelling excuse for a councillor * weak leader * real threat to democracy *
* disgusting individual * hate marches * blatant racism *

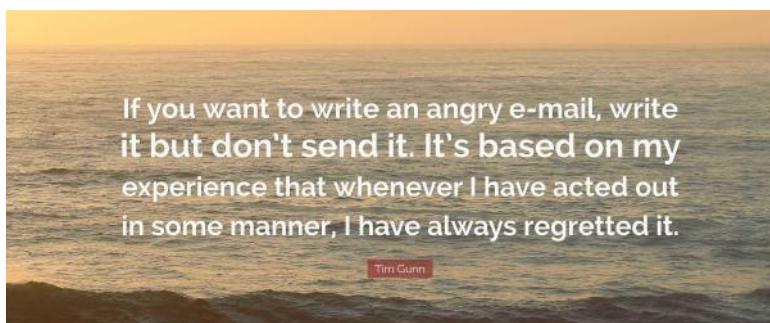
She claimed individuals "lied" and "harassed".

Her hatred of these people seems to be based on religion. This is shown by her mentioning the Manchester and Bondi Beach attacks. Why she thinks a community newsletter would be interested in that, we do not know. We're pretty sure the '*Wetherby News*' would not be interested in her views either.

Had the correspondent provided any strong proof to justify her extreme claims and views, we may have been interested and asked her to rewrite it in an acceptable manner. But she didn't.

We hoped she would write back and apologise, if she wrote it in the heat of the moment and now regrets it. But she didn't.

The content of this email has preyed on the Editor's mind. What was the correspondent's intention? Whatever it was, it was a disturbing read and therefore could be seen as 'malicious communication'. Had she sent her views direct to the Councillors, she could expect a visit from *West Yorkshire Police*.

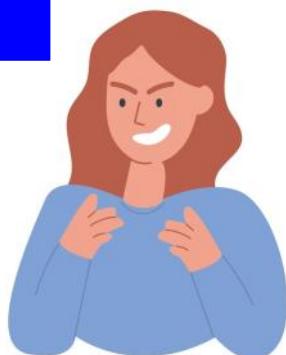


“Excellent job”

Says our
Conservative
Leeds City
Councillor
Alan Lamb



Facts Cllr Lamb has given us to back up his opinion:



We suggest to the woman that she does not write to us again in a similar manner. If she must, she should vent her anger on a more suitable forum like X / Twitter where that sort of content is common. If she writes to us again in a similar way, we will pass it on to her targets and the Police.

This distressing email reminds us all that there are some unpleasant people in our pleasant area

Other unpleasant people who live or work in this town include the Wetherby Mafia, who do all they can to deter people from cooperating with us.

Please do not hesitate to call them out.

They degrade our whole community.

Town Council Mtgs - Open and Accountable?

Cont'd **Property Ctte - December. Chair Cllr Newcombe.**

Dog fouling in cemetery still a big problem - despite signs put up. Their solution:

- 1 provide bag dispensers – no, too expensive and ineffective
- 2 dog ban - no, couldn't be enforced
- 3 educate people on social media - yes



Nothing imaginative was suggested, see image, to resolve this age old problem. Highly doubtful their solution will be effective; telling people what they shouldn't do rarely works. How many dog walkers will see their messages anyway? It's a waste of staff time, we think.

Welcome to Wetherby Ctte - December. Chair Cllr Buckle.

Mtg last one hour. Cllr Harrington was absent, as were the public members J Kent & D Turner.

Yet another strange thing in this very strange Council. THREE Council staff were present - Comms & Events Officer, Town Clerk & Assistant Clerk! You only need one of them to take minutes. Why do the Town Clerk & Asst Clerk both need to be present?



Does it show the Council is overstaffed? Still no clue as to who non-Cllr members Kent & Turner are.



"Councillor Nicholson requested clarification on *Welcome to Wetherby's* responsibilities and committee governance in regards to organising large events. It was NOTED that the Council organises the annual Bonfire Event and Remembrance Day commemorations"

It is somewhat surprising that this clarification was needed! Why when surely it is documented somewhere or if not, isn't it obvious. What is behind this question, we wonder.

There is no large planned event yet for 2026. Says it all really. No progress on reprints of their town leaflets.

*We recommend readers take a look at the minutes of *Welcome to Wetherby* meetings. Judge for yourselves what it actually gets done to attract visitors to this town. Very little indeed, we think.*

TOWN COUNCIL FULL MEETING December. Chair Cllr Newcombe, Deputy Mayor.

Meeting lasted 1 hour.

6 / 15 Cllrs did not attend, included Cllrs Payne & Lavocah. That is more than a third. 2 members of public attended, given only 15 minutes to raise issues. Cllr Stables attended. No acknowledgment of our newsletter in 'Correspondence'. Civic Society's was.

