

HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

On 6 February around twenty residents gathered at The Angel for a discussion about how the two villages - Topcliffe and Asenby - might celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee between 2 and 5 June. That was followed up by another meeting last Sunday (6 March) where further progress on planning the events was made.

It's hoped that a definitive programme can now be agreed and that volunteers will come forward to take the lead on getting things organised.

Here's what we know for sure:

Both Topcliffe and Asenby Parish Councils have indicated they will support the celebrations.

The two villages will have specific events for their residents, with communal events for residents of both villages staged in Topcliffe.

The Village Hall Committee has agreed to offer free use of the Village Hall for community events linked to the celebrations.



St Columba's Church will organise a range of jubilee services that complement the community celebrations.

Our district ward councillor, Mark Robson, is personally providing a Lime tree which will be planted on 11 March on the grassed area outside Topcliffe Academy. This date is the 70th day of the 70th year of the Queen's reign, and it coincides with the right time to plant trees! He is also arranging for a commemorative plaque.

Plenty of ideas have come forward to mark the Jubilee including:

Pre-June

30 April to 2 May - Scarecrow competition with a royal theme - to coincide with a similar event in Carlton Miniott.

May - Village tidy-ups and litter picks (dates to be agreed).

Persuade the county council to repair Topcliffe Bridge - which was damaged several years ago and is now an eyesore.

An old fishy tale

Here's an interesting find. This cabinet containing a 7lb 13oz Barbel caught in The Swale at Topcliffe in 1909 by a Mrs J B Clough was seen in an antiques shop on West Park, Harrogate last month.



Ruth and John, who live at The Mill in Topcliffe were so intrigued that they took this photograph...and they are hoping Tattler readers can throw some light on the 113-year-old story.

Topcliffe resident Mark Bowen said he remembered the fish being on display in the pub that was located in The Mill in the 1970s when the Smart family were landlords. If you can add anything about this fishy tale, please get in touch with the Editor.

Thursday 2 June

Lighting of village beacons - to remain on for duration of celebrations or lit daily.

Street and house decoration - throughout weekend celebrations.

Friday 3 June

Evening Meal and Disco in the Village Hall - bring your own drinks.

Saturday 4 June

Party in the Park on the playing field. Bring your own picnic and drinks. Possibly with a band and dancing, games, races etc.

Children's crown-making competition

Children's Jubilee art competition

Jubilee photographic competition

Fancy royal dress competition

Vehicle display - any vehicles 70 years of age and over

Flat Green bowling knock out competition - teams of four (including children accompanied by adults)

Some of these events could be staged at different locations and on any day during the weekend, depending on what people want.

Continued on page 3...

Topcliffe Parish Council Update

HGV traffic continues to be the biggest single issue facing Topcliffe and Asenby and both parish councils continue to seek solutions.

Topcliffe parish councillors met directors of the Dalton company IPN and Hambleton planners to discuss the implications of proposed development to expand their site. They have taken on board the parish council's serious concerns about increased HGV traffic through our villages. They have agreed to conditions written into the planning approval which should help reduce any impact. The conditions include a £5,000 bond for use by the parish council for enforcement and monitoring. IPN's contracts with external hauliers will, over time, be re-written to include a clause excluding the lorries from Topcliffe and Asenby. IPN has also agreed to take action against offending HGV drivers and provided the parish council with the name of a director to whom evidence of breaches can be reported.

Potters Plant Hire recently submitted an application to extend access to their site near Catton in the mornings, evenings and weekends. The parish council suggested that this should only be granted if there is a condition excluding their vehicles travelling through Topcliffe and Asenby at these times. This was agreed by both the planners and Potters Plant Hire.

It is now almost a year since discussions began with the county highways department about an amendment to the weight restriction zone through Topcliffe. The parish council asked for three simple things. That:

the weight restriction sign at Busby Stoop roundabout be moved to the Topcliffe village boundary;
better signage be erected to warn HGV drivers; and
that the highways and trading standards departments enforced the law by prosecuting drivers who ignored the law.

The parish council strongly believes that the authorities are dragging their feet as they are reluctant to take action or say no to us, and it is frankly not good enough. Consideration is being given to the best ways of escalating this matter and at some point soon a coordinated community letter writing campaign may be organised.

