

Free Press

Est 2021 Facts & Integrity



The Mighty Wharfe

Debris on Bench After Flooding

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Contents overleaf



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Underwater Cameraman on Countryfile

Local fish film-maker Mark Barrow was featured on Sunday's popular BBC Countryfile, all about the Yorkshire Dales. Mark has been on many other TV programmes in recent years, showing his footage of life in the River Wharfe and highlighting the pollution frequently pumped into it by Yorkshire Water and others. In the profile we



learnt that Mark has been filming underwater for 35 years. In summer he's out in the river 4 or 5 times a week, and his wife jokes that he's 'absolutely bonkers'. Mark mentioned the large variety of underwater life in the Wharfe, including salmon, grayling, eels, perch and barbel. 'People are amazed at what's in the river when I show them the footage', he said. The worst part of his work is the sewage. He described an incident where he was 'covered head-to-toe' in toilet waste. Fish have disappeared in some places because of the algae and slime on the river-bed. He called the situation 'appalling'.



Mark's best filming moment was capturing Barbel spawning

It's fantastic to see the town's best asset and its beautiful fish on the telly again. Millions will have seen it and we are grateful to Mark.

We will continue to promote his important work, as we have done in Issues 6, 15, 40 & 66.

On page 5 we ask why the public are unaware of the amazing underwater life in the Wharfe, and make sensible suggestions to help Mark in his quest to educate us.

We also ask why the Wetherby & Villages Clean River Group (WAVCRG) did not promote Mark's appearance on their Facebook or X accounts when he is a great supporter of theirs. We look at their most recent efforts to highlight the continuing problem of water pollution.



New Box Junction in Wrong Place!



Leeds City Council have painted a new box junction in the wrong place, **not where it is desperately needed** - at the bus station exit by Moji's pizza place, where buses are regularly blocked. Was it a case of miscommunication by our Town / City Councillors? There is no problem at the Market Place junction seen in the image, particularly as the pelican crossing lights stop the traffic frequently. *There's nothing about this new box on Councillors' or the Council's social media. It looks like a BIG mistake. It is simply unbelievable that our Councillors and everybody else responsible have not resolved the bus blocking situation in over 3 years. It has inconvenienced a huge number of passengers and will continue to do so.*

Page 4 - Traffic Warden's view Page 13 - Media take up story

Parking Survey Tells us the Obvious

Leeds City Council need to find money from somewhere to pay for services that the most vulnerable in society need, as well as services many of us use, including car parks! There is a multi-million black hole in their finances. It should be no surprise to anybody they are going to introduce parking charges. They have a duty to 'consult', hence the survey. *So they have to waste time and money on a long questionnaire when the underlying question is "Do you want to pay for something that you have never paid for before?" The answer from most is a foregone conclusion. Equally wasteful of time and effort was any petition or appeal against the charges. The Free Press doesn't like to see just one side of an argument constantly put forward so we dare to point out the facts you may not be aware of. See page 3.*



Turkeys tend not to vote for Xmas

We Are in the Daily Mirror!
See Back Page

3 Years of Stating Facts & Reasonable Opinion - Nothing Withdrawn

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

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More Examples to Inspire Town Artists Page 9

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You're having a larf!



it's gone.
* I never finish anything. I have a black belt in Partial Arts.

* How do you make the number one disappear? You just add a G and



* I was struggling to understand how lightning works, but then it struck me.



- * The rule "I before E except after C..." has been disproved by science.
- * What did Spartacus say when the lion ate his wife? Nothing, he was gladiator.
- * I hate it when people use double negatives. It's a big no-no.
- * What is made of brass & sounds like Tom Jones? Trombones.



Thanks to reader who sent this in.
Not much of a saving here!

Wetherby Town Council - Oct Mtg

* 1/3 of Cllrs were absent *

* 2 meetings within days of each other 'inquate' *



ie not enough Cllrs turned up to make decisions at two Town Hall Ctte meetings. Only one Cllr attended one of them.

* No Permission for BAE Coffee Boarding *

* 'Inquiring into options' re bus blocking *

after 3 years you have to laugh



* 3 Months to Approve Comm's Ctte Minutes *

* Town's WiFi Supplier Gone Bust *

* Staff cost £24,000 a month *



Wetherby Town Council have a website and Facebook page to promote what they do. We have no space. They don't produce a simple newsletter, like many villages do (including Bramham) to keep the digitally excluded regularly informed on how they are spending over £500K of our money. This is despite having the luxury of employing a Communications Officer, now in post for over a year. They stopped posting on their X / Twitter account in 2022 but only recently decided to stop using it officially!

More about the Council on P8

Next Wetherby Town Council Mtg

Tues 10 Dec at 7pm, Town Hall

Agenda at www.wetherby.co.uk



Lidl & Care Home To Go Ahead on Hotel Site

Lidl successfully appealed the planning decision but no starting date has been released yet.

WETHERSPOONS Planning Appeal Decision expected on 20 December. *Reader's view on P6*



Lucky Ducky **£1.25 per bag** **Duck Food**



Elderly Caring & Domestic Help

15 years Experience



NVQ Level 2 Qualification

References available

Call Kerry on 07876 525 589

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



Simple - You Send it, we Publish it. It's Your Newsletter

Millions saw the 412 York Bus on *BBC Countryfile* - Tockwith Isolated at Weekend

Tockwith featured on *BBC Countryfile* in an item about the lack of housing in rural communities, and the effect of large housing developments, like the one at Green Hammerton. The question all residents ask is whether public services, like GP surgeries, will be able to cope.



Craig Temple's Connexion Buses 412 - the only bus service in Tockwith where the company is based

Bus services are one area which could benefit from an influx of people. Connexion buses are based in Tockwith and the 412 double-decker was shown. But this large village has no bus services at all on the weekend. The 412 Wetherby to York does not run on a Saturday, leaving Tockwith and other villages along the route completely isolated. At least the villages surrounding Wetherby have a service to Leeds and Harrogate, and on Sundays too.

A village the size of Tockwith should have a bus service of some sort on a Saturday. We asked the Parish Council what action they were taking to remedy this and whether the *Free Press* could help in any way to put pressure on those holding the purse strings.

Cllr Arnold Warneken of North Yorkshire Council told us: "In 2022 there were plans to axe the 412 completely after I successfully ran a survey gaining the support of the NY parishes and Rufforth (please note Wetherby Councillors and the LCC transport did not respond) and over 500 residents.



