

Press release: Town's flood gates to be replaced

Residents in Yarm are invited to a community drop-in this week to find out more about Environment Agency work to replace the flood gates in the town.

The project will start in April and is expected to be complete by June, taking around 12 weeks.

There are 30 flood gates along the flood defence in Yarm, and as part of the work some of the gates may be replaced and others may be removed and the flood wall bricked up, subject to further discussions with residents.

The work will start by replacing the flood gates along True Lover's Walk riverside path, starting with flood gates at West Street and working towards Silver Street.

Residents are invited to find out more at a community event taking place at Yarm Town Hall on Friday 24 February. They can drop in any time between 3pm and 6pm.

Project Manager Neil Smith said:

The gates are being replaced because many of the existing flood gates are approaching the end of their usable life. To maintain the current standard of protection for the town it's essential these gates are replaced.

By carrying out this work we will ensure the town continues to be protected from flooding from the River Tees in the future. I'd urge residents to come along to the event where they can find out more about the work we are carrying out in the town.

Work is also already underway to carry out improvements at the Boat Landing stage. Some wall coping stones and block paving have been repaired and new handrails will be put up along the waterside of the boat landing in May.

In addition, there will be restoration and repainting of the perimeter fence and replacement of benches and litter bins in the area.

Press release: Green light for North Tyneside sea defence scheme

A revised scheme to strengthen and safeguard sea defences – which has saved more than £1m of public money – has been given the go-ahead.

North Tyneside Council's Planning Committee has approved proposals for the sea defence scheme at the Central Lower Promenade in Whitley Bay, which will protect homes, businesses and the surrounding area.

It means vital work can now get underway to refurbish the structure, which is around 100 years old and is reaching the end of its serviceable life.

Elected Mayor Norma Redfearn said:

This is yet more great news for Whitley Bay. The Central Lower Promenade really needs important structural work to be carried out and the general appearance of the area is in need of improvement.

The scheme promises to achieve just that by strengthening and safeguarding sea defences and giving this stretch of the coastline a major boost. It will also save a significant amount of public money and takes into account ideas and suggestions raised by residents.

The revised scheme, which has received strong public support, involves building a new rear wall and strengthening the existing sea wall on the lower promenade.

It was drawn up after the Mayor decided the original plans and proposed price was unacceptable and a value for money exercise was carried out, which has resulted in savings of more than £1m.

It has also allowed the opportunity to include some suggestions from residents.

The project, which is being funded jointly by the council and partners Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency, will be carried out in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Council.

An open space will be created on the lower walkway with new seating, providing a great opportunity for leisure activities and events.

The design also incorporates a commercial opportunity for 'pop-up' style stalls/units on the lower promenade.

The wide upper footway will be refurbished and enhanced while the design also includes the Mayor's commitment to replacing the balustrades.

The work, which is due to be complete in winter 2017, will complement the improvements being made to the Northern Promenade.

The Central Lower Promenade scheme is part of the council's £36m Seafront Master Plan, which aims to breathe new life into the coast between Cullercoats Bay and St Mary's Island.

As part of the Master Plan, restoration work to return the Spanish City Dome to its former glory is continuing apace, a new Premier Inn is nearing completion next door, improvement work – including new surfacing and seating – is taking place along the Northern Promenade, efforts are underway to secure funding to refurbish St Mary's Lighthouse and a number of private sector schemes are also underway.

[Employers shouldn't be allowed to break their promises on pensions – Debbie Abrahams](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, commented on the Government's Defined Benefit Green Paper, said:

"Moves to allow employers to erode the value of their workers' pensions, which could reportedly cost 11 million pensioners thousands of pounds, are absolutely unacceptable.

"Employers shouldn't be allowed to break their promises on pensions and we will not stand by while the Government gives the green light to companies to downgrade them.

"The Tories are letting older people down, Labour will fight to guarantee a secure retirement."

[NPC mulls several laws, prepares for annual session](#)

China's top legislature Wednesday started its bimonthly session, with

lawmakers deliberating revisions to several laws and preparing for the annual session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) in March.

Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, presided over the opening meeting.

Legislators considered a report on the work of the NPC Standing Committee, which will be submitted to the March session.

They reviewed a draft agenda of the annual session, a draft list of candidates for the session presidium and secretary-general, as well as a list of observers.

They reviewed a report on the qualifications of some NPC deputies and discussed appointments and dismissals.

Lawmakers also deliberated revisions to the law on the Red Cross Society, the law on corporate income tax and the Unfair Competition Law.

