



## KNARESBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

Transfer of Knaresborough Market  
Full Business Case (Double Devolution)  
20 May 2025



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Project Name:	Knaresborough Market Devolution
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## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1 Scope

This plan sets out the case for Knaresborough Town Council to undertake the management and operation of the town's weekly charter market in accord with North Yorkshire Council's commitment to provide opportunities for town and parish councils and community groups to manage services and assets on its behalf.

### 1.2 Timetable

Knaresborough Town Council is prepared to undertake the management of the market as soon as possible. The timescale is dictated to some extent by North Yorkshire Council's decision to require self-erection of stalls in June/July 2025.

### 1.3 Budget

Our budget is based on historic trading figures provided by North Yorkshire Council. We believe that the market can remain self-financing providing that existing traders stay, and new traders are attracted. Knaresborough Town Council is able to allocate funds from its reserves to cover any trading loss in the year following transfer. Trading figures from the date of transfer to the end of this calendar year will guide the Council in setting an allocated budget for 2026/27 and, if appropriate and agreed by resolution, to adjust the 2026/27 precept request accordingly.

### 1.4 Key benefits

Our aim is to ensure the long-term future of the market by bringing it under local management, utilising local skills and resources to reinvigorate this longstanding and vital asset. Our vision is to develop the market into a thriving, well-managed amenity which supports the local economy, boosts tourism and fosters a wide range of community-based activities. These themes are developed in detail under Section 4 (Project resources and potential).

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## 2. Organisation and management

### 2.1 Knaresborough Town Council

Knaresborough Town Council is the tier of local government closest to the people of the parish of

Knaresborough. It was created under the Local Government Act 1974 as the successor to the previous Knaresborough Urban District Council. Being located in the town and with all elected members living or working in the parish, Knaresborough Town Council is uniquely placed to respond to the needs and aspirations of the community and to recognise and encourage local skills, knowledge and experience.

The Council consists of twelve elected councillors representing four wards. The population of the town at the time of the 2021 census was approximately 15,500. The Council is administered by three officers: the Town Clerk, a Deputy Town Clerk and a Community Projects Officer. Several committees and working groups meet regularly or as required to inform decision-making.

## **2.2 Financial Management**

The financial management of the Council is scrutinised by a yearly internal audit and by external auditors through the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). As required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations Act, 2015 and the Transparency Code for Local Authorities, the budget and annual audit reports for the past ten years are published on the Council's [website](#).

## **2.3 Governance**

The Council has policies in place to ensure high standards of governance. In addition to financial regulations, risk management, financial reserves, employment, biodiversity and recruitment, policies also cover risk assessments for Health and Safety, and Finance. The Council also has a Business Plan based on a survey of residents undertaken in 2022 and adopted in 2024, and an Action Plan which is revised annually. The latter includes the acquisition of the market as a strategic priority.

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## **3. Proposal and plans**

### **3.1 Introductory remarks**

We propose to undertake the management and operation of Knaresborough market. We believe that, with the co-operation of North Yorkshire Council, we can facilitate a smooth transfer, and work with traders and the local community to realise the market's full potential.

In providing any service or amenity, financial considerations will take priority. Financial viability is also the major concern for market traders. Parish and town council need also consider the negative effects to the community if an amenity is lost.

Our plans include promoting the market as a viable local retail centre and a tourist attraction. Additionally, we will explore its potential as an educational resource, an information hub, and as a means of promoting community wellbeing. The closer customer-trader connection fosters a sense of wellbeing and increased self-esteem. encourages opportunities for alternative food networks and raises awareness of the benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

### 3.2 Powers under the Food Act 1984

Parish and town councils hold the power to acquire and operate a market under the Food Act 1984, amended 1990. s.50 which states (in summary) that:

*‘A local authority may establish a market within their area (and/or) acquire by agreement (but not otherwise), either by purchase or on lease, the whole or any part of an existing market undertaking within their area, and any rights enjoyed by any person within their area in respect of a market and of tolls, and, in either case, may provide (i) a market place with convenient approaches to it (and) (ii) a market house and other buildings convenient for the holding of a market.’*