Cllr Warneken representing Tockwith in North Yorkshire

In discussion with officers we were able to get the contact renewed minus the Saturday service. If a separate contract for Saturday service can be agreed then as our survey showed there was the demand there but this would need financial support from all 3 local authorities and at least one willing operator to run the service. Previous attempts were unsuccessful as it was apparently challenging to staff this service.

Today I have written to NY Passenger Transport asking for us to revisit this potential additional service, lets hope this leads to a positive outcome."

A subsequent email from the Council suggests that the difficulty lies with finding an operator able to run the service, as well as funding. Cllr Warneken was optimistic as "it shows a willingness on at least North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council to progress this."

We copied in Leeds City Councillors Alan Lamb (board member of Metro / WYCA) and Penny Stables to our email. Penny responded to Cllr Warneken with a note of thanks and "I am very happy to do all I can to help secure this additional service".

Cllr Warneken's email contains more evidence that Wetherby Town Councillors care little about Wetherby's bus services. They may have ignored his survey in 2022 because he is a Green and they were all Conservative at the time.

We just need one out of our fifteen Town Councillors to have as much enthusiasm about bus services as Cllr Warneken (and Cllr Andrew Batty in East Keswick). We wish Cllr Warneken all the best.



New Bus Service from Wetherby to York via Boston Spa and Tadcaster - Operator Found

Leeds City Councillor Penny Stables says she is working hard to try and set up this new route and has found a bus operator willing to run it. She is now trying to get funding support from WYCA.

We do not know if our two other Leeds City Councillors Lamb & Harrington are in favour of this initiative.

Car Parking Charges - The Facts You May Not Be Aware Of

We do not like to see a totally one-sided argument, like this one. The one Labour Town Councillor we have, Alex Riddell, has kept silent on the issue and is not defending the Labour City Council's proposal. Not a single 'Independent' Councillor has spoken in favour of the charges (we have yet to see any evidence they think 'independently' of the Conservative majority on any issue!). Every Councillor representing Wetherby seems to be against this move, even the Greens! The Editor is a car driver and often uses the Wilderness car park but has put his big boy pants on and dared to state the facts and *an alternative view in italics (note, as Devil's Advocate they are not necessarily his)*.

- ⇒ **Only 2 of our 6 car parks are affected** - *we should be grateful it's not all of them, shouldn't we?*
- ⇒ **You will get 1 hour free at the Wilderness and 3 hours free at Station Gardens** - *that is reasonable and some may say generous*
- ⇒ **Wilderness: 1-2 hours £1.15 -3 hours £1.65 -4 hours £2.15 -5 hours £2.65 -6 hours £3.15 -7 hours £3.65 (daily max)**
Weekly ticket - £12.15 *These charges are not unreasonable and a lot cheaper than many other places*
- ⇒ **Station Gardens: £2.15 daily charge after 3 hours Weekly ticket £10.15** *It's basically free for most people then - why would you need to park there for more than 3 hours?*
- ⇒ **It's free on Sundays and every day after 6pm** - *many places you pay on Sundays. In Ilkley they charge on Bank Holidays.*
- ⇒ **Almost every other town in the area have charged for years** - *why should Wetherby be any different? Just last week somebody asked the Editor where the machine is to pay. Visitors (off the A1(M)) expect to pay.*
- ⇒ **You can park in Morrisons for 2 hours, for 4 hours & All Day in Cluster of Nuts for free & All Day at the leisure centre** - *plenty of time for most shoppers*



Cluster of Nuts - Stays Free
Short Stay is 4 hours
Long Stay is All Day

Leeds City Council say charges "would enable improvement works to be carried out as well as meet costs associated with maintaining car park areas. This will improve the standard of both facilities as currently there are no budget resources to fund this work"

In other words general taxpayers are currently subsidising the car user! *Why should those who can't afford a car and have to use the bus pay for car users? Perhaps one of our Conservative-dominated Town Council could explain. If only they fought for the bus user like they do the motorist!*

These charges are a small amount compared to the general cost of motoring - insurance, tax, petrol, MOT & servicing. If people use these 2 car parks frequently and on most days, they can park further away and walk into town to avoid being charged. The exercise will do them good.

Where is the evidence that businesses in town will suffer as a result of these charges. Will shoppers drive many miles to another town to park for free (very few exist) when it will probably cost them more in petrol money? It is unlikely.

And finally, if motorists do refuse to pay for parking or find alternative free parking, they may leave their car at home and be tempted to use local buses instead (free for ENCTS pass holders). That is good for local bus services and the planet.

Bus Blocking - Traffic Warden tells us it's up to COUNCILLORS to make the case

The Editor had a very interesting chat with a traffic warden recently. They made it clear that it was up to local Councillors to make the case for changes to the bus station exit.

Of course, it's the responsibility of residents to inform Councillors that the problem exists. We have been doing that for 3 years. Every single Town & City Councillor should be fully aware of the frustration felt by passengers and drivers. If they don't they are living under a stone and



Still a Problem after 3 Years

should not be representing us. Cllr Lamb said that it was up to us, the passengers, to report it to the police when it happened. We pointed out that would have no permanent deterrent effect whatsoever,

especially as drivers can legally park there with blue badges. It was ridiculous to expect passengers to ring the Police themselves when it is the bus driver's responsibility. Councillors should have been trying to resolve the problem permanently on our behalf with the massive amount of evidence the Wetherby Free Press have provided, as well as that on social media.

Despite all the publicity we give it, no permanent deterrent has been put in place, apart from repainting the double yellow lines. It took three years to do that one simple thing, and it will only have a small deterrent effect.

All those involved should be ashamed of themselves.

As we state in the parking charges article, our Conservative-dominated Town Council are far more interested in representing car users than bus passengers.

The Editor has yet to see a Town Councillor on the buses. If you see one, please tell us. All Town Councillors continue to ignore all bus issues we raise in the Free Press. That says it all really.

Perhaps one will do the decent thing and volunteer to be the liaison person on this one topic to inform us if the yellow box junction on page 1 was a mistake and provide updates on progress to resolve this problem. Cllr Norma Harrington would be the obvious choice as she is both a Town & City Councillor and says she is interested in buses, having been to meetings with bus managers.

Bus fare cap to rise to £3

The bus fare cap will be extended to December 2025.



But the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, has extended the £2 fare until 31 March 2025 for West Yorkshire. Good news for those of us who use the 7 to Leeds, X98/99, 923 & 174. The MetroDay ticket valid on all West Yorks. buses will stay at £5 until 31 March.

From 1 Jan 2025, it will cost £2 to go to Harrogate or York and £3 to get back.

