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'What happened in the UK between 2020 and 2022 must never unfold again'

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Yorkshire's National Newspaper

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Region is charged most for its energy

Gas price in Scotland is half the cost that Yorkshire pays

Leigh Jones
INVESTIGATIVE CORRESPONDENT

RESEARCH for The Yorkshire Post shows councils in the region are paying hugely differing rates for energy – potentially costing the public millions.

Box Power, a non-profit energy consultancy, asked 300 local authorities and public bodies for data on their gas and electricity usage between April 1 2023 and March 31 2024 – as well as what they paid – to calculate an average rate for each unit consumed.

The data showed the per-unit cost of energy bought by Yorkshire authorities was more expensive than any other region in Britain.

The average price local authorities in Scotland paid for gas – where energy was cheapest – was 6.2p per kilowatt hour (p/p/kwh).

The average price Yorkshire authorities paid for gas was double that – at 12.4p/p/kwh.

City of York Council appeared to be paying much higher rates than many other public bodies in the country during the time period.

It paid 49.5p/p/kwh of electricity used, for a total of £3.9m, and 15.1p/p/kwh for gas, for a total of £1.6m.

In comparison, Leeds City Council paid 25.7 p/p/kwh for electricity and 6.3 p/p/kwh for gas – making it the only Yorkshire council to pay less than the national average per unit for both, which was 33.3 p/p/kwh for electricity and 8.6 p/p/kwh for gas.

Debbie Mitchell, inset, director of finance for York Council, said: "In 2023 energy prices were historically high nationally, due to domestic and international factors.

"We have since seen a reduction in costs and forecasts are for these prices to continue to fall in the short-term. In April 2024, our gas price reduced to 3.16p/kwh.

"City of York Council purchases energy through the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation, who use a competitive tender process to achieve the most advantageous price and service.

"We are satisfied this arrangement has provided value for money for the council."

The YPO has established purchasing frameworks for public procurement of many services, including energy, which local authorities are able to purchase through.

Its spokesperson refused to confirm who their customers were, on grounds of commercial sensitivity.

However, they added: "This data does not correlate with the data we hold for our framework, which is a fully compliant solution for public-sector organisations, with value at its heart.

"We are committed to transparency, value and supply."

To ensure economies of scale were not responsible for the pricing discrepancies, Box Power compared usage across councils and discovered a huge disparity between prices.

Kirklees Council bought 33,609,775kwh of gas for £6,546,075 (19.5p/p/kwh) whereas Portsmouth City Council bought 34,996,452kwh of gas for £2,435,955 (7p/p/kwh), meaning the Yorkshire council paid almost 180 per cent more per unit than Portsmouth.

A spokesperson for Kirklees Council told The Yorkshire Post that its agreement with YPO ended at the end of this financial year.

It has already changed its electricity supplier to Crown Commercial Services, which is run by central government, and has signed up to receive gas from CCS's framework from April 2025.

It comes after Energy Secretary Ed Miliband told MPs: "The biggest threat to nature and food security, and to our rural communities, is not solar panels or onshore wind – it is the climate crisis which threatens our best farmland, food production and the livelihoods of farmers."

Mr Miliband recently approved three major solar power projects: Mallard Pass, Gate Burton, near Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire and Sunnica, near Mildenhall, in Suffolk.

Comment: Page 12.



Cow and Calf daredevils zip over moor



Hundreds of daredevils took to the skies over the weekend for Sue Ryder's Zip the Cow fundraiser which saw thrill seekers start from Cow and Calf rocks and then whizz 270 metres down Ilkley Moor at speeds of up to 35mph to raise money. Full story: Page 5.

£150m 'to make landscapes thrive'

PROJECTS that aim to boost nature recovery and back the people who make landscapes thrive will receive a share of £150m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The organisation said the money would reach about 20 large-scale projects across the UK as part of a decade-long initiative called Landscape Connections.

The funding will focus on Britain's protected landscapes, including national parks and national landscapes in England and Wales, areas of outstanding natural beauty in Northern Ireland and national parks and other areas in Scotland.