For more than a year now the parish council has been actively participating in various schemes and programmes for the prevention of illegal HGV traffic passing through our village streets, with varying degrees of success.

Trading Standards Lorry Watch Scheme - reports of almost 1,000 potentially illegal HGV vehicles in the village have been submitted, but not a single submission resulted in a prosecution.

Police Operation Spartan - many hours were spent video recording HGVs passing through the village and these were supplied to the police. A dozen of these were totally illegal infringements. Unfortunately, this activity has resulted in just one fixed penalty fine. The police have now dropped Spartan and created Operation Snap, which incredibly no longer pursues weight restriction violations.

Trading Standards Tracking - this involves officers monitoring lorries entering and leaving the weight restricted zone. Here there's been a little more success with three offenders being identified last October, but legal proceedings are still ongoing. A further day of tracking is being carried out at the time of writing. The department pleads a lack of resources to hold tracking days. Parish councillors have offered support to run extra tracking days on their behalf, but the offer is yet to be accepted.

Police Road Safety Team - in November the parish council was referred to this new scheme and met with the police coordinator. We will continue to work with them - but we have not seen any results to date.

So, despite all these efforts, villagers will have observed that there has been no noticeable decrease in HGV passage through Topcliffe. And like parish councillors, many must be increasingly frustrated by the lack of serious progress via any of these official schemes.

Village Projects

A number of projects have been proposed and will be actioned as finance allows:

Work has started on the Sheep Wash led by Malcolm Morley and Ben Collard.

Life buoys have been purchased to be placed at the Mill and the Sheep Wash.

Several fences and gates, which are the parish's responsibility, need repairing or replacing this year.

Outline proposals for revitalising the Jubilee Gardens have been received from Topcliffe resident, Mandi Labuschagne and these are now being costed.

Some of the playing field equipment needs replacing.

Bags2school recycling collection day

The date has been set for the spring Bags2school textile recycling event at the Village Hall. It's on Thursday 28 April. That gives everyone loads of time to undertake that annual clear out of cupboards and wardrobes. Please keep your bags of textiles for this charity collection. If you have trouble storing the bags, contact Donna Fleming (07591 438766) or Doug Allan (07785 223707) and they will try to make arrangements for storage until the collection day. The proceeds of the event will be shared between the Village Hall and 1st Topcliffe Scouts.

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Continued from page 1...

HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Sunday 5 June

Jubilee walk - a short stroll between Topcliffe and Asenby and back for families and people of all ages.
Sunday Brunch in the Village Hall.
Church service.

Commemorative Projects

Potential improvements to Jubilee Gardens.
Platinum Jubilee Walkway on the trail between Topcliffe Bridge and Asenby, with new path surfaces, more benches, picnic tables at the bridge end grassy area, waste bins, more tree planting and jubilee signage. Hambleton Brewery has offered to help with funding.

In line with the Queen's green canopy initiative, could we see more tree planting in both villages?

So, lots of ideas to make the celebrations a fun time and some great opportunities for long-term improvements.

Note: *This edition of The Tattler went to print before the second public meeting last Sunday. Updated information will be presented in forthcoming Sunday Emails.*

Soup and sweet lunch

Soup and sweet lunches will be held at the Village Hall at 12 noon on Wednesdays 16 and 30 March and 13 and 27 April. The cash raised will be donated to a different charity each time.

Looking forward to spring bulbs blooming!

On a cold and damp day last December, a few keen volunteers turned out to help plant crocus bulbs in the grass verge opposite the Surgery on Long Street in Topcliffe. Karen and Malcolm Morley, Martin Hexter, John Pearson and his children Jake and Amelia, and Doug Allan managed to plant around 1,500 bulbs and, as spring beckons, they are looking forward to a carpet of colour for everyone to enjoy.

Parish & Village Hall meetings

Asenby Parish Council will meet at 7.30pm on Wednesday 16 March - www.asenby.net

Village Hall Committee - 7.30pm on Tuesday 5 April.
The AGM and an Ordinary Meeting of the Committee will be held consecutively starting at 7.30pm on

Tuesday 7 June. www.topcliffe.org.uk/village-hall

Topcliffe Parish Council - 7pm on Thursday 7 April - www.topcliffe.org.uk

Both parish councils and the Village Hall Committee meet at Topcliffe & Asenby Village Hall.

