BOROUGHBRIDGE & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF TRADE EST. 1968

CHAMBER CHAT

President: Derek Hufton Vice President: Tracey Wrigglesworth

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1. From the President

As I write this missive Chancellor John Healey's first Budget is just a couple of days away. After the hammering received by businesses under the previous Chancellor (Ms Reeves) the mood music so far has been that businesses (and individuals) will escape significant tax increases, unless you are a Bank, while firms (and households) under the greatest pressure will receive help.

Mr Healey has expressed concerns in various interviews about the cost of doing business, including tax, regulation and minimum wage hikes, so let's hope those views are supported by relevant action. We'll have to wait to see how it all plays out in tangible changes of course, but one very welcome item that does seem to be on the cards is that Business Rates will not have to be paid by small businesses. It would also be very nice to see the National Insurance rises imposed on employers by his predecessor reversed, but there is no hint of that so far. Increasing Capital Gains Tax, widely feared by businesses, seems to have been rejected as it would be seen as anti-business along with debateable revenue gains. It's unlikely the Chancellor will be satisfied with a label that merely focuses on a lack of damage from the budget, but rather in presenting a narrative which builds on the recent upgrading of UK growth by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – but whenever did the IMF get a forecast correct?

I would just like to mention the recent Chamber meeting on 20th October on the subject of The Employment Rights Act 2025. The subject was expertly covered by Ashley Heeley from Hethertons Solicitors, and while all attendees probably already had some knowledge of the new legislation, there were certainly a number of key nuggets to take away from Ashley's presentation. On such an important topic for employers it was slightly alarming there were not more businesses represented at the meeting. An excellent Summary/Aide Memoire of the key points was subsequently issued to all Chamber members, not just the attendees. More details of the meeting are provided at item 3 below.

2. Member News

A quick reminder that the 2026 Chamber **Member Survey** closes on **Monday 2nd November**. Thank you to everyone who has already responded. If you haven't had a chance to complete it yet, it takes only about five minutes and will help the Committee plan for 2027 around what matters most to you and your business. Click here to complete Survey

If you add your name and business at the end of the survey you'll be entered into the Prize Draw for a bottle of Champagne.

We are delighted to welcome ***Matthew Fairey*** as an individual Chamber member. Matthew is a Great Ouseburn resident, and although part of Tadcaster-based Johnson Insurance, he works mainly in the Boroughbridge area and has quite a number of local clients. He is involved with the local Young Farmers association and also volunteers at the Aldborough & Boroughbridge Show (Johnson Insurance is a Show sponsor). Matthew can be contacted on 07342-699703 or at matthew@johnsoninsurance.co.uk

3. Employment Rights Act Meeting Report



On **Tuesday 20th October** Ashley Heeley, Consultant Employment Executive at Chamber members Hethertons Solicitors, duly delivered a very informative presentation on the recently introduced and upcoming legislative changes relating to The Employment Rights Act 2025. The 12 attendees (representing 8 businesses) was a disappointing turnout for such an important topic.

For those who couldn't make it, and as an aide-memoire for those who did, an excellent short two-page member guide, kindly put together by committee member James Stork (BCT Accountants) summarising the key points, was circulated to members at the end of last week. The guide is for general information only and isn't legal advice. Key components of the Act and timing summary is as follows:

Already in place: SSP and paternity/parental leave from day one.

From October 2026: up to six months for an employee to bring a tribunal claim, and a duty on employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

From January 2027: unfair dismissal protection after six months, and new limits on 'fire and rehire.'

Coming in 2027: zero-hours contract reforms, bereavement leave and flexible working changes.

It's the biggest shake-up of employment law for some years, but the headline message from the evening was for employers not to panic! They should review contracts and handbook/policies, tighten up on probation period reviews, and keep dated notes of all relevant meetings/interactions with employees because evidence is everything should there be an issue down the line. If you'd like assistance with your own situation, Hethertons' employment team can help (hethertons.co.uk) and ACAS (acas.org.uk) has free guidance and templates.



As an added incentive for attending, a Prize Draw winner was independently pulled out of the hat by Ashley, with our very own Karen Farrer being the lucky recipient of something in a mysterious white envelope. We're not quite sure what was in it, but Karen certainly looks happy, at left, receiving the prize from Ashley.

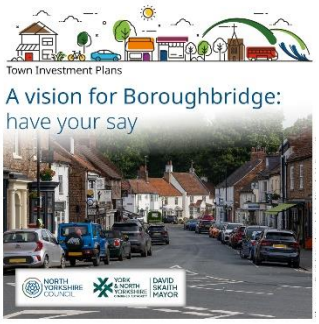
4. Late-night Christmas Shopping

A reminder that the Late-night Christmas Shopping event takes place on **Wednesday 2nd December**. As usual, the event will start with the switch-on of the Christmas Tree lights in **Hall Square at 5:30pm** by our celebrity guest Georgey Spanswick from Radio York, accompanied by the Mayor, Cllr Zoe Metcalfe. We will have Santa and his Sleigh (courtesy of the Lions), Hog Roast in Hall Square and lots of community stalls dotted around the Town in addition to many of the shops opening late.