No view on possible pollution of R Wharfe.

The Town Council has no opinion on a concern that raw sewage may enter the Wharfe due to the installation of a toilet block & septic tank at Wetherby Golf Course.



Does this show how much they care about the environment?

The largest item of expenditure each month is staff - £28K.

Budget & Governance Ctte December.

Chair Cllr Newcombe.

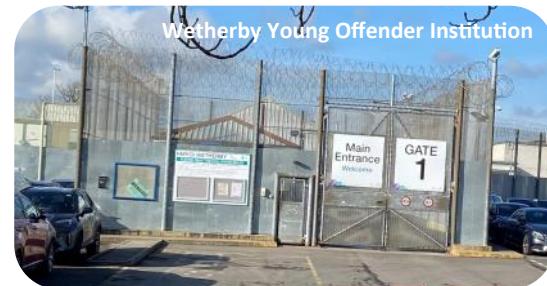
3 Cllrs were absent - Cllrs Mulhall, Payne & Lavocah.

Nearly £15,000 was paid to *Clifford Cooper & Sons*. Only clue why this payment was made was 'Boiler Gift Town Hall'.



Cllr Stuart Newcombe
Conservative

YOI in Headlines again



Wetherby Young Offender Institution

BBC Look North reported that more than 500 "improvised weapons" were found over an eight-month period last year

The annual independent report found: * rooms

"just reach" the min. size standard with offenders often spending up to 23 hours a day in them * violent incidents are decreasing but "remain a concern" * educational attainment remained "unacceptably low".

Read more on BBC news website for plans to improve the situation.

Penny on the Telly - Housing Issues



Cllr Stables on the Sunday morning local politics show with Tim Iredale

Penny Stables is the *Green Party Councillor* for Wetherby on *Leeds City Council*. She appeared on the *BBC's Politics North* programme to highlight problems with house building around Leeds. She wrote to us (you send it, we print it):

“ The Labour Party has promised that it will build 1.5 million homes by the next election. Housing allocations have been given to local authorities, and a tenth of these are due to be built in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. But there are no specifications about what sort of houses should be built.

I explained that inadequate regulation is causing housing problems. Builders will always want to get the most money for their houses so they're building three, four, five bedroom detached houses. What we need in Wetherby is more homes for older people to retire into, which will free up family homes. Developers are applying to build on greenfield land in North Yorkshire on the edge of Wetherby (in West Yorkshire).

If those sites are built, people who live there will consider themselves residents of Wetherby, I explained. They'll use all the infrastructure, the GPs, the schools, the dentists, and they'll clog up the roads, but they'll pay their council tax to North Yorkshire.

I added that it's not just about building 1.5 million homes. It's about building the right homes in the right places. **”**

You can find the program at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002pxtl/politics-north-yorkshire-and-lincolnshire-11012026>

cont'd from front page Why It Should Not Be Called The 'Wetherby News'

Where's a photo of inside the Angel Inn? Why not ask customers what they think? Ask local businesses for their views. Instead, it's another cut and paste from a press release. Lazy journalism and more proof that they have no reporters living in the area. **Why does it matter?** Because good local journalism keeps those in top positions in the town, especially councillors, in check. They would think twice about doing anything dodgy knowing a local paper may pick up on it, especially if it then got into the more influential local media ie local TV news.



The Wetherby News once had several staff and an office in town, but even then they rarely if ever publicised poor behaviour or low standards of anybody in influential positions. They certainly never investigated any allegations of wrong-doing.



That is why our current Councillors and Council staff know they can act with no serious scrutiny from anybody. Just look at all the serious, reasonable questions we ask, which they simply ignore and refuse to answer. It is poor behaviour that goes unreported by the 'professional' press.

Local and national papers have been cut to the bone in recent years and are now mostly interested in clickbait ie keeping advertisers happy instead of doing their public duty. This leads to a total lack of accountability by organisations, like our Town Council who spend over £600,000 a year of our money. They have forced large Council Tax precept increases on us which has

resulted in no obvious benefit in our view, despite employing more staff. Nothing about this in any of the local papers.

Top Tory William Hague has written to say how important a local free press is. Accountability of local representatives and everyone paid for by the public purse is of the utmost importance, he says. And of course, they should be a forum of free speech. We think there could be wrong-doing not being discovered because reporters do not investigate any more. It takes a whistle-blower to uncover poor practice and worse, but good people willing to risk their jobs are few and far between.

The public must take responsibility and act when they read something that seems not quite right. Find the facts for themselves. Please do something or the low standards, inaction and poor performance we have highlighted will continue. Wetherby Deserves Better.



Wetherby News NEWSWATCH Up 10p to £2.30!

The price is now hidden away on the BACK page.