Rural Arts classes underway

The first Rural Arts class in a new series took place in the Village Hall on 22 February...and by all accounts was a great success! Dates for future classes are Tuesdays 22 March, 19 April, 17 May, 21 June and 19 July. You can simply turn up on the day (it's free to attend) or if you want more information call Judith Lowe on 577911.

Come in and enjoy



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Reaching for the stars

Children at Topcliffe Academy have been involved in intergalactic activity...without putting a foot outside the village.

They've been reaching for the stars and having an incredible 'out of this world' experiences in a spectacular Wonderdome - a massive inflatable in which the planets and life in space could be studied.

The Wonderdome, which virtually filled the school hall, was a planetarium in which each class enjoy a tailored workshop run by a specially trained astronomer. It had a state-of-the-art, 360 degree camera, with special effects audio and video. Children were 'blasted off' on an incredible journey to explore the stars, the planets in our



solar system, the galaxy and the universe. Pupils even had their minds opened to the potential of what could possibly lie beyond all that we know.

It was an amazing experience and judging by their excitement and interest, it's possible Topcliffe Academy may have the next Tim Peak ready to reach for the stars!

Sporting Memories Foundation

Thirsk Community Library is starting a Sporting Memories Foundation club and is looking for volunteers who would be willing to help run the weekly club. All training and materials will be provided by the Sporting Memories Foundation so all you need is a love of sport.

The club will particularly aim to help older adults who are isolated, living with depression or dementia or other long-term conditions, but who have a common love of sport. The Foundation uses sporting memories and physical activity to help its members, who might be sports fans, former players or members from a sporting family. At the moment the nearest clubs are Northallerton and York, so it will be great to have a club serving Thirsk and surrounding villages.

If sport is one of your loves and you think you could help support the club, please get in touch with Helen Ashworth on 07826 335255 or email: helen@communityworks.uk



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District Council Update

I think we might all agree that the last two years have been awful and that the pandemic created much pain and uncertainty. The pandemic isn't over but there are no restrictions in place anymore and even though Covid is still around, there is definitely a feeling of normality returning to our lives.

Council services are just about back to normal - but as we emerge from one major crisis that has had a massive impact on the level of services available to local communities, local government faces yet another significant upheaval as all councils in the county (except York), are abolished and replaced by one single county-wide council. This will happen on 1 April next year when North Yorkshire Council will be created.

Election of councillors for this new authority will take place on 5 May this year when 90 councillors will be selected to represent the 89 wards across North Yorkshire. The councillors will serve one year on the existing North Yorkshire County Council before switching to the new unitary authority from 1 April 2023. This 'shadow' authority will run alongside the existing councils until they disappear at the end of March 2023.

I am pleased to say that I have been selected as the Conservative candidate on the new council for the Sowerby & Topcliffe ward and, if elected, I look forward to continuing to work for and on behalf of residents through the change-over period and beyond.

I know that some of you last month attended the open day at the new Maple Park Crematorium near Busby Stoop and had the chance to look around this multi-million pound, much-needed facility. It's been completed in just eighteen months despite the pandemic and it is now fully operational. I am delighted with the building which provides a high-quality, calm and peaceful space, both out and indoors, for family and friends to say goodbye and commemorate their loved ones.

Last month I had the pleasure of attending a meeting with residents from both Topcliffe and Asenby to discuss ideas as to how the two villages will celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June. There was a lively discussion and lots of suggestions for the event, which I am certain will be a great success.

I am personally providing a Lime tree which can be planted in the village as a permanent reminder of the platinum jubilee. The tree will be planted on the triangle of land in front of Topcliffe Academy at 11.30am on Friday 11 March. That date marks the 70th day of the 70th year of The Queen's reign. It's hoped that children from the school will be able to assist with the planting and that those villagers who can, will pop along to witness the planting. Arrangements have been made for a plaque to be erected at the tree, but it's unlikely it will be ready by the 11th, so it will be put up as soon as it is available.