### 3.3 Accordance with North Yorkshire Council policies and priorities

The former North Yorkshire County Council’s submission to the government for the establishment of a unitary authority set out a commitment to pilot ‘double devolution’ to provide opportunities for town and parish council and community groups to manage services and assets on behalf of the new council. It stated that all instances of ‘double devolution’ would need a solid business case and delivery plan and be cost neutral to the new council. It also stated that it would be piloted in a small number of areas. In November 2022 an invitation was sent to all town and parish councils inviting expressions of interest in participating in the pilot scheme.

At the time, it was emphasised that local priorities would not be overlooked. The agreed £540 million investment fund over thirty years, following the creation of the Council, would allow the elected mayor (of the combined authority) to commit funds to local priorities such as infrastructure projects and economic development sites. Locality working is therefore a key element of North Yorkshire Council’s plans. The four aspects or ‘pillars’ of this policy are local services and access, local accountability, local action and local empowerment. Given the market’s historical, economic and social importance to the town, the transfer of its management and operation is in keeping with all these principles.

### 3.4 Carbon Reduction

Working to guidelines provided by the Carbon Literacy Project we believe that town markets provide a significant positive effect on carbon reduction. In essence, localness is the key:

- A market provides a localised space in which to shop on foot or by bicycle, thereby reducing carbon emissions in the centre of a built-up area and enabling better access to fresh, local, affordable food often in quantities more suited to the individual. The greater the choice and quality of the merchandise, the less need there is for consumers to travel further afield.
- A locally organised system of disposing of litter and the byproducts of market trading will mean less waste and a lower carbon footprint than a waste collection service based elsewhere. Market trading normally involves less unnecessary packaging.
- Potential food waste (as in fresh produce that is near to its ‘use-by’ date) can be collected by a local charity for distribution within the town.
- The intended provision of storage facilities for market stalls within Knaresborough or nearby will avoid any increase in carbon emissions caused by traders conveying stalls to the market each week.

### 3.5 Timescale

The projected timescale is largely influenced by the decision by North Yorkshire Council to initiate a strategy to 'harmonise' the setting-up of the seven outdoor markets it operates by introducing 'self-erect' to Ripon and Knaresborough markets, the two remaining markets (at the time the decision was taken) where stalls are erected by the Council.

Within the Knaresborough business community and the market traders, this decision raised concerns. Taking into consideration the views of market traders, the effect on the market is predicted to be serious. According to a North Yorkshire Council consultation exercise, Knaresborough market, which has already seen a diminishing number of traders and stalls due to economic conditions, would lose a further nine traders representing fifteen stalls, because these traders lack storage facilities and suitable vehicles for transporting the stalls. Some traders have indicated their businesses would no longer be viable if they were unable to attend the market. Several have said that as they are nearing retirement age, they will not have the physical strength to set up stalls.

A motion was proposed and passed unanimously by North Yorkshire Council's Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Committee to delay this change in policy to allow Knaresborough Town Council time to progress the devolution process. A subsequent report by North Yorkshire Council's Assistant Director, Highways and Infrastructure, dated 6th December 2024, recommended a delay of six months. In February 2025, North Yorkshire Council informed market traders that the policy would be implemented in July 2025.

Knaresborough Town Council shares the concerns of local businesses and market traders with regard to traffic and parking implications if the 'self-erect' policy is imposed. Vehicles and trailers will be parked in the market place for longer whilst stalls are erected and dismantled, and the number of concessionary parking spaces would have to increase significantly.

Consequently, it is the intention of Knaresborough Town Council, by seeking a local contractor with practical experience of providing a similar service to nearby markets, to ensure that the present arrangements, including the erection, dismantling, storage and transporting of the stalls, continues following the July deadline.

It is of the utmost importance that the transfer of the market is carefully planned and facilitated. A strategy will be agreed to enable Knaresborough Town Council's staff to shadow the present market personnel for several weeks prior to transfer. Discussions will be held with the traders, and all new contractors will be required to familiarise their staff regarding the transport, rigging and derigging and storage of the stalls.