Alec Shelbooke - Shadow Transport Minister

Alec Shelbrooke is our Conservative MP for Wetherby & Easingwold. He was made Shadow Transport Minister in July 2024. None of the 3 main towns in his new constituency has a railway station. Boroughbridge, Wetherby & Easingwold are all reliant on buses. In the July '24 general election he did not mention buses once in campaign literature.

Since Alec's appointment, these are his social media posts about buses

8 July - 27 Nov:

2 Tweets / Facebook Posts

On 30 August he asked the Transport Minister "What assessment has she made of the potential impact of parked cars outside bus stations on levels of delays on regional bus networks?"

In the last issue we asked what Alec thought about the 50% increase in maximum single fare from £3 to £2. He was silent on the matter on his social media. On the day the Free Press was published, Alec tweeted about it, see image. What a Coincidence! Especially when Labour had announced it on 28 October, 11 days before Alec got round to criticising it.



We have informed Alec about the many bus issues we face in Wetherby and area. He has yet to respond to us about any local bus issue.

There is little evidence that Alec has a real interest in local bus services. He is still doing his NATO work and travelled to Canada with it recently. If you think differently, please send us the evidence and we'll publish it.

Nottingham Win Again at UK Awards

Nottingham City Transport have won the 'Large Bus Operator' award for the 5th time. We have featured them before in these pages for their high quality services and infrastructure. They are not a bloated, expensive bureaucracy like Metro / WYCA. They are a city-council owned operator with a small transport department that does the simple things right. We can only dream of having such competent staff and councillors to oversee it. They have printed timetables, real time that works, next stop displays on all buses, a night-bus network, new buses, big bus stop flags, the list goes on.

And of course, they have a tram network.

Leeds can only look on with envy.



Always a Good Travel Experience in this East Midlands city

Only £2 single to Leeds, Harrogate, Otley, Garforth & York

Ben Still, CEO of Metro / WYCA about £200K

Reminder of Bus Facts for our Councillors & MP, Alec Shelbrooke (Shadow Transport Minister)

- ◇ Transdev's route 7 to Harrogate & Leeds via B Spa was reduced to hourly from half-hourly in Nov '22
- ◇ The late night route 7 service from Harrogate at 11.30pm was cut in Nov '22. The last bus is now 10.20pm
- ◇ There is NO Saturday service to York (Connexion's route 412) or Otley (Connexion's route 923) since May 22
- ◇ WYCA/Metro made a big mess of installing new bus stop flags in 2021. Half the stops are still the old type
- ◇ WYCA/Metro have stopped printing their 7 invaluable network maps. Not even displayed at W'by Bus Sta



Why Aren't We Educating People about the Wildlife in our River? cont'd from front page

Mark Barrow says that people aren't aware of the wonderful fish that make the River Wharfe their home.

We make some obvious suggestions on what should be done to make the river, Wetherby's best attraction, a better experience for residents and visitors.

1 Official Information Displays

It would be a big help if there were official information displays about fish (or any other wildlife) on the riverside. The *Free Press* pointed this out in May 24 and showed what Otley do, see image on the right. There are 3 organisations that could help to introduce such a simple educational benefit.

Wetherby Town Council's 'Welcome to Wetherby' Ctte,

Wetherby & Villages Clean Rivers Group (WAVCRG)

Wetherby Weir Preservation Trust (WWPT)

Why they have not introduced such an obvious measure we can only guess. It should have been done years ago. Perhaps Mark could suggest it to his friends at Wetherby Town Council and WAVCRG.

2 Entrance to the Salmon Steps.

The WWPT have organised a fantastic volunteer effort to make the bench and surroundings a fantastic place to sit and relax. It must have cost a lot in time and effort. But the entrance has been ignored and in a poor state for many years. Visitors would not even know there is anything down there. When we pointed this obvious fact out over 2 years ago, a couple of sensitive souls took offence. Nothing has been done since, not even a simple sign, despite the Editor offering to make one himself.

This is disappointing and is just one example of a Wetherby organisation unwilling to take even the mildest of criticism on the chin and make improvements. It is a backwards attitude that belongs in the 1950s, not a thriving, progressive town.

The *Free Press* makes lots of positive suggestions to make this town a better place to live, work and visit. As we point out in almost every issue Town Councillors ignore them, and have few, if any, creative and imaginative ideas themselves. It is a shame that this town will never reach its full potential with the current people we have in influential positions.

Wetherby & Villages Clean Rivers Group (WAVCRG)

Mark Barrow is a supporter of this group, which was started in July 2022 by Conservative Councillor, Linda Richards. It comprises of Boston Spa Parish Council, Thorp Arch Parish Council and Wetherby Town Council.

The Group has featured in many editions of WFP:

Issue 48, July 2023 - Conservative Councillor Linda Richards, leader of this group used the Group's X / Twitter account for political purposes.

Issue 49, Aug 2023 - WAVCRG had applied for Bathing Status at 3 sites in Wetherby and all were rejected. The WAVCRG website is basic and amateurish, especially compared to Ilkley Clean River Groups. WAVCRG does not have a constitution, unlike Ilkley CRG.

Issue 52, Oct 2023 - Cllr Richards closed down the WAVCRG website. Ilkley CRG's campaigning has resulted in Yorkshire Water investing £13M in the town. Ilkley CRG appear in Michaela Strachan's documentary 'Swimming in Sewage: Britain's Water Scandal', along with Mark Barrow.



Linda Richards

Issue 66, Aug 2024 - Mark Barrow allowed himself to be on Conservative Cllr Lamb's election material. The Conservatives were in power for 14 years and allowed our rivers to get into the shocking state we see now. Wetherby has finally gained 'Bathing Status'. We pointed out that all this means is that the water will be tested. It makes no difference to the amount of sewage entering the river. Yorkshire Water Chief Exec Nicola Shaw received pay of more than £1M whilst her company was fined £47M for historic sewage spills. Mark told local news that over 19,000 hours of sewage was discharged in one year. Campaigners like Fergal Sharkey post almost daily tweets about river pollution and WAVCRG had not reposted any of them, or posted any of their own about it.

WAVCRG are a campaign group that does not highlight the problem on social media or ever criticise those responsible for our dirty river!

Their only tweet so far this year is about the Mayor of Leeds, nothing to do with the river. After we exposed this SECOND inappropriate use of the Twitter account, the post disappeared months after it was posted. So no tweets at all this year! Why have an account?

Meanwhile Becky Malby of Ilkley Clean Rivers Group continues to call a spade a spade on local and national TV and does what you would expect the leader of a campaign group to do. We can only guess why WAVCRG do not speak out and criticise those responsible for our filthy waterways.