Councillor Mark Robson

The Tattler - Summer 2022

The next edition of The Tattler will be published on Tuesday 31 May and delivered door to door over the following couple of days.

The TATTler

Shed fund reaches £1,500

In just over three months Topcliffe Academy pupils and the local community managed to raise £1,500 for a new equipment storage shed for the school's Seedlings Nursery.



Mrs Cat Cowton (left) and Miss Katie Watson with some of the nursery children

Various fundraising activities were organised within the village and children from the Seedlings Nursery themselves took part in a sponsored walk around Topcliffe.

Then Topcliffe Parish Council stepped in and agreed to contribute the balance needed - £474 - to complete the fundraising and allow the shed to be purchased.

Now that's what you call a real community effort!



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Joanna's got the touch!

Creating a business from scratch is hard enough at the best of times but having to do it to survive after a marriage break-up and then being hit by a pandemic, makes the job so much more difficult.

But that's exactly the situation in which Topcliffe resident Joanna Brierley found herself, but her perseverance has ensured her business has developed in black and white and in colour!

When her husband left her three years ago Polish-born Joanna knew she had to find work in order to maintain her children - Emilia aged 10 and Sebastian, seven. As a stay-at-home mum she realised that her work skills were limited and going back into the workplace wouldn't be easy, and of course she had to be there for the children.



Joanna had always dreamed about doing something creative and her friends and family encouraged her to embrace a long-held passion for photography, which until that point had simply been a hobby.

Her business idea began to take focus and in 2018 she launched Joanna's Touch Photography and quickly learnt how hard it is to build a business from scratch. Joanna says: "Life had taken some difficult turns and all of a sudden I had to take action to provide for my family. I was lucky that I had a hobby that I loved and which could be turned into a business. I had just started up when Covid struck and the pandemic was to be the back-drop to my business world for a long two years.

"I never imagined how difficult it would be to transfer my love of photography as a hobby in to building a business. I suspect it would have been hard enough during normal times, but the pandemic just made it a real slog.

"When Covid arrived I found that the photography work dried up, but I didn't give up. I spent that time learning new business skills and looking for new opportunities that would see me through. I was invited to give talks about self-development, I taught workshops about how to take better photographs with mobile 'phones and helped other local businesses in any way I could.

"Most of my marketing has been online and via social media. I quickly realised that to succeed in this line of work you have to stand out - not only in your imagery and creativeness - but also in presenting opportunities that customers are keen to take up. The amount of networking

and social posting I have undertaken has been insane, but entirely necessary.

"There were so many days I wanted to quit but I truly loved taking photographs of people to help them cherish the special moments in their lives. It has kept me going and I'm proud to say all the hard work paid off and that post-pandemic Joanna's Touch Photography is now back on track.

"I'm photographing families, capturing those deep emotions that people have for the ones they love the most. I have also had commissions to photograph women in business and am doing maternity and makeover photoshoots. The business is really taking off and I'm loving it.

"Building a business through Covid has been hard, but it has taught me that if you really want to make a difference to your own and other people's lives, you should never give up."

Joanna's Touch Photography is on Facebook and Instagram and a new website will launch soon. If you would like to talk to Joanna about your photographic requirements, please call 07732 941758.

The Sunday Email - 100 up!

On Sunday 20 March the 100th Sunday Email will be published and circulated to over 300 recipients, mainly in Topcliffe and Asenby but with some going further afield. Each week a dozen copies are printed off and delivered by hand to residents who don't have access to 'techie' devices.

First launched on 4 April 2020, a week after the first Covid lockdown was introduced, the weekly email was an attempt to inform villagers about Covid, the restrictions and how important services - health and everyday needs - could be accessed.

Although there's still some Covid content, the email has morphed into a general newsletter with details about local activities and events. And it would seem that many residents value it sufficiently to read, or at least glance through, its contents...making its continued publication worthwhile.

If anyone would like to be added to the circulation, please go to this site - dougallan.co.uk - to sign up. You'll also be able to read in more detail how the email came about and check out back copies.