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## 4. Project resources and potential

### 4.1 Introductory remarks

The market created Knaresborough. Soon after the castle was constructed in c.1100 to guard the strategic crossing of the River Nidd, traders brought their goods to sell within its curtilage. Traders also brought services to those who worked in the castle, prompting the establishment of a community.



Today, markets can provide the same essential components of a community as a focus for local trade, a hub where local news and services can be exchanged, and as an 'engine' to encourage education, tourism, health and wellbeing.

It is therefore important to fully understand the wider potential of this transfer when considering the resources required.

## **4.2 History, heritage and tourism**

Historic England has estimated that since 2022, heritage tourism in the UK has increased above preCovid levels. A survey by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2023) indicates the most popular heritage visitor sites include visits to parks and gardens with historic features (40%), followed by towns and cities with celebrated histories (39%). Heritage therefore plays an important role in attracting people to a place. Heritage as an activity supports thousands of jobs, generates incomes, and contributes to the national and local economies.

A thriving market is a tourist attraction in its own right, and Knaresborough Town Council recognises the importance of tourism for the local economy. The town's history, reflected in its architecture, is well-suited to attracting heritage tourism, hence the Council's plans to provide volunteer tour guides.

Although street markets should not be viewed as relics of a bygone era, they are inseparable from a town's history. The market place as a physical space has its roots in the layout of Roman settlements. The surviving descriptions of these markets show a remarkable resemblance to those of today.

The rights in law of the landowner on which Knaresborough's market operated were confirmed with the granting of a market charter by Edward II. Throughout the medieval period and into the modern era, the market was an important aspect of the life of the inhabitants. The 'busyness' of the market also led to the establishment of permanent buildings surrounding the Market Place including inns and some shops that began as market stalls and developed into established businesses with permanent premises.

Knaresborough Market Place is at the heart of the town. It's ancient connection with the castle, overlooking the river, remains. Roads with ancient Danish names such as Kirkgate and Castlegate lead into it from the High Street, and the surrounding buildings, many of which are listed, look inwards towards the market.

## **4.3 Social and economic benefits**

In recent decades there have been significant changes in the structure of local communities. These have affected people on a personal and social level. The rise of internet shopping and other issues including economic instability has led to the decline of many town centres. The consequences are far wider than simply being an inconvenience.

In some towns, elements of a 'trip into town' or the local centre are no longer available due to the closure of corner shops, local pubs, schools, churches and banks. Visiting any of these amenities reinforced the sense of community and identity.

Markets bring life into the heart of a town, even if for only one day a week. Well-managed markets can also bring other benefits to the community. They can offer a sociable place to shop where local people can also engage in community activities. Stalls can raise awareness of local needs, and consumers can engage

directly with traders and suppliers. A regular market can provide the community with a meeting place and a sense of security, identity and permanence.

Markets offer a platform for small and start-up businesses to test trade in a low cost, low risk, supportive environment. In turn, working on stalls enables local people, young and old, to gain work experience and new skills in a no-risk environment. Gathering related stalls together increases footfall to all stalls. Trade for retail businesses, pubs and food outlets on the perimeter of the market place can also increase, thus keeping money local.

#### **4.4 Education**

Against the backdrop of supermarket, online shopping and home deliveries, markets give young people access to a much shorter supply chain and to food producers thus providing them with an understanding of food origins, supply and locations.

Young people can also be given the opportunity to learn new skills or be inspired by artisans and crafters. King James School sixth-form business students and Knaresborough's Youth Council (Inspire Youth Yorkshire) should become involved.

The market could also offer young people showcasing opportunities such as school projects, volunteering commitments, or a space to perform and display.

#### **4.5 Community Engagement**

Historically, the market place was a meeting place where important proclamations were made and, in some towns, political hustings and rallies took place. It is where acts of Remembrance are held and, previously, where criminals received punishment. For better or for worse, the market place brought people closer to those in authority.