The river provides so much joy and is such an important part of the town for residents, visitors and wildlife. That is why we will continue to focus on the actions of organisations related to it. They should be at the top of their game. We think:

Wetherby Deserves Better



Otley has many info displays about local wildlife by the Wharfe. Why doesn't Wetherby?



The entrance to the salmon steps is in exactly the same state as 2 years ago. We suggested make it a feature and give it a name.





A Reader Writes:

The Wetherspoons Saga

The property was purchased on 7 October 2022 for £1,678 440 (source Land Registry) and on top of this would be stamp duty and professional fees.

In August 2023 Wetherspoons announced that they would not be proceeding citing sensitive "commercial reasons" and the changing landscape of the hospitality industry.

However in April 2024 Wetherspoons decided to go ahead.

Plans which were due to be heard on 2 July were pushed back to 3 August . On 5 November Wetherspoons said "We are currently waiting on the planning approval, which is expected back at the beginning of December."

From the Leeds Planning Portal 24/02368/LI and 23/02367/FU various documents were uploaded on 7 May 2024 which include a document dated 23 April seeking planning permission. Then on 30 August, 3 September and 30 September various documents were uploaded with revisions , presumably as a result of discussions between Wetherspoons and the Planning Department.

On 14 October 2024, Wetherby Council's comments were made public

"While Wetherby Town Council has no objections to the interior designs proposed, it does raise concerns as to the significant risk of congestion caused on High Street due to the proposed design for waste management and deliveries. The council requests that the following be considered as part of the drawing up of resulting conditions: Regulation of operating hours for deliveries and waste collection to outside of peak hours as to ensure the amenity of neighbouring residents and vehicles is not compromised. Regulation of the programme of deliveries so as to minimise detrimental impact of the proposed drop off zone on traffic along High Street. Requesting the provision of accessible toilet facilities through the implementation of Changing Places toilets where possible."

Nothing about Wetherspoons bringing in people who would use the local shops.

On 16 October 2024 a document was uploaded from the Leeds City Council Access officer commenting on the application - but why was it so late in the day ?

The Conservation team commented in a document uploaded on 17 October 2024 and included re the North Elevation

"Recommend the three existing arched windows are altered to drop the cills to match, which can either be glazed or recessed infill stone panel to address floor levels – to read as cart door openings ancillary to host"

On 1 November a raft of documents were uploaded including a letter from Wetherspoons architects to Leeds City Council . The potential deal breaker is the arched windows on the North Elevation -as they say "It is the view of the client and design team to maintain the existing apertures in their current form. When the project was first appraised, it was not clear that in the viability study that the development would require such changes to the listed building. In keeping with the guidance as prescribed by the RIBA and client traditions, the design approach has always been to maintain the external appearance of the host building as best as possible. To commit to such a change (on a technical, operational and financial) level may implicate costs which take the scheme beyond its current viability strategy. The design team do feel alterations to the existing windows are not paramount, and should be considered by the planning authority to maintain as existing with the repairs carried out where necessary. "

And so there we are -will the arched windows request be the straw that breaks the camel's back ?

I was in Wetherspoons in Knaresborough, Otley and Ripon over half term and each one was rammed . There is nowhere similar in Wetherby.

On 15 November a response came back from the Conservation team including

"The only outstanding matter is the proposed rear extension and north elevation treatment, which still requires some minor adjustment to meet previous comments supplied.

- The rear extension appears to be approx. 1m longer in length than superseded versions. The extent requires pulling back to that considered prior to sit comfortably as an ancillary structure to the listed host and to ensure the added bay length follows that set by the existing building bay rhythm (please see indicative drawing attached to previous comments). -

Please reinstate section of boundary wall, railing and gate post, which have been lost due to this change in length to the rear extension. -The rear extension is a modern addition itself and it is understood was intended to read as ancillary Stables serving the function of the host. The as built arched windows do not successfully achieve this design intention. Accepting that it is not the client/design teams intention to drop the as existing cills, the advice remains that the arched opening to the new additional bay is designed to read as a door.

In summary, largely fine subject to the revisions as described above.

December 20th seems to be the new deadline.

We thank our reader for such a thorough overview of the current situation.

It's hard to believe there are still people in the town who do not want a successful business, like Wetherspoons to come here. Their fears may be based on misconceptions. Spoons have premises in many towns far posher than Wetherby with no problems. It would attract many new visitors to the town, especially off the A1 (M). As these pages often point out, there are many in the town who want no change at all. Nobody has yet written to us with an argument saying why a JD Wetherspoon pub would harm the community.

Let's hope planning permission over these trivialities will soon be given.

Quick Beer Joke: I'm writing a book on how to enjoy beer. Currently on my 3rd draft.



Brighouse 'Spoons, a former church



Our contributor, and many other eagle-eyed readers, noticed the Guinness is more expensive on a Monday when it is supposed to be cheaper. A printing error we assume.

Cllr's Call For Action



Can you imagine any of Wetherby's Town Councillors posting a message like this? No, we can't either. It's never happened.

We have been advising folk for years to make their voice heard. If something is wrong then people should complain. How else is it going to improve? If you don't tell them, those in authority will ignore it and tell everybody there is no problem.

We urge all bus users to write to those responsible for poor service - the bus company, the Mayor and her Transport Authority (Metro / WYCA). We would add Leeds City Council (and Councillors) too, who are responsible for roadworks which often causes delays.

One email could help. Please copy your caring local newsletter (us) in to any emails and responses.

Well Done Cllr Batty, a Parish Councillor who knows how to get things done.



MEET THE EDITOR



A Big "Thank You" to all those who came to 'Meet The Editor' on the 2 days, and for your kind words and support.



It was heartening to see the good people of Wetherby & area care about what goes on here. And great to hear your views on how it can be improved.

Many mentioned enjoying the jokes and cartoons in WFP so we'll try and make more space for them. We need more joy in the world at the moment, don't we?

A couple of people said they were grateful for the printed copy because they don't use smartphones or computers. They feel excluded and are sad that many in the town do not seem to care about them. That is why we will continue our campaign to help the 'digitally excluded'.

None of our critics or senior figures in the town turned up to discuss any of the important issues. Nor have they arranged an alternative time and place to meet up.

It's disappointing they have decided to act in this manner. Why are they are unwilling to discuss anything face-to-face in a mature manner? Because they have no case to argue is the obvious answer.

As for the keyboard cowards and bullies, who often hide behind fake or anonymous profiles on social media, we will continue to keep records of their pathetic behaviour. They hate that we have free speech, a basic right that millions have died for.