The National Lottery Heritage

Fund said the initiative would enable landowners, public and private organisations, estates, farmers and communities to collaborate on making a lasting impact.

The money will also allow for new local partnerships to undertake enterprising projects and create a network of "protected landscapes". Land owners will be able to apply for the money over the next decade.

Julian Glover, Heritage Fund trustee, said: "We have some of the most beautiful, loved and famous landscapes in the world but they can do a lot more for nature and people.

"This is a chance to make them flourish by working with those who

know them best, from naturalists to businesses and farmers. This goes beyond investing in land and nature recovery to back the people who make landscapes thrive."

Landscape Connection is the latest National Lottery Heritage Fund scheme and was shaped in consultation with stakeholder groups. It will be delivered as part of the fund's 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033.

Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy added: "This new investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund will ensure we can preserve our landscapes for future generations, while providing opportunities for young people and increasing access for all."

Man charged over bus torching in riot

A MAN has been charged with arson and violent disorder after serious disturbances in a Leeds suburb.

Justin Dobre, 37, of Clifton Mount, Harehills, was charged after a bus was set on fire during rioting in Harehills last Thursday evening, West Yorkshire Police said.

He was charged with violent disorder and arson reckless as to endanger life.

Police said he was remanded to

appear at Leeds Magistrates' Court today.

Earlier on Saturday, officers arrested another five people on suspicion of violent disorder. They remain in police custody. Four people who were initially arrested have been bailed pending further investigation.

A peaceful vigil was held in Harehills on Friday evening. Police said a woman was arrested on suspicion

of a public order offence before being released and given a conditional caution.

Officers said the rioting broke out in Harehills on Thursday as officers responded to reports of social workers experiencing hostility while dealing with a child protection issue. Police were attacked and helped social care staff to safety.

'Urgent review' into child protection case: Page 6.

Biden bows to pressure by pulling out of race

US President Joe Biden dropped out of the 2024 race for the White House yesterday, ending his bid for re-election following a disastrous debate with Donald Trump.

The decision comes after escalating pressure from Mr Biden's Democratic allies to step aside following the June 27 debate, in which the 81-year-old president trailed off, often gave nonsensical answers and failed to criticise the former president's many falsehoods.

Mr Biden plans to serve out the remainder of his term in office, which ends on January 20, 2025.

"It has been the greatest honour of my life to serve as your president. And while it has been my intention to seek re-election, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term," Mr Biden wrote in a letter posted on X, formerly Twitter.

He threw his support behind Vice President Kamala Harris, the party's instant favourite for the nomination at its August convention in Chicago.

Mr Biden, who remains at his Delaware beach house after being diagnosed with Covid-19 last week, said he would address the nation later this week to provide "detail" about his decision.

The announcement is the latest jolt to a campaign for the White House that both political parties see as the most consequential election in generations, coming just days after the attempted assassination of Mr Trump. **'In the best interest of party and country': Page 10.**

WEATHER

A few isolated showers, but largely bright.
Full forecast: Back Page

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Assembly debate

A GRASSROOTS campaign calling for the establishment of a Yorkshire assembly with budgetary control and tax-raising powers is to stage a conference on the future governance of the region.

The Great Debate is being staged at the Yorkshire Museum in York and will be hosted by the Yorkshire Society and the University of Hull. **Full story: Page 2.**

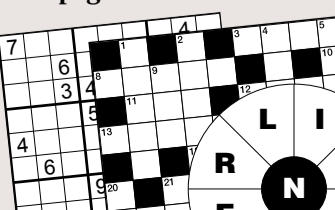
Wages pledge

CHANCELLOR Rachel Reeves has said the Government will "make sure the sums add up" if public sector workers are given above-inflation pay rises.

Reports which first appeared in The Times suggest independent pay review bodies have recommended the 5.5 per cent rise for teachers and around 1.3 million NHS staff. **Full story: Page 4.**

Crosswords & Puzzles

See pages 2 and 18.



Nuclear pledge

SOUTH Yorkshire will continue to play a central role in nuclear research despite dozens of jobs at a specialist centre being placed at risk of redundancy, say MPs after talks.