Internet technology now gives access to a vast amount of information and enables communication almost instantly to anyone, anywhere; but this remote communication also creates misinformation, and isolation, and cannot be a substitute for face-to-face dialogue. Depending on resources, the market could provide the opportunity for members of the public to meet town councillors and officers on an informal basis. A chance for Knaresborough Town Council to 'set out its stall'.

#### **4.6. Staffing**

Backroom administration will be covered by the present Town Council officers. This will include working with contractors and preparing reports for the Market Committee and Full Council.

The Town Council will enter into discussions with the present Market Officer regarding the transfer of employment, with the co-operation of North Yorkshire Council and TUPE guidance from the Society of Local Council Clerks.

A Chapter 8 Traffic Management Operative will either be employed and trained or will be supplied by a local contractor.



#### 4.7 Financial controls

All financial transactions relating to the market will be approved by the Markets Committee and initiated by the Town Clerk.

Knaresborough Town Council is investigating appropriate software packages to manage the market bookings and rents. *AdvantEDGE* is an IT consultancy providing a range of software packages to parish and town councils including an application for managing markets. Booking stalls and financial management is included. This product can be accessed from any device so could be used by the Market Officer on site using a mobile phone as well as by office staff. Integration with Knaresborough Town Council's existing financial system should be possible.

#### 4.8 Volunteers

The broader aspirations of the Town Council include substantial community involvement. The Town Council already employs a Community Projects Officer who works closely with local volunteer groups.

#### 4.9 Partnerships

In addition to the involvement of volunteers, local management of the market has the potential for the involvement of several partner organisations. These include the Knaresborough and District Chamber, which organises the popular and successful Christmas Market, King James School Sixth-form Business students, and Knaresborough's Youth Council (Inspire Youth Yorkshire).

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### 5. Asset(s) and/or service, and support

#### 5.1 Stalls and trailers

The transfer of the existing stalls and serviceable trailers to Knaresborough Town Council at no cost (as verbally confirmed by North Yorkshire Council officers). Additionally, a quotation for the continuing storage of the stalls at North Yorkshire Council's Iles Lane depot is requested.

#### 5.2 Market Charter rights

It is requested that either the ancient Market Charter rights in respect of rival markets is transferred to Knaresborough Town Council or that North Yorkshire Council undertakes to exercise control over any such trading on behalf of our behalf.

The ancient market charter applies to the land (the Market Place), and not to the market operating on that land. Royal charters protected the *owner* of the land on which a market or a fair was held. The charter gave the landowner the power to prevent a rival market operating within a radius of 6.66 miles (approximately 10.7 km) which could attract traders away from an existing market and therefore reduce the landowner's income from rents.

The relevant Land Registry entry for Knaresborough Market still registers the former Harrogate Borough Council as the owner of the Market Place. It is assumed that, legally, North Yorkshire Council is the present landowner.

However, the statutory power to control rival markets is also granted through the Local Food Act 1984. Part III S.50.2 states that no market can be established which could interfere with any rights, powers, or privileges within the authority's area without that person's consent.

The power is still exercised by many councils and is usually applied to car boot sales, farmers' markets and similar 'pop-up retail events'. Some councils charge a fee to issue permits for temporary events. This control is supported by the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) and the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA).

### **5.3 Letting of market space to charities and for commercial promotions**

We request that the letting of market space to charities and for commercial promotions does not conflict with the regular Wednesday market traders and that Knaresborough Town Council is kept informed of all such arrangements.

### **5.4 Provision of rules and regulations (to harmonise)**

Prior to the formal transfer of the market operation, provision of all appropriate documentation relating to the operation of the market including health and safety, market rules and regulations, details of rents, names and addresses of traders, etc. It is noted that North Yorkshire Council is currently reviewing rules and regulations across all markets. Knaresborough Town Council may adapt these revisions to suit the local arrangements

### **5.5 Annual market-related revenue for 2025/26 already received by North Yorkshires Council**

The transfer to the town council of any *pro rata* annual revenue payments made to North Yorkshire Council in respect of the market covering the remainder of 2025 (as agreed by North Yorkshire Council in principle).