Law on Red Cross Society

The draft revisions to the Law on the Red Cross Society aimed to further boost transparency and credibility of the country's Red Cross societies.

According to the new draft, which was brought for a third reading, Red Cross societies in China and their staff are required to give feedback to donors on the use of their donations in line with the law.

Those in charge and staff members directly responsible who fail to do so could face civil and criminal charges, it said.

Meanwhile, a previous clause giving Red Cross societies the power to "rectify" illegal activities carried out by their subordinate societies and staff members was deleted from the new draft.

China's Red Cross has in recent years grappled with trust issues.

Revision work for the Law on the Red Cross Society began in 2015.

The first reading of the draft revision suggested independent third-party agencies should audit donations, while the second draft expanded the Red Cross societies' duties in the donation of stem cells and organs.

The third reading, however, specified that Red Cross societies could "participate in and promote" blood, body and organ donations, and could participate in and carry out "work related to" stem cell donations.

It also said leading supervisors at all Red Cross societies must be chosen through a "democratic process."

The new draft has addressed public concerns and included pertinent revisions to the existing law, Zhang Mingqi, a vice director of the Law Committee of the NPC, told lawmakers Wednesday morning.

It will better safeguard and regulate Red Cross societies in performing their duties in accordance with the law, and boost its credibility, he said.

At a panel discussion, Shen Yueyue, vice chair of the NPC Standing Committee, said that the revised law is expected to boost the credibility of the country's Red Cross societies and ensure their role in the humanitarian field could be fully played.

Unfair competition law

Lawmakers started to review a draft amendment to the Unfair Competition Law, as the country strives to build a socialist market economy.

The draft revision, the first since the law came into force in 1993, was given a first reading at the bimonthly session.

As the market economy has evolved and new business models have emerged, some of the law's existing clauses do not properly address unfair competition, Zhang Mao, head of the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, told lawmakers.

The draft under consideration expands the scope of unfair competition to cover commercial bribery, false commercial propaganda, tie-in sales without buyer consent, and deceitful prize allocation, according to the draft.

It stipulated that operators can not use the names, branding or titles of established entities.

Bribery or influence to affect the outcome of a deal is banned, according to the draft.

The draft in particular stipulates that malicious activity on the Internet used to coerce buyers or disturb other businesses is also banned.

The banned activity includes misleading, cheating or forcing users to "modify, close or unload" products or services, the draft said.

It also includes products or services that are maliciously designed to not be compatible with other products or services, it noted.

The draft also stated that any activity that seriously disturbs competition order but is not currently covered by laws or regulations should be reported to the State Council, according to the draft.

The State Council will establish a coordination task force tasked with studying major policies against unfair competition.

Violators could face fines up to 3 million yuan (about 436,170 U.S. dollars) or have their business licenses revoked, it said, adding that they could also face criminal charges or have their violations recorded in a credit record system.

A draft amendment to the law on corporate income tax was also submitted to

legislators for reading on Wednesday.

The draft is expected to address the common complaint that businesses making large donations do not get enough tax concessions.

The government has waived corporate income tax on donations made by companies from their profits, but this only applies to companies that donate 12 percent of their profits or less.

The new draft stipulates that if a company's donation exceeds the 12 percent in one year, the balance can be deducted from the taxable income over the following three years.

[DVLA gets out and about to the Motorcycle Trade Expo](#)

Back in September 2016 we blogged about how DVLA is developing a [new web service](#) for our stakeholder customers to register new vehicles.

Since then we have continued to develop the service based on customer feedback.

Last month Alison Wolley (Corporate Services Relationship Manager) and I were invited to exhibit at the [Motorcycle Trade Expo](#) event in Coventry by the Motorcycle Industry Association.



This is an ideal opportunity to spend time with our customers and chat with them face to face. We set up camp in the 'Knowledge Shop' section of the show – a perfect place to showcase the new service. And that's just what we did during the 3 day event.

We demonstrated and answered lots of queries about all aspects of vehicle registration and licensing. Knowing that there were customers still using our paper process, we were also able to showcase all of the digital services DVLA offers to help dealers registering motorcycles.



Being present at events such as these is invaluable in helping us to get a deeper understanding of the industry in general and it was great to see this reciprocated in the feedback we received about the new service:

- “this will save me a lot of time and money”
- “this is so much easier to use”
- “this looks like a service I could use, I would be able to register the vehicle much quicker to allow my customer to use their bike”

Many thanks to all that took the time to visit us and we look forward to seeing you again soon at another event.

If you want to be involved in testing the new service please contact us at ved.reform@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

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