Job cuts have been proposed at its Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre and the effective end of its current operating model. **Full story: Page 19.**

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COMMENT

Urgent need for executive honesty on price of power

ONE of the major driving forces behind that which has been billed the 'cost of living crisis' has been the price of energy and fuel, with gas and electricity bills in particular soaring.

The net effect of that, for those who can afford to cover the cost of those bills, quite simply, is less change in the pockets for other essentials and less so for the nicer things in life.

For that reason, savvy consumers will shop around for the best price, switching providers where possible and where said providers are not, in the eye of the customer, providing good value for money.

It will therefore come as something of a worry and as a source of frustration to council tax payers that this newspaper has seen evidence of major discrepancies between local authorities when it comes to the amount paid for energy.

Information contained in a Freedom of Information request-led investigation shows the charges vary wildly from local authority to local authority, both nationally and within the county boundaries, the sum total of which appears to be costing the taxpayer millions of pounds.

One example appears to show York Council paying almost 50 pence per kilowatt-hour of electricity used whilst just along the road at Leeds, the council paid half that amount – 25 pence per kilowatt-hour of electricity used.

It is the view of this newspaper that these revelations merit further scrutiny. The chief executives of those local authorities who appear to be over-paying for power owe it to residents to explain in full and frank terms why.

Understandably, now, readers of this newspaper will be quite rightly asking: how can it be that some councils are able to secure value for money and others not? These are questions that require urgent, honest answers.

Steel City's warning to health leaders

TRAGICALLY, for patients needing an appointment with a dentist or doctor it has become something of a running joke when it comes to the likelihood of securing one.

Yet for those whose health depends upon receiving the prompt, expert care and compassion of a trusted GP, the lack of capacity in the healthcare system leading to the unavailability of practitioners is no laughing matter.

The stark nature of the problem is writ-large in Sheffield, where a call has been sounded for a health emergency to be declared in the Steel City.

And whilst the wellbeing of patients in the NHS system must maintain absolute priority, it is not just those receiving diagnoses and treatment who are being failed by an ailing system; a shortage of funding in Sheffield is leading to GPs facing unemployment – a situation that will inevitably lead to them leaving the city in search of a livelihood elsewhere.

Such a predicament is ridiculous in a city where figures show that last year, a quarter of all appointments successfully booked with a GP took place more than two weeks after patients deemed the attention of a doctor necessary.

It is a situation that is likely going to be exacerbated by the global IT outage caused by a faulty update issued by anti-virus company CrowdStrike affecting booking systems used by a number of surgeries around the country.

Many column inches have been filled in this newspaper and others about the challenge facing health service policy makers and those charged with running trusts around the country, but time is running out before it fails completely.

Stairway to heaven

They are unquestionably one of the most photographed heritage assets the county boasts, standing proud of the River Wharfe like a zip-fly stitching together two stretches of water since the 1800s.

As durable as they are enticing, the attrition through the years has taken its toll on Bolton Abbey's stepping stones, rendering the ancient crossing, once a corridor to peace and prayer at the Priory for Augustinian monks, impassable.

Now, to coin a phrase, no stone has been left unturned in calculating the most careful restoration of a score of missing stones, with multiple complementary agencies coming together to protect through conservation expertise the smorgasbord of flora and fauna at the abbey.

Once complete, without question, the 57 stones will once again become a must-visit tourist attraction for those who want to experience this special connection with nature.

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Please include your full postal address and the publication date if referring to a Yorkshire Post article or a previous letter. Please print as well as signing your name. The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

Reform party is not saviour of English culture

Alison Crosby, Cononley.

In his column of July 10, GP Taylor plumbed new depths and so, by association, did The Yorkshire Post. It is hard to know where to start when it comes to challenging the nonsense contained therein – nonsense that seems to have been gathered from the worst elements of the media.

This is not the first time that Taylor has banged the drum for the Reform Party – aka the business registered with Companies House as Reform UK Party Limited – but let's not forget that the Reform Party's manifesto was written safe in the knowledge that the party would not be forming a government.