### **5.6 Temporary Traffic Restriction Order**

Confirmation of the continuation of the existing Temporary Traffic Restriction Order (TTRO) for the remainder of 2025 at no cost to Knaresborough Town Council.

### **5.7 Parking concessions (continuation of)**

The continuation of the existing concessionary car parking for traders for the foreseeable future (regarded as a cost-neutral arrangement). It is noted that North Yorkshire Council is undergoing a harmonising process across its car parks.

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## **6. Risk assessments**

### **6.1 Policies**

As noted above (Section 2), Knaresborough Town Council has a range of policies in place to address financial and other risks. These are re-assessed annually.

## **6.2 Insurance**

Knaresborough Town Council's insurers have confirmed that the Council's present insurance policy will cover staff and volunteers working on the market.

Additionally, the current Market Rules and Regulations issued to all stallholders state that 'the Stallholders shall indemnify the Council against all claims for damage, injury, loss or any other nature, which arises from the breach, by the Stallholder or by any person under the Stallholder's direction or control, of any of the regulations contained herein.'

## **6.3 Governance**

The terms of reference of the Council's (to-be-formed) Markets Committee (see below) will include a detailed risk assessment, the contents of which will be reflected in the agenda of each meeting.

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# **7. Management Plan**

## **7.1 Oversight**

Overall management of the market will be the responsibility of the Markets Committee (formed as a Working Group in January 2025) which will report to Full Council. The Markets Officer will attend meetings of the Markets Committee to present a report. All meetings of this committee will be open to the public. In addition, the Markets Officer and the Town Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer) will hold a weekly meeting. The Town Clerk's regular financial report to Full Council will include details of market trading.

## **7.2 Annual Meeting**

It is also proposed that the Town Council will convene an annual meeting with regular market traders which will be attended by councillors as well as officers. A representative of the market traders will be invited to present a report to the Annual Meeting of Knaresborough Town Council and to attend meetings of the Markets Committee.

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# **8. Future strategies**

Knaresborough Town Council will seek to ensure a prosperous future for Knaresborough Market with initiatives that will also rejuvenate the central area of the town. These strategies and the priorities will be decided in consultation with market traders, Knaresborough's business community and the townspeople. These may include:

- A programme of annual events in the Market Place in addition to the existing Christmas Market.
- Staged musical entertainments.
- Fashion shows focussing on garments sold on the market.

- Involving the Town Crier in events and on market days.
  - An historic pageant (in conjunction with Knaresborough Castle and the Court House Museum).
  - Social media ,marketing and publicity.
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## 9. Financial appraisal and project costs

### 9.1 Financial resources

A key question to be considered is the effect on Knaresborough Town Council's overall budget and, by definition, its precept requirement should unforeseen circumstances significantly reduce the estimated income from the market in the short or longer term.

Knaresborough Town Council carried forward a balance of £241,891 on 31 March 2024. For the 2024/2025 financial year the Council set a budget of £257,150 balanced against precepted income of £172,180 with a projected other income of £11,970 and a transfer from reserves of £73,000. The Council has agreed to a precept increase in 2025/2026 which will increase the council tax by £10.07 to £36.99 (Band D equivalent).

The current reserves are well within the JPAG Practitioners Guide recommendation (that local councils, depending on their size, should maintain a general reserve of between three and twelve months of their net revenue expenditure). The Accounts and Audit Regulations Act, 2015, (s.3 & s.4) requires that a local council "must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which:

- (a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives.
- (b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and
- (c) Includes effective arrangements for the management of risk."

### 9.2 Trading and Finance Strategy

For historic reasons, detailed information on the level of trading of the market is not available. However, given the economic fluctuations of recent years, influenced by Covid and international tensions, the income from the market has remained remarkably stable. Based on figures provided, annual turnover is in the region of £70,000.

Given the economic turbulence of recent times, it would be unwise to assume there will be a stable financial environment in future years. All councils will remain vulnerable to rising costs, particularly salaries and energy charges, and the income of the market will be dependent on the buying power of customers and the quality of goods on offer.