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No 20mph zone for Topcliffe

In the December 2021 edition of The Tattler it was reported that nine to eleven year olds in Maple class at Topcliffe Academy had launched a campaign to persuade the authorities to introduce a 20 mph zone along the stretch of road past the school. The children enlisted the help of Topcliffe Parish Council, which put up a monitoring device to gather data about how fast traffic was going. They tracked vehicle movements and recorded trends, as well as gathering research data and completing tally charts to monitor the volume of traffic - with some astonishing results.

The children despatched persuasive letters to North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police and our local MP, Kevin Hollinrake, asking for the speed limit near the school to be reduced from 30 mph to 20mph.

Unfortunately, it looks like the campaign has hit a brick wall as the county council has pointed out that a long list of important criteria needs to be met before a 20mph zone can be considered...and they say Topcliffe fails on all counts!

Teacher, Miss Sophie Howard said the response from all sides had been extremely disappointing. "We did not get the sort of response we were anticipating. The official position was highly technical and unsympathetic, despite what we felt was good evidence in terms of dangerous traffic behaviour. The county council has said they have no power to change the speed limit unless we can meet a long list of criteria and they added that police enforcement is regularly carried out close to school."

But all hope is not lost!

Last month the government announced that motorised traffic could be banned on streets directly outside many schools at drop off and pick up times. It comes as part of efforts to improve safety, encourage active travel and cut pollution if a pilot study proves successful.

North Yorkshire County Council has agreed to examine the idea and has agreed a new 20mph zone policy, promising to scrutinise where it could lower speed limits outside schools.

The move follows years of pressure from road safety campaigners calling for 20mph zones, so maybe Topcliffe Academy might yet get its wishes? However, the county council has insisted such action would not be suitable everywhere and there could be considerable enforcement issues, so councillors may need more persuasion that Topcliffe needs attention.

Snooker Club

There's been a good take up of membership this year, though there's still room for a few more if anyone's interested. Fees are £25 for the year. Former members are asked to return their door key to David Bowman. He can be contacted on 577843.



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What a mess! Which dog owners are responsible?

Dog mess is perhaps the most unacceptable and offensive type of litter on our streets. And dog fouling is an issue that many members of the public are very concerned about. So it's unfortunate that once again dog fouling has recently been a talking point in both Topcliffe and Asenby.

The Top Residents Facebook site has seen many residents complaining that there's dog poo everywhere - Front Street, Long Street, Winn Lane, various alleyways, country paths between Queen Mary's and Asenby - and that some dog owners appear not to understand their responsibilities to pick up after their pet.

While most dog owners are caring, responsible individuals, there are still some people who do not clean up after their pets. The law states that being unaware a dog has fouled or not having a suitable bag is not a reasonable excuse. As we don't have a dog warden or police patrols, the threat of a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £100 is probably no deterrent in Topcliffe and Asenby.

Storytime Mondays at Thirsk Library

Every Monday during term time 1.30 - 2.15pm. Please note change of time. All preschool children welcome and it's free! Come and enjoy stories, rhymes and songs and activities for preschool children. Just turn up - no booking required.

Please contact Helen Ashworth, Activities Coordinator, at the Thirsk Community Library on 01609 534589 or email library@thirskcommunitylibrary.org.uk

Thirsk Community Library

Thirsk Community Library has received funding to help isolated and/or elderly people from villages around Thirsk access its services. This can include using the Thirsk community minibus to collect people from their homes and to transport them to the library, so that they can become a member, borrow books, (including large print and audiobooks), DVDs and jigsaws or just visit for a cuppa and chat. The Library is looking to organise the first trip fairly soon so if you or someone you know would be interested in this service please contact Helen Ashworth, Activities Coordinator, at the Library on 01609 534589 or email library@thirskcommunitylibrary.org.uk



Storytime Monday: Dawn Treacher the Mouse Pirate


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Opportunity Knocks in Asenby

The majority of members of Asenby Parish Council, including chairman Peter Palmer and vice chair Judith Lowe, will not be seeking re-election when elections take place on Thursday 5 May, meaning there is an opportunity for some fresh faces to run village affairs.

In addition, the present Clerk to the Parish Council will also be stepping down in May and a replacement will be required at that time.

On Monday 7 March the official notice of election was published and nomination papers need to be filed with the Electoral Department at Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) before 4pm on Tuesday 5 April. There are five seats on the parish council and if there are more than five nominations, then the five candidates with the most votes cast in their favour will form the next council.