One man called me 'brave' for saying the things I publish. I don't think I am. We should not be afraid of speaking truth to power. You can't go wrong if you stick to the facts with reasonable views based on them. The truth will always win and people will eventually be exposed for what they are.

As for nonsense spread on social media or directly from the Wetherby Mafia, stupid people will believe what they want; they don't want the full facts or both sides of the story. Intelligent people do not believe what they are told purely on the basis of someone's job or position. They ask questions and need evidence from both sides before judging anybody. They see much respected celebs etc exposed and their darker side revealed deeds. It is only the opinion of emotionally mature, intelligent people you should care about.

Local Hotel Wins Prestige Business Awards



John Gascoyne, General Manager at The Bridge Hotel & Spa is thrilled to share some exciting news.

His independently-owned, four-star hotel has recently been honoured with a prestigious award recognising our dedication to excellence in hospitality. The award celebrates not only their commitment to delivering outstanding guest experiences but also the team's hard work and passion.

John says "We owe this achievement to the incredible support of our guests and our talented, hardworking staff, who strive every day to make our hotel a place of warmth, comfort, and quality.

As a local, family-owned establishment, we are proud to represent Yorkshire on the national stage and bring recognition to our region.



This accolade motivates us to continue raising the bar in every aspect of our service."

The Bridge Inn looks forward to welcoming more visitors to enjoy the charm and hospitality of Yorkshire and hopes to make our community proud.

John thanks us for allowing us to share this celebration with our local community, and he extends his deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported the hotel on this journey.

For more details about the awards visit:

www.prestigebusinessawards.co.uk/news-and-winners/f/the-bridge-hotel-spa-a-winning-destination-for-2024



Wetherby Town Council - Continuing to Be Unaccountable To Us

We thank the 15 Wetherby Town Councillors for being unpaid volunteers. Unlike most volunteers they have power and are responsible for spending over **£500,000** of our money. Most are Conservative and raised our Council Tax precept by 80% in a cost-of-living crisis in 23/24, much of it to pay for new staff.



Not political !!!

They claim to be non-political. This is nonsense, shown by the Conservatives spending a great deal of time, money and effort to get their person (Cllr Smith) elected in Feb 24. See left.

In July 2024 Councillors agreed to hide one specific fact about themselves - their political allegiance on the website. They are denying information to the public that many would base their vote on. What possible reason have they got for keeping this basic, vital piece of information from us?

All but one of the 9 Council reps on other organisations are Conservative.

Every one of the 12 Council Meeting Chairs are Conservative.

The Mayor & Deputy Mayor are Conservative.



Iona Taylor, Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is Iona Taylor. She is manager to an Assistant Clerk (downgraded from an experienced Deputy Clerk in 2023), an Admin Officer (Dawn Murrell appointed in Oct 24), a Communications & Events Officer (Helena Briden since Nov 2023), a Finance Assistant, a Burials Officer, a Facilities Officer (downgraded from an experienced Facilities Manager, started in June 24) and a Facilities Caretaker.

There are 8 members of staff, more than most Town Councils. Employment costs are £150,000+ a year. Work is also contracted out.

There are no images of Town Hall staff on their website wetherby.co.uk, unlike Otley Town Council's, and no easy-to-find diagram showing the line management structure. We find it strange that there have been no official photos of the Town Clerk until now. She has been a senior and influential public figure in this town for many years (not stated anywhere exactly how many), yet most residents will not know what she looks like. This does not fit well with being an open and accountable council. The public have a right to know who is responsible for managing a £500K+ budget. The first official image of her has been posted on social media recently, left. She won an award and we congratulate her. Whatever the award was for, the many issues we have had with the Town Clerk over the years still stand and remain unresolved. Our summary of 2024 will remind readers of the Council's actions in the past year. They have a full right to reply, of course.



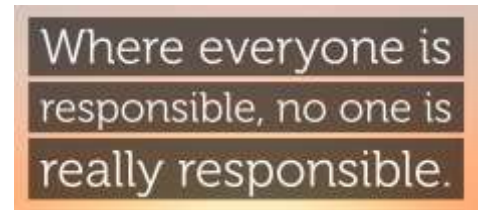
Image we had to put together - New Website Will Not State Political Allegiance. Why?

What the Council does: Market * Cemetery * Playgrounds * Distribute £5K Worth of Grants * Building Maintenance * Planning Issues * Events * It spent **£562,000** of our money in 23/24. There were many changes in staff in the past year and recruitment is a costly exercise. Two staff who left in 2023 say they would not work for the Council again.

Are we getting high standards and value for money from this Council? *We provide evidence in many issues of WFP that suggests we aren't.*

Are they open and accountable? *Not in our view. Councillors simply ignore the majority of our reasonable and legitimate concerns and questions.*

The Basic Problem - No one councillor is ultimately responsible for anything. Joint responsibility means no responsibility. If one person is given actions/leadership, things usually get done. When nobody takes overall responsibility, progress is much slower, standards are usually lower or things don't get done at all. The Committee Chairs should take full responsibility for their Cttee's performance but they ignore our questions. Meetings should have clear actions and deadlines. Few do.

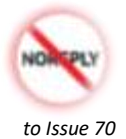


Albert Bandura, Psychologist

Opportunity for any of our 15 Town Cllrs or Their Supporters to Say Anything to Residents
Unedited, max 400 words **Nothing Sent Yet**

After every issue we ask the Town Clerk & the 15 Town Councillors to respond to our legitimate questions and issues raised.

Every Councillor ignores these emails and refuses to make any comment on serious issues. The Editor sends it from his personal email address too, writing as a resident of 30+ years, including "I am a constituent of Wetherby East so would like Cllrs Bradley, Lavocah, Knight, Newcombe & Payne in particular to respond." There is no legitimate reason why Councillors ignore these emails, especially when one Councillor admits that she has hardly any direct contact from constituents. Surely it can't be laziness?



to Issue 70

Minutes of Wetherby Town Council Meeting in October 2024 - Questions to Answer

10 out of 15 Councillors attended, which means **one third** of councillors did not turn up. Cllrs Chapman, O'Byrne, Lavocah & Smith sent apologies. **Cllr Ager-Mills did not send apologies and this was not noted in the minutes.** Cllr Ager-Mills has resigned from all committees and had the worst attendance record in 23/24. *What is going on? Residents deserve to know.* No residents were present. The Leeds City Cllrs present were Alan Lamb & Penny Stables. Norma Harrington is both a Town Councillor & Leeds City Councillor.