Graham Chalmers is the Editor and writes the majority of news articles in this Harrogate-based paper. Not once has he contacted the Free Press for more information about any of our stories. Or quoted our content. We have told him he can use any of our photos or content, as long as he acknowledges the source. Does his behaviour suggest he wants to cover Wetherby comprehensively and produce a value-for-money newspaper for residents? We think not.

11 Dec **NO News Items. No Letters**

18 Dec **2 News Item. No Letters**

Free Parking on 2 Saturdays. Harrogate FC training ground at racecourse

1 Jan '26 **4 News Items. No Letters**

Duke of Wellington re-opens & Wetherspoons opens, Dean Buckle's honour, care home is rated 'good' by CQC.

8 Jan **NO News Items. No Letters** 15 Jan **NO News Items** (promo of a clrr's restaurant is not news!). **No Letters**

22 Jan **NO News Items. No Letters**

This group of local 'newspapers' even publish articles written by Wetherby Town Council Comms Officer, Helena Briden. Independent, critical reporting? It's an absurd situation. We want all the facts, not Council PR which ironically we pay for, and it's not cheap.

They have given up on printing people's views about local issues. The vast majority of their letters are about national issues and no place of origin is stated, just 'email'. Are views about local issues being censored or is nobody writing in? There were just 3 letters last year about Wetherby area.

We wonder if there is anybody else willing to defend the lack of news in the so-called Wetherby News? We know of only one person in support of this publication - Steve Cooper of Bramham, a prominent member of the Lion's organisation. (In his defence of the paper, he mainly attacked the Free Press which is totally irrelevant, of course — see issue 80 for details).



Not a Single Proper News Item about Wetherby, Boston Spa, Clifford, Bramham, Collingham, Linton, East Keswick, Thorner, Spofforth, Clifford or Kirk Deighton in the last 3 editions.



CONCERT HARROGATE MALE VOICE CHOIR AND THE RODILLIAN SINGERS



BOSTON SPA METHODIST CHURCH
LS23 6AA

27 FEBRUARY 7:30PM

IN AID OF MARTIN HOUSE CHILDREN'S HOSPICE
TICKETS £12 (INCL. LIGHT REFRESHMENTS)

Under 16s free! Tickets available through the church and respective choirs, and on the door.



secretary@harrogatemvc.org.uk
bostonspamc@gmail.com
secretaryrodilians@hotmail.co.uk



BOSTON SPA GARDENING SOCIETY next Meeting Wednesday 28th January

"York's National Trust Gardens; Past, Present and Future" is the title of the talk at Boston Spa Gardening Society on Wednesday 28th January. Sam Shipman the Head Gardener and Parkland Manager for the York Area National Trust will describe how their gardens in York, including The Treasurer's House and Goddards, have evolved since they were taken into the organisation and what the plans are for the future. Do come and join us and learn about these treasures on our doorstep.

The meeting will be at the Deepdale Community Centre, Boston Spa, LS23 6EW. Doors will open at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm start. .

Raffle and Refreshments. New members, guests always welcome

For further information please see our Facebook Page, Next-door Forum, or contact Jenny Douglas 07483 887667



Wetherby Foodbank

January 2026
Foodbank Wish List

- Long-life milk - full fat
- Sugar - small packets please
- Cooking oil
- Long-life fruit juice
- Pasta'n'sauce instant meals
- Pot noodles/instant noodle meals
- Tinned vegetarian meals (NOT macaroni cheese)
- Tinned potatoes
- Instant mash
- Tinned sweetcorn
- Squash/cordials
- Tinned custard
- Instant hot chocolate
- Surface cleaning spray
- Or... make a donation via our website

Thank
you!



The Free Press thanks all volunteers for their fantastic work



Boston Spa Methodist Church

Lunchtime Concert
to be held at 1pm
Friday 13th February 2026



Bethany-Hannah Winteringham
Classical Soprano
with Tom Owen, Piano

TICKETS £6
Light lunches served from 12 noon

ENQUIRIES: 0113 268 2041

Response from Cllr Norma Harrington to Article

Town Council's Christmas Card (right) Shows Lack of Effort to Market Our Great Market Town

Very Small File of 28KB Reason for Lack of Clarity



Our Article in Issue 86 Extra

A Mayor, A Lady Mayoress & A Deputy Mayor



Lady Mayoress Miss Rebecca Tyler Mayor of Wetherby Cllr Connor Mulhall (Con)

details about her on the Council website so we do not know why she is suitable for the role and what qualities she has to perform it. Why?

Other questions that arise are:

- 1 In which Town Council meeting was this appointment discussed and agreed?
- 2 Why do we need a Mayoress when we have a Mayor & Deputy Mayor?
- 3 What is the process of choosing a Mayoress? Surely it cannot be pure nepotism in this day and age? If it was an open competition, there may be many ladies who are better qualified than Miss Tyler. It would bring such joy and happiness if somebody with a disability were to attend these events on our behalf, representing us. It would gain much respect for the town and perhaps be life-changing for the person chosen. Was this ever considered?
- 4 Does she claim any expenses (our money) in her duties as Mayoress?