Right now, Asenby Parish Council has only four members, as the vacancy created by the resignation of Cllr Don Crompton back in July has not been filled, in spite of the vacancy having been widely advertised. The situation is extremely worrying for local democracy.

In May, unless there are at least three candidates nominated, the council will not be quorate and will not be able to function. Were this to be the case, then HBC would arrange a further election. If this still failed to elect at least three members, then HBC councillors would be appointed to enable Asenby Parish Council to function.

The absence of local residents on the Parish Council would be most unfortunate for the village, leading to a loss of local influence on decisions and an abdication of responsibility to outsiders.

If anyone wishes to discuss this potential problem and the future of the Parish Council, please contact Peter Palmer on 578057.

St Columba's Services

Services scheduled up to and including Easter are:

Sunday 6 March at 6.30pm - Choral Evensong

Sunday 13 March at 10.45am - Holy Communion (traditional language)

Sunday 20 March at 10.45am - Sung Matins

Sunday 27 March, Mothering Sunday, at 10.45am - Holy Communion (modern language)

Sunday 3 April at 6.30pm - Choral Evensong

Sunday 10 April, Palm Sunday, at 10.45am - Holy Communion (traditional language)

Saturday 16 April, Easter Eve, at 7.30pm - Easter Vigil and First Mass of Easter. This is perhaps the most glorious service in the church's year, starting in near darkness with readings and unaccompanied singing by the choir, then the lighting of the Easter fire, the Paschal candle and candles throughout the church, and concluding with a special Holy Communion for Easter. After the service refreshments including finger food and wine will be served.

Sunday 17 April at 9am - Easter Day Service (there's no Holy Communion at the Sunday service as our Easter Eucharist was held at the Saturday evening service).

Sunday services continue with the usual monthly four Sunday programme. There will be no fifth Sunday service

Changes for Topcliffe shops

Late last year, a survey was undertaken to find out what changes customers using the Post Office and Milk Churn Farm Shop would like to see now that the two shops are under the same ownership. The feedback was extremely positive and helpful and lots of the ideas have become a reality.

Most significantly the role of the two shops has been clearly defined with the Post Office concentrating on post office counter services, news agency, cards, confectionery and hot & cold food, whilst the Farm Shop now has all the food, cleaning and pet products, as well as the café and gift shop.

Anyone who has visited the Post Office recently will have seen the changes and how the shop has been decluttered, redecorated and made more welcoming. New services introduced include courier parcel drop-off and pick-ups, a laundry service, an extensive hot and cold lunch selection and, coming soon, a foreign currency service.

Debbie Roberts said: "I would like to thank all of the customers who took the time to fill out our survey to let us know what they would like to see. I have tried to accommodate the key requests and I hope there is now a winning formula. I hope that customers will agree that we have listened to their comments and taken action to try and meet the needs of the community."

She added: "Customers enquiring about the farm shop opening on a Monday have been advised that it could only happen if there is a considerable increase in footfall. There are considerable costs involved - staffing, gas and electricity - and at the moment opening that extra day simply can't be justified, but I promise to keep the matter under review."

on 29 May. All services finish with refreshments and time to linger and socialise in the Percy Chapel

Special services and events for Lent

Every Wednesday 9 March to 13 April at 7pm, there'll be a Service of Compline for Lent. This is a 15-minute service of evening prayers and readings to close the day.

Lent Soup & Sweet lunches at Topcliffe & Asenby Village Hall. Wednesdays 9, 16, 23 and 30 March at 12 noon.

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Energy bills go through the roof

On 1 April the energy price cap rises 54% - meaning everyone will pay half again on top of what they pay now - that's an increase, on average, of a whopping £700 per year. The rise is down partly to wholesale energy prices and they exploded during the August to January assessment period.

To show the scale of magnitude, someone with average direct debit use currently pays £1,277 each year. From 1 April, they'll pay £1,971 - a £693 per year rise.

The energy price cap is currently set every six months, though there are discussions going on that may change this to quarterly. In October 2022 it's anticipated that a further 20% price increase may be introduced.