It was not stated who chaired this meeting. Was it the Mayor or the Town Clerk? *Why isn't it clearly stated?*

The meeting lasted less than an hour. *This suggests that few questions are raised about the many important issues raised in the other committee meeting minutes. The culture seems to be of rubber stamping decisions and rarely questioning them.*

City Cllr Reports - Boarding outside the old Barclays Bank building owned by BAE coffee shop had no permission. BAE's outdoor seating appears to infringe what the license allows. Parking obstructions outside Dominos Pizza was also mentioned. *There seems a disregard for the rules here, which no doubt the owners of the numerous other Wetherby cafes and eateries will not be pleased about. Cllr Lamb's opinion on this is not minuted.*

Mistake in September Town Council Meeting Minutes - Cllr Alex Riddell's attendance was not recorded. *No apology for this mistake which should have been noticed by the person checking, if there is one.*

Communications Cttee - Wetherby WiFi company gone bust *We have heard nothing about WiFi since it was introduced a few years ago. Has it been working? If so, how many people used it? Why has it been so poorly promoted? Where can we read something written down about its success / failure? Why is there so little information in the minutes of the Full Town Council meeting minutes about this? It is clear that no questions like these from Councillors were asked (proving the point above).*

Cont'd on next page



IMPORTANT ROAD CLOSURES FOR DECEMBER (info from Leeds City Council)

Sunday 1st December 2024
 Roads to be closed 10.00 to 21.30 : Market Place - to the sides and rear of the Town Hall
 The Shambles - between Market Place and Cross Street

Sunday 8 December 2024
 Dickensian Christmas Market 07.00 to 16.00 :
 Roads to be closed 06.00 hrs to 18.00 : Market Place - to the sides and rear of the Town Hall
 The Shambles - between Market Place and Cross Street
 Cross Street - the whole

The above streets will be subject to No Waiting at any Time from 18.00 on Saturday 07 December until end of event.

Thursday 12 December 2024
 Carol Event starts 19.30
 Roads to be closed 18.00 to 22.00 : Market Place - to the sides and rear of the Town Hall
 The Shambles - between Market Place and Cross Street



Let's Brighten the Town Up & Promote It!



The Editor saw 6 Red Kites hovering above his house recently and reminded him of the incredible work of art above in Derby. Ripon make the most of their assets too in the town centre and promote one they have in common with us; a racecourse. When will *Welcome to Wetherby*, *Wetherby Business Assoc'n* etc do anything to encourage this sort of permanent wonderful art in our town?



cont'd from last page Minutes of Wetherby Town Council Meeting in October 2024

Highways and Transport (No Ctte) - Cllr Harrington reported on a road safety meeting that is "Inquiring into options to reduce congestion and obstructive parking at Wetherby Bus Station". **Yes, after 3 years of this problem they are beginning to 'inquire'.** Cllr Harrington's views on this were not minuted. There was no discussion about it despite the clear responsibility of Councillors to raise this subject - see page 3. Not a single Town Councillor says anything about this topic. Yet they speak up against parking charges. Why is there no Town Council committee that covers roads, buses, parking, litter bins, library, leisure centre etc and is responsible for raising these issues with the relevant authorities? We have a system where councillors take up issues purely on the basis of personal preference ie if they're not interested in it or you, they ignore it.

Crime (No Ctte) - Rise in Thefts from Cars. No numbers provided or comparisons with previous month or previous years.

Finances Ctte - The largest cost by far each month is for staff - about £24,000. The next highest expenditure is for cutting the cemetery grass at £2,000 a month.

Communications Ctte - The minutes of July's meeting was approved. *Why has it taken so long for these minutes to be agreed? No explanation is given. More evidence this is not an open or accountable council.*

Staffing Ctte - The Council will spend about £6500 a year on Human Resources supplied by a private company called Peninsular Group based in Manchester.

Town Hall Ctte - Two Meetings with 5 days of each other were inquorate ie not enough cllrs present to make any decisions. Only Cllr Moss turned up for one meeting in September. Cllrs Chapman, Bradley & Newcombe were absent. *To have 2 pointless meetings so soon after each other is an embarrassment. Why aren't meetings postponed if they know people aren't going to turn up? Wetherby deserves better than this.*



Theft From Cars on the Rise. No Details



An App for Wetherby? No details

Welcome to Wetherby Ctte - A Wetherby app was mentioned but no details. There was a 'representative of the Wetherby Business Association'. *Was it Jamie Hullah, Chairman of WBA or (Cllr) Billie Ager-Mills? Why was their name not stated? Is it deliberate or just poor minute-keeping?*

Men's Singing Group at Local Brewery



Spirit of Harmony, Wetherby's entertaining lower voice a capella close harmony ensemble have had a busy month so far.

They couldn't resist the invitation to sing at the Bosuns Brewery open mic session earlier in the month and four of the guys entered the British Association of Barbershop Singers quartet preliminary competition in Leicester - just falling short of qualifying for the Senior's final to be held in Bournemouth next year.



Four of the Group at Barbershop Competition in Leicester



The Guys at Bosun's Brewery (in Good Beer Guide '25)

This friendly group are always looking for new members, who will always be made to feel very welcome. No previous experience required!

Practice is at Wetherby Methodist Church Hall on Thursday evenings from 7.30pm

Pop along or contact Dean at jdfwhitehouse@gmail.com or call him at 07923 957488

NEWS DIGEST

To find out the big stories about the area in local printed media, we carry out a Google Search using:

'Wetherby Boston Spa' in the News section

There were 3 results for the past 4 weeks (less than one story per week).

One was a charity's press release in the Yorkshire Evening Post saying they are opening their café an extra day per week because of the demand at Boston Spa.

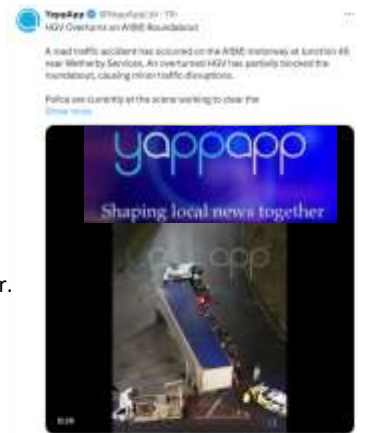
Another was Boston Spa Academy students 'absolutely buzzing' after winning National Competition in Food, Farming and Natural Environment 2024, featured in the Harrogate Advertiser.

The third was Morrisons supporting Martin House Hospice with £10 Million partnership in the H'gate Advertiser.

Either nothing else happened here in Wetherby & Boston Spa or there is gross under-reporting.