We are again blessed with a number of Choirs performing this year - Boroughbridge Primary, Boroughbridge High, Roecliffe Primary, Kirby Hill Primary and Boroughbridge Music Academy. The kids absolutely love it (as do doting parents and grandparents of course) and are always in fine voice, and it's good to have the adults performing too.

The theme for the best-dressed ***Window Competition*** this year is "***My Favourite Christmas Carol.***" We had a record 25 entries for the competition last year (won by Bloomerang Florists) so hopefully the theme provides yet another broad canvas to satisfy those creativity urges to encourage lots of participants.

5. Town Investment Plan Update



As previously reported, work to develop a Town Investment Plan for Boroughbridge is underway and the next major step will be a one-day conference 'From Plan To Place – Advancing North Yorkshire Town Investment Plans' to be held at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Harrogate on Thursday 19th November.

The conference will bring together key local stakeholders from all participating towns (there are many!) who have been instrumental in developing Investment Plans for their place to explore next steps in turning Town Investment Plans into tangible projects and lasting impact. As plans begin to move from strategy into implementation there is a growing need to share learning, strengthen partnerships and identify practical approaches to delivery.

The gathering will focus on the key ingredients for successful delivery, including securing investment and building strategic partnerships. The meeting should provide the opportunity to learn from emerging practice,

exchange ideas with peers and identify opportunities for collaboration. It is more than likely that the Chamber of Trade will be represented at the meeting, but as yet we have received no feedback from the NYC team from their various consultations with local groups and individuals in Boroughbridge. We will be pursuing that.

As Town Investment Plans are at various stages of development across the County, whether towns are preparing for delivery or at the first consultation stage this conference aims to provide practical insights, valuable connections and a shared understanding of how groups can collectively deliver thriving, resilient and sustainable towns across North Yorkshire.

6. Recent Town Centre Changes

The previously reported ***Back Lane Car Park*** maintenance was successfully completed week commencing 28th September. Anecdotally, the impact on businesses during the work and temporary closure was mixed, with some reporting a slowdown while others not noticing much difference. While not solving the capacity problem entirely, the 10 new extra parking bays will certainly help. Improved signage will be added in due course to encourage more users to contribute a donation to the honesty box as the Car Park currently runs at a deficit. Now back in full operation, groups of walkers and cyclists continue to clog up the car park, while several mobile homes take up multiple spaces (one seemingly camped in the car park permanently). Nonetheless, the Town Council is to be thanked for this much-needed initiative.

The Town Council is also planning an upgrade of the Town's ***CCTV system.*** The current ageing technology needs replacement to bring better quality recording and easier access for the authorities when needed. This is another welcome initiative by the Town Council. As yet we are not aware of a start date for the work.

A few changes to report in the Town Centre itself. A ***Toy Shop*** is shortly to open at 6 Fishergate (formerly occupied by Sweet & Seasonal and more latterly by Dream Attic). There is no name over the door just yet, but the exterior has turned a bright shocking pink with lots of Barbie dolls displayed in the window!



The ***Vape Shop*** at 34 High Street recently closed its doors for good, in what was a rather rapid exit. We are aware there is much interest in this well-located premise, and one assumes the unit will not stay empty for long. We await the new occupiers with interest.

Concrete & Cacti, located at 13 High Street, has recently ceased trading, with the owner reportedly moving on to 'other things.'

Apparently, the current derelict site on Horsefair, originally earmarked for a **mini-CoOp** store, is up for sale again. We understand the asking price to be £600K.

7. Snippets

Yorkshire-list (https://yorkshire-list.com/) describes itself as 'the ultimate guide to Yorkshire.' One of their stated goals is to shine a light on great local independent businesses and find out what life is actually like on the ground for new residents. As part of their new series of comprehensive neighbourhood lifestyle guides focusing on places to live in Yorkshire, a feature on Boroughbridge has recently been published, part of which includes discussion with Chamber President Derek Hufton. The article can be found here:
https://yorkshire-list.com/explore/an-insiders-guide-to-boroughbridge-the-north-yorkshire-town-flying-the-flag-for-independent-shops/

Kirby Hill resident ***Caroline Jameson*** has been in touch with a free, no-obligation offer to Chamber members. Caroline has 20 years experience working in the energy industry and is offering free advice and peace of mind to local business relating to energy suppliers/utilities during what is after all a volatile time in the sector with many businesses (and domestic households) struggling with energy and utility costs. She will happily sense-check an invoice or two for you as part of the offer. If you wish to take up the offer you can contact Caroline direct via email at caroline.stangroom@icloud.com or mobile 07468-483427.

… and keep up to date with the Chamber

News Items are regularly posted to the Chamber website (www.boroughbridgect.co.uk) and we post on Facebook (@BoroughbridgeCT) too.

Make sure you follow and check out these channels for regular updates, useful alerts and information.

Footnote: Please note that the various blue email and website links in this document are not live links – i.e. you cannot click on them. To use them simply copy the text and paste it into your browser or email client.