Bear in mind that the "price cap" is misnamed. There's no maximum you can pay on energy. Use more, pay more. What's actually capped are electricity and gas standing charges and kWh rates

Normally energy customers are advised to look around for the best deals but at this point there are no tariffs meaningfully cheaper than the price cap and the cheapest open-market fixes are all more expensive than the 1 April price cap. So it's best to stay with your present supplier.

To help 'poorer' households a £150 council tax rebate will be given to most homes in bands A to D - that's about 80% of homes. It will be paid in April. Then, in October, every household will get a £200 "rebate" from their energy supplier - this is, in effect, a loan that will be repaid at the rate of £40 per year over five years. There is no choice - you can't opt out. Prepay users will get the money via their



smart meter, voucher, cheque or similar. Those homes exempt from council tax won't get the £150, so there will be a £144 million discretionary fund distributed via local authorities to catch those cases that slip through the net

If you're falling behind with your energy bills, and finding yourself struggling to pay, the best thing to do is contact your supplier as soon as possible. Under rules from regulator Ofgem, your supplier has to help you - usually by negotiating a payment plan that you can afford.

Sunday Brunch

There'll be Sunday Brunch at the Village Hall on Sunday 24 April between 10am and 12 noon and there'll be bacon, sausage and fried egg sandwiches on offer, with plenty of tea or coffee. Any funds raised on the day will be donated to Call for Back Up, a charity that offers mental health support to blue light emergency services personnel, including fire fighters, police officers, ambulance drivers and paramedics.

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400 years of Swale bridges

There's a plaque on Topcliffe Bridge stating that the first stone bridge was erected across the Swale in 1622 - that's an amazing 400 years ago!

Not mentioned is the fact that there were earlier wooden bridges going back to 1227 and possibly even earlier structures.



Historical records show that it was a constant problem keeping wooden bridges in good order. Even in 1585 the village faced a charge of £13. 6s. 8d for essential repairs. At times the bridge fell into a state of decay and there were arguments about who was responsible for its upkeep. In 1621 officials from Thirsk met on site and decreed that things were so bad that a new stone bridge should be erected with all urgency at a cost of £256.13s.4d.

Just 20 years later it was again described as in decay and ruin, and Topcliffe residents were charged with allowing the structure to be neglected. In 1786, John Carr, the

County Surveyor, designed and opened a much more substantial and widened stone bridge that we all easily recognise today. It cost £994 and was probably undertaken as part of the general improvement of the Boroughbridge to Durham Turnpike that was taking place at that time.



The most recent widening took place in 1954 to take the ever-increasing amount of traffic heading to and from Teesside. Then, when the new A168 dual carriageway was built in 1977, most traffic was diverted from Topcliffe Bridge and it settled back into relative peacefulness - apart from the damaged caused by car drivers who constantly knock down the railings when they drive too fast around the corner at the western side.

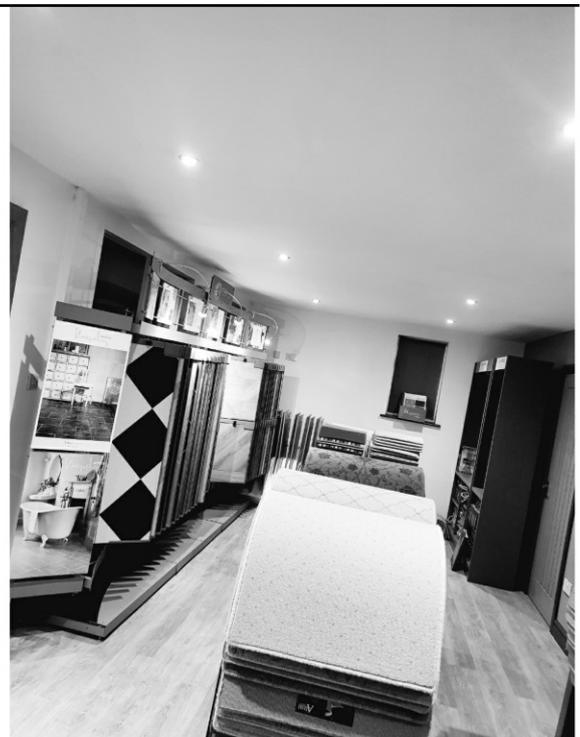
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