That is why the Free Press is needed.

The best immediate source for traffic and police incidents is Yappapp, available on all social media. The image shows a recent overturned lorry by Wetherby Services.



Everyone is welcome to join the Group for a social celebration

People, Planet, Pizza

Tuesday 17th December from 6.30pm

at Tom Foolery, Boston Spa

Let Chair Adrian Balcombe know if you're going by emailing adrian.balcombe@bostongreengroup.co.uk

In the latest newsletter he says:

"So, what a brilliant movie Wilding was, insightful and inspirational, thank you for supporting Wetherby cinema. The movie is also now available to stream at www.justwatch.com/uk/movie/wilding-2024

- ◆ Want to help restore nature in your own garden? Why not buy the Wilding book? There's plenty of local autumnal opportunities for volunteering in Wetherby, Boston Spa and local schools to improve local nature and biodiversity too.
- ◆ Which member of our community recently won a 'powerful people' award for his work on BEET?
- ◆ Learn more energy saving ideas as we head deeper into the autumn



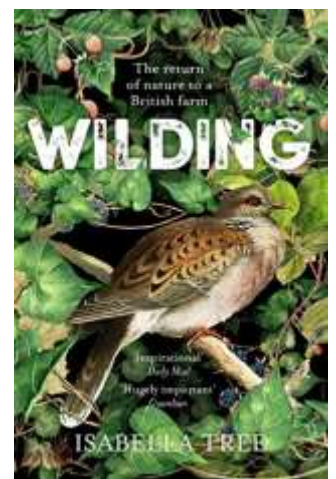
Keith Jackson wins award for the Boston Energy Efficiency Trial (BEET)

- ◆ Be inspired by Christmas eco-ideas and help support us with our recently launched Just Giving campaign.

Read more in our November newsletter, found under 'News' on our home page and please get involved.

The group is run by local volunteers who give their time freely, yet need regular resources to continue our initiatives and accomplish our plans. You may not be able to physically support us, but a contribution (big or small) would make a difference at bostongreengroup.co.uk/just-giving.

Back issues of all our newsletters can also be found under 'News' on our homepage, where you can subscribe to stay informed and not miss out."



The book came before the film

The Group's website is: www.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).

Wetherby & Boston Spa Men's Forum 2025

8-Jan	Andrew Hamilton	A Policeman's Lot
15-Jan	Gillian Waters	The Siege of Skipton Castle
22-Jan	David Davies	The Big Freeze of 1947
29-Jan	Malcolm Johnson	The Road to Big Sur
5-Feb	Roger Browne	The Great American Songbook
12-Feb	Alan Pugh	Titus Salt of Saltaire
19-Feb	Tony Burkitt	Australia - Cairns to Tasmania
16-Feb	Roger Owen	Working with the UK's Greatest Grocer
5-Mar	Geoff Queen	In the Steps of the Incas
12-Mar	John Clithero	Sporting Knights & Dames
19-Mar	Angela Beaumont	Patagonia in the Autumn
26-Mar	John Lyte	Funny You Should Say That - Part 1
2-Apr	To Be Announced	
9-Apr	AGM	

Meetings

9.45am Wednesdays
 St. James' Scout Hall
 Church Street, Wetherby



See Men's Forum website or Issue 68 for December dates

Wetherby & Boston Spa Men's Forum currently has about 50 members and new members are always welcome.

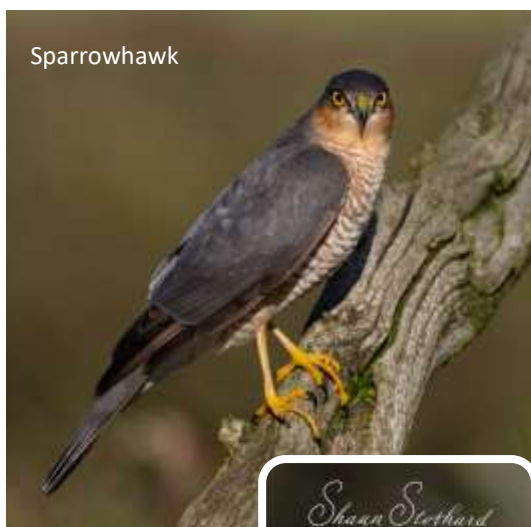
Meetings are held in the Scouts and Guides Hall, at the end of Church Street (off Bank Street), Wetherby at 9.45am on Wednesday mornings from September until April (with a short gap during the Christmas period).

After a cup of tea or coffee and a chat, the Chairman starts the meeting and an interesting and entertaining talk by a visiting speaker is then enjoyed by members.

Meetings usually end shortly after 11.30am.

More Details at www.mensforum.wetherby.info/ or call Mike Earle, Chairman on 07526 007508

The Incredible Wildlife at Goosemoor Nature Reserve



Sparrowhawk



Bullfinch

More stunning shots from Shaun Stothard at the reserve near Cowthorpe just north of Wetherby. Our thanks to him.

If you would like to admire images of these every day, why not buy a calendar and help support this volunteer-led group?

You can keep up-to-date with all the goings on at the reserve by visiting their Facebook page. There are 2 accounts—Goosemoor Nature Reserve & Goosemoor Nature Reserve Group. The latter has more news and images.

If you have not visited the reserve yet, you are missing out. It is a peaceful place to sit and watch some amazing wildlife. Not just an incredible variety of birds but also bats, bugs, newts and moths & butterflies (and rats!).

They always welcome new volunteers if you would like to help out.

Goosemoor Nature Reserve



Calendar 2025

Twelve stunning photos of feathered visitors to Goosemoor Nature Reserve

£10 with all proceeds going towards the upkeep at
Goosemoor Nature Reserve

Text 07743 504186 with your order. For BACS payments, sort code 08-90-72, account number 01429716, account name Mr Arnold Warneken (GNR account). Please use your name and "Calendar" as the reference.


Wetherby Choral Society
 Music Director: John Dunford
 Registered Charity 510264

HANDEL Messiah

**Saturday 21 December
 2024, 7.30pm**
 St James's Church,
 Wetherby LS22 6LP

**For unto us
 a child is
 born...**

Wetherby Choral Society
 John Dunford - conductor
 Eleonore Cockerham - soprano
 Rachel Gilmore - alto
 James Micklethwaite - tenor
 Terence Ayebare - bass
 Wetherby Pro Musica



Tickets: £20 (under 18s FREE) | Book online: wetherbychoral.org.uk
 • Nicola Florist, 1 Bank Street, Wetherby (01937 585233) - CASH OR CHEQUE ONLY, NO CARDS
 • Tel: 07443 466254 / tickets@wetherbychoral.org.uk
 • Any Society member • At the door on the day - cards accepted

WETHERBY FOLK CLUB
 TUESDAY
 10TH DECEMBER 7.30PM

Our Mission continues in bringing a wide variety of top folk artists to Wetherby

Last December, we had a blast with Merry Hell at The Engine Shed. So, let's finish the year again with a night never to forget with one of the best live bands around with the brilliant PlumHall!