Free speech is important, but it should not be used as a shield behind which to tell untruths. The idea that Labour could soon deem his article "a hate crime", and that he could be "arrested and imprisoned", is just plain daft. There is nothing patriotic about a man (Farage) who puts himself before his country. A man who, when the election was announced, declared he was heading to the USA to help Donald Trump's presidential campaign, only to do a volte face and place himself as candidate in a town he had previously stated wasn't a place he wanted to spend his Friday nights.

A man who wants to move the NHS to a system like the one in France (oh, the irony) and who thinks we should pay for GP appointments (note to Nigel, most of them already do pay, it's only free at the point of need, we shouldn't have to pay twice).

A man who, when it was revealed one of the Reform candidates thought we should have appeased Hitler, dismissed it as pub talk. A man who was happy to

take EU money as an MEP whilst his behaviour in that role, supposedly representing his country, was worse than any toddler I've ever known; remember when he and his Brexit Party allies turned their backs on young musicians playing Ode to Joy, or his blatantly boorish rudeness to a Belgian MEP?

I am no fan of the Conservatives but when I heard Farage state that he'd like to "destroy" it, a chill went down my spine – just as it does when I hear him parroting Putin, and his belief that Andrew Tate is an "important voice" for the emasculated.

We've just emerged from an election campaign, during which many lies were spoken, mostly by those on the Right, lies that were persistently repeated even when fact checkers corrected them – yet still Labour won, Tories second, Lib Dems third.

We voted, aware of the current

electoral system. Taylor's column contains so many wild and unsubstantiated conjectures that it is impossible to address them all in the space of a letter, but to correct just a few examples: Labour has stated (much to the disappointment of many of us) that there is no plan to declare war on Brexit; Rayner has not declared open house on immigration; being woke (having an awareness of social, sexual and racial inequalities and injustices) is not a bad thing, unless one is ok with misogyny, elitism and racism. If Taylor really believes that "the preservation of English culture, our heritage and beliefs are in the hands of five Reform MPs" then he would be well advised to brush up on his history, and educate himself about the many cultures and nationalities involved, over many centuries, in the making of the "English" heritage he believes so endangered.

SNAPSHOTS OF YORKSHIRE

The white sands of Bridlington's south side. By Aled Jones.



Have you taken a stunning photograph of everyday life in and around Yorkshire? For a chance to be featured, email your image, along with your contact details and a brief description of the image, to yppicture.desk@ypn.co.uk (Please label your email "Snapshots of Yorkshire". Image format: Hi-res JPEGs only).

Payments that have just gone down the drain

Hilary Plews, Save Our Swale, Richmond.

On 11/7/24 Ofwat proposed that by 2029/30 Yorkshire Water customers' bills will rise by £107 before inflation. This is the second highest increase out of all the English water companies, higher even than that proposed for ailing Thames Water.

It seems strange that such an increase to hard-pressed customers' bills should be proposed when Ofwat itself considers that "...Yorkshire Water's performance lags behind most other companies..."

This increase in bills is so that Yorkshire Water can "...deliver cleaner rivers and seas, and better services for customers". One wonders what we have been paying Yorkshire Water to do since it was privatised in 1989, if not precisely that? Was it not logical for us consumers to assume the sewerage charges set out in our bills were for Yorkshire Water to remove and safely dispose of the sewage from our homes?

Instead, Yorkshire Water has tipped 1,791 hours of raw sewage into the Swale at Richmond in 2023. There is a similar tragic story for every river in Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Water will say in its defence that 2023 was very wet. But they still managed to dump 1,113 hours of raw sewage into the Swale at Richmond in 2022 which was a drought year.

One wonders if anyone has told Yorkshire Water that dry dumping is illegal, especially as the Supreme Court has recently implied that individuals can sue water companies?

Why should any Yorkshire Water customer pay again for what we have already paid for in our sewerage charges? Just think how Yorkshire Water's sewage infrastructure could have been transformed if even a small proportion of the £6.7bn they have paid to their shareholders since 1989 had been used to do what they charge us for.