A basic trading and finance policy will therefore require:

- Ringfenced reserve in case of downturn in trading.

- Strong marketing and publicity to encourage new customers and visitors (which in turn will encourage more traders to stand).
- Ongoing monitoring of costs to identify where further savings could be made.
- Resolution of matters listed under Section (5) Assets and/or service, and support.

### 9.3 Cost analysis at time of transfer

1	Installation of stands and provision of Section 8 trained operative.	£554.00	£28,800.00
2	Business Rates	£96.00	£4,990.00
3	Road Closures	£22.00	£1,100.00
4	Staff	(redacted)	
5	Storage of stands (Iles Lane)	£100.00	£5,200.00

1. This is based on quotation received from a company providing a similar service to two nearby markets and includes provision of a Section 8 trained operative. Contractual conditions will apply including a *pro rata* increase in charges if the number of traders increases.
2. The rateable value of the Market Place is £10,000. As this is below £50,000, the Small Business Multiplier (49.9) applies and therefore the rates due per annum will be £4,990.
3. This is the present annual cost for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order.
4. This figure is based on the NJC salary scale and includes NI and employer pensions contributions.
5. This is based on a table provided by North Yorkshire Council indicating the costs relating to the two units at the Isles Lane depot where the stands are currently stored. The figure above derives from the average and median costs over previous years.

Additionally, some miscellaneous costs. If and when they arise, will be borne by Knaresborough Town Council's existing budgets. These include marketing and publicity (officer hours), overall financial management and administration (Town Clerk hours), financial management software, and possibly the training of a standby Section 8 Operative.

### 9.4 Financial Summary

Based on all known and estimated figures, it will be possible for Knaresborough Town Council to operate and manage the market without drawing on its reserves or increasing its precept request for 2026/27. However, unforeseen events cause a downturn in market trading, the Town Council has adequate reserves to protect this asset.

The full co-operation of all parties – traders, North Yorkshire Council, and elected councillors serving Knaresborough – is essential for the success of the transfer and the continuing prosperity of the market.

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## 10. References

The Accounts and Audit Regulations Act, 2015.

The Practitioners Guide, (Governance & Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England,) JPAG, 2024.

Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration (13th edition), Roger Taylor (Ed), LexisNexis, 2022.

Transparency Code for Local Authorities, MHCLG, December 2014.

Documents (policies, minutes, etc) provided by Knaresborough Town Council and/or downloaded from the Council's website - [www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.knaresboroughtowncouncil.gov.uk)

Documents relating to Wetherby Town Market provided by Wetherby Town Council.

Nick Rhodes, The Rhodes Report, NABMA, 2005..

National Market Survey 2022, NABMA, December 2022.

Main report for the Participation Survey (April 2022 to March 2023), DCMS, 2023.

Dr Samantha Letters, Online Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516, [www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2](http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2), accessed December 2024

AdvantEDGE. (IT software for markets) [AdvantEDGE Markets & Events - EDGE IT Systems](#)

Safe and Trained (Chapter 8 Course) <https://safeandtrained.com/traffic-managementcourses/chapter-8course>

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## 11. Declaration, disclaimer and signature

This document sets out the case for Knaresborough Town Council to undertake the management and operation of the town's weekly charter market.

The Business Case outlined in this document was approved by resolution at an extraordinary meeting of Knaresborough Town Council on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and minuted accordingly.

**Disclaimer:** This document is provided as a basis for further discussion between Knaresborough Town Council and North Yorkshire Council. The contents are for informational purposes only and do not constitute a binding contract, either in whole or in part. No legal obligations or rights shall arise from this document unless and until a formal agreement between Knaresborough Town Council and North Yorkshire Council is accepted and approved.



To the best of my knowledge and belief, all the information provided in this business case is correct and true:

Printed name: STEPHEN BUTT

Date: 20th May 2025

Position in organisation: Associate, Local Council Consultancy on behalf of Knaresborough Town Council.

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