BEST LIVE ACT FOLKING AWARD 2022

MERRY HELL

13 YEARS TOGETHER. 6 ALBUMS RELEASED. 100'S OF GIGS PLAYED.

Multi-award winning Merry Hell is an 8-piece band offering joyful, uplifting folk-rock, with a message for troubled times. Their energy and passion is complimented by their love of what they do and desire to share hope and togetherness with as many people as are willing to listen. They offer voices of hope and beacons of light to anyone valuing both melody and positive humanity.

PLUMHALL
 We are delighted to welcome back Plumhall after performing twice at Wetherby last year - once to raise money for Ukraine. They are renowned for their exquisite vocal harmonies and scintillating live guitar playing.

2024 kicked off spectacularly for the duo as they completed a triumphant 30-date tour with the legendary Fairport Convention as special guests. Their eagerly awaited third album 'One Star Awake' is a revelation.

www.wetherbyfolk.co.uk steve@wetherbyfolk.co.uk

THE ENGINE SHED, YORK RD, WETHERBY, LS22 7SU £22 OR £25 ON THE DOOR



Wetherby News

NEWSWATCH

We are recording the number of **general** news items about Wetherby / Boston Spa & villages. And the number of letters/emails from residents about the area in the published paper, costing £2.20.

We do this in the hope they will wake up and take up some of our stories. Not so far - they are ignoring most of the serious issues in our great town and do not deserve to have the word 'Wetherby' in their title. It makes our role more important than ever.

Issue of 14 Nov
News Items - 1 Letters - 0
 Introduction of Car Park Charges

Issue of 21 Nov
News Items - 1 Letters - 0
 Press Release from Stockeld Park

Issue of 28 Nov
News Items - 2 Letters - 0
 Two Charity Press Releases, see P10

Incredibly, this paper carried no report on the local election for our Leeds City Councillor and Mayor of West Yorks in May '24. They do not report on, or attend Town Council meetings. The paper is not available in any library or on Leeds Libraries PressReader.

Town Hall Staff now write for the Yorks Post. Where are the real "journalists"?

WE DESERVE BETTER

Wetherby Foodbank

**November 2024
 Foodbank Wish List**

- Tinned sweetcorn
- Tinned carrots
- Long-life semi-skimmed milk
- Tinned rice pudding
- Tinned/cartons custard
- Condiments & sauces
- Long-life puddings
- Long-life fruit juice
- Squash
- ReadyBrek/instant porridge
- Loo roll
- Washing up liquid
- Laundry powder
- Surface cleaner
- Hand soap

Thank you!

National & Local Media Report on Bus Problem



At last one of our local media companies has picked up one of our stories. Thanks to Sam at *Leeds Live* for highlighting this issue. His report contained 3 of our pictures showing bus blocking. The actual situation is worse than reported. The simple truth is: Over the last 3 years buses have regularly been blocked from

exiting the bus station (on one occasion 5 buses were delayed for an hour resulting in a massive knock-on effect inconveniencing many hundreds of passengers) and all that has been done to resolve the problem is repainting of the double yellow lines in Nov 24 (which did not stop it happening again a couple of weeks later).

The *Wetherby News* has not reported on this issue once. Their printed paper is almost all North Yorkshire news and their Facebook & X accounts almost all non-Wetherby related. The *Yorkshire Post & Yorkshire Evening Post* have ignored this story too, so far.

All media are welcome to use our words and pictures, whenever they want.



Hitting the National Headlines



Leeds United - Training Ground at Thorp Arch



Championship

After beating Swansea 4 - 3 in a thrilling encounter in South Wales, United went top of the Championship for the first time this season. The Italian Gnonto scored the winner in the 92nd minute.

Games come thick and fast in the Championship and a few days later came Luton Town to Elland Road in the mid-week match. The Hatters most famous fan, Eric Morecambe was becoming famous when Luton last won at Elland Road - in 1961.



Wilfried Gnonto came close in Luton game

the season gone, can they maintain this impressive run of form until the end?

Let's hope so.

It took 10 minutes for Leeds to open the scoring with some beautiful footwork from Sam Byram. It was his first goal of the season. Luton had a few goal scoring opportunities through the match, including a goal-line clearance at 1 - 0 but United dominated.

United's second goal came at a perfect time just before the break. Leeds top scorer Piroe put away an easy chance following a corner that wasn't cleared.

Dan James finished Luton off with a glorious finish over the goalies head in the 80th minute. 3 - 0 it finished. Sorry Eric, your team did not bring you sunshine but you are still one of the funniest comedians to have ever lived.

The result left Leeds top of the pile once again. With a third of



Eric Morecambe QC (Queer as a Coot) & Mad as a Hatter



Blackburn v Utd on Sat 30 Nov at 13.30
 Utd v Derby on Sat 7 Dec at 12.30
 Utd v Middlesbrough on Tues 10 Dec at 20.00

All games on sky sports

German Manager Farke smiling after first goal against Luton



www.pkmarketing1.com/wetherby-free-press

Your Not-for-Profit Community Newsletter

Editor: Paul Kirby Email: WetherbyFreePress@PM.me

Tel: 07840 862861 Twitter/X: @wbyfreepress

We Make Not A Penny so Plse Donate Online to cover printing costs

Thank You

Everyone mentioned in the WFP has a right to reply. The reply will be published unedited.

If facts are wrong, we will apologise publicly and correct the error, like mature adults.

We don't do interviews, as we are not professionals (but have high standards). We are not 'journalists' - we simply say what we see.

We encourage everyone to write to us with their views, whatever they are. Our countrymen have died for our Freedom of Expression so do not be afraid to use it. You can remain anonymous if you wish. We or you cannot be sued for libel/defamation as long as what is published is:

True or Honest Opinion or in the Public Interest

Unjustifiable threats of legal action can be seen as harassment.

The Editor has had 6 'Meet the Editor' events so far. None of our harshest online critics have turned up yet to have a mature face-to-face discussion.

In April 2024 we had 1000 online visits in 2 days

NEXT ISSUE Fri 13 Dec 2024