Having a Mayor, Mayoress & Deputy Mayor seems a bit over the top in a small town like ours. We suspect this is the Conservatives doing exactly what they want again, with no openness or accountability. If we're proved wrong, we will publish the details and an apology in Issue 87. But Cllr Mulhall has yet to respond to any of the issues we raise - as a Ctte Chair, an ordinary Cllr or as Mayor. Here's another question that will probably go unanswered: Why does he refuse to answer reasonable questions?

Despite their many failings, the Free Press wishes all our Councillors and Council staff a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

Mayor Cllr Mulhall sent the Christmas card so he is ultimately responsible for its quality. His mayoral blurb on the WTC website says he will be "bringing a fresh and dynamic perspective to the position". Is that card 'fresh and dynamic'?

The card is also signed by Miss Rebecca Tyler, the Mayoress.

We have not come across this lady before. We have not noticed her name in any meeting minutes. She is not a Councillor and so has not been voted into the position. We believe she is in a relationship with Cllr Mulhall.

Miss Tyler is representing our town and therefore basic information about her should be freely available. There are no details about her on the Council website so we do not know why she is suitable for the role and what qualities she has to perform it. Why?

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2 Why do we need a Mayoress when we have a Mayor & Deputy Mayor?

3 What is the process of choosing a Mayoress? Surely it cannot be pure nepotism in this day and age? If it was an open competition, there may be many ladies who are better qualified than Miss Tyler. It would bring such joy and happiness if somebody with a disability were to attend these events on our behalf, representing us. It would gain much respect for the town and perhaps be life-changing for the person chosen. Was this ever considered?

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Despite their many failings, the Free Press wishes all our Councillors and Council staff a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

Good morning Mr Kirby,

For clarity the Mayoress is a consort role only. When I was the Mayor, my late husband was my Consort and attended events with me.

I would hope that you would correct the previous article and apologise for any stress caused to this young lady.

Norma

Our Response to Cllr Harrington

We wrote back pointing out that she responds to the most trivial of points when there was so many other reasonable questions and legitimate issues that she ignores in this article and others in the newsletter. We asked her why that was (no response).

We said that she had provided us with no reason to apologise or details about why the Mayoress is upset (or proof of any upset). We pointed out that there is no mention of 'consort' anywhere on the Town Council website or social media posts. Her point was therefore flawed.

We thanked Cllr Harrington for reading the Wetherby Free Press, the only not-for-profit community newsletter in the country that speaks truth to power and highlight low standards by those in the public pay.

We also took the opportunity to see if she would ask colleague Cllr Lamb to defend his statement that the now honoured Cllr Dean Buckle does an 'excellent' job for Welcome to Wetherby - Issues 85 and 86 (no response).

We ended with
"Best Wishes for
2026".

So many questions
... but no answers

It is a great shame that the Editor's meeting in May 2025 has resulted in little progress, particularly communication.



The Angel Inn

Our pub correspondent, Phil Ittothetopplease writes "I've never been so pleased to be wrong in thinking that the Angel would not be ready to open on the 23rd December. It clearly went down to the wire with work still going on inside and outside on the 22nd, and delivery and opening hours only being signed off on the 18th

Apparently a queue started at 06.00 on the Tuesday for the 08.00 opening. When I got there around noon, there was barely a seat to be had. On Xmas Eve at around 19.00 hrs, it was three deep at the bar. Every time I've passed since, it has been full.

If you haven't been in, the interior has a horse racing theme with saddles mounted high up together with photos of jockeys and racehorses past. It doesn't have Racing TV unlike the two Carlisle Spoons which are about half a furlong apart.

At the time of writing Real Ale is £2.15 a pint though a January sale from 2nd - 15th Jan saw a pint of Worthington's for 99p.

Who are all the people in Spoons? Did they previously go to the Winter Gardens in Harrogate or the Crown in Knaresborough? Or did they just not go out? Given the numbers, it is unlikely they were spread among the other Wetherby pubs.

As to the other pubs, cafes and restaurants in Wetherby, they will never compete on opening hours, food service times and price. However, the Angel doesn't have Sky or TNT Sports, quizzes, pool, karaoke, live music etc. Nor does it offer Sunday Roasts, steaks, mixed grills, pies, sandwiches, scones and cakes. The Old Cock in Otley (won many CAMRA awards) and Blind Jacks in Knaresborough (Best Beer Pub at GB Pub Awards) both sell beer that you won't find in a Spoons. Which Wetherby pub can step up and win an award?"