Feargal Sharkey told Richmond residents when he visited before the election that we are being scammed by our water companies. If you agree, why not take a look at <http://www.boycottwaterbills.com> for action you can take to stop Yorkshire Water polluting our rivers for profit.

From the outside

MK O'Sullivan, Victoria Street, Allerton Bywater, Castleford.

On July 16, I tuned in to Sky News and much coverage of the Republican Party Convention and the choice of Senator Vance for the Vice Presidential slot on the ticket for the November election.

Kay Burley was the presenter and had plenty to say, not unusual for her. Burley is clearly no Republican or Donald Trump fan, like almost all of her colleagues, Botting, Austin, Samuels.

Burley needs reminding that she will not be voting in the November election, at times I think that she forgets this. In any vote for 'mouth of the month award' Burley would be far ahead.

The YP Included a letter from William Loneskie (16/07/24) including the phrase "Biden must go", rather rich this from I presume a non-voting outsider, many here seem to think that what they say will be heeded, dream on.

It is an internal issue for the Democratic Party if Biden stays or goes. I have friends from school days in the US and recently I asked

their views on what outsiders think of the electoral process, the answer was the same as Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green not long back gave to Emily Maitlis.

The Congresswoman has little liking for Brits and Sky in particular, as she has made clear. If the Republicans win in November I imagine that she will have an important post in a Trump administration.

I am reminded how in 2004 the Guardian decision makers decided to meddle in the presidential election, readers were invited to write to voters in Ohio, addresses supplied asking them not to vote for George W. Bush seeking a second term, but instead back John Kerry.

Being Guardian readers, they could not resist making clear in strong terms their dislike, hatred for Mr Bush, he won the state and got his second term.

Democracy fears

Malcolm Naylor, Cowpasture Road, Ilkley.

The YP letter writers never disappoint in supplying interesting material in either content or diversity. Malcolm Parkin of Kinross's sweeping assertion that the 40 per cent of the electorate who didn't vote, don't care who runs the country being one of them.

Some do care very deeply but won't engage and give credibility to a voting system that is undemocratic. It is true that his assertion might apply to some but that's a matter for education and for others, as I have said before, it's not apathy. It's anger.

In contrast, other writers on the same day addressed the problem of our undemocratic voting system.

But Malcolm may be right on one thing. The alienated 40 per cent are a worry and if anger turns to action we are in dangerous territory.

IN BRIEF

Don't scrap the child benefit cap

Bob Watson, Baildon.

Unicef UK has called for an "urgent reset" from the Government and an end to the two-child benefit cap (The Yorkshire Post, July 16). Personally, I think that a two-child benefit cap is entirely correct. Parents have a significant responsibility in all this, and surely one should only continue producing children if you can afford them. The UK taxpayer should not be expected to fund ever-expanding families. Too much personal responsibility seems to be diluted these days.

Changing lanes

Mr PL Taylor, Milner Street, Lockwood, Huddersfield.

Re, the headline of The Yorkshire Post, May 31 – Scrap deadly smart motorways. The campaign for the hard shoulder to be reinstated after a fatal accident. Surely the minister responsible for transport and road safety must have considered all the potential dangers that could ensue when the hard shoulder was to be scrapped.

Wrong choice

Peter Rickaby, Selby.

Of those MPs appointed to Labour's cabinet, the least qualified for the position to which he has been allotted has to be Ed Miliband. No scientific experience but given the authority to determine our future energy policy, his decisions based solely on impractical ideological opinions, today's King Canute, achieved nothing but a huge unnecessary cost to the taxpayer.

Nuclear option

George McManus, Whins Lane, Long Riston.

One of the greatest risks to world security is the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Labour's defence review should therefore be welcomed. But former policy documents, agreed by party conference, clearly stated that when Labour is next in government, a comprehensive review would 'include nuclear'. Whatever conclusions are reached, nuclear can't be ignored.

HORACE & DORIS



"THERE IS SOMETHING I WANT TO TELL YOU - LOOK IN THE LETTERS SECTION."