



## Leaving Zoom behind

AS 2021 began and the country went into the third lockdown it was hard to imagine that my High Sheriff's year would be anything other than Zoom Declaration followed by Zoom meeting followed by Zoom interview. However, thanks to the determination of His Honour Judge Sean Morris and the cooperation of everyone at York Crown Court, I was very lucky that my Declaration ceremony took place as hoped on 29 March. Only a tiny percentage of my guests were able to attend, all masked and socially distanced of course, but it was still an incredibly special day and emerging into bright sunshine on to the steps of the court felt like a positive omen for the year ahead.

The theme of my year is 'connectivity', with my ambition being to raise awareness for the many small community charities which have been helping vulnerable people throughout the pandemic. In five months I have hardly scratched the surface but it has been heartening and inspiring to discover the innumerable local ventures, manned by enterprising volunteers who have supported the lonely, vulnerable and elderly during these darkest of times, giving so many isolated people an essential lifeline during the lockdowns.

For the first month, I was attempting Zoom three mornings a week. I found that the planning of these calls was the easy bit, while the execution of them was a very different matter! There were many victims of my inefficiency as I struggled with the technology but when we finally connected, I loved my conversations with the various inspirational charity founders and volunteers. The vital link between me and these charities is the Two Ridings Community Foundation, a fantastic organisation that provides logistical support and grants to underfunded charities across North and East Yorkshire.

As the weather began to improve, I breathed a sigh of relief and left Zoom behind and started having garden meetings with people like Trish Kinsella from the Rainbow Centre in Scarborough. Trish is an awesome lady with boundless energy and compassion. Her inspired lateral thinking meant that during lockdown Scarborough's underemployed traffic wardens pivoted to distributing food from the Rainbow Foodbank to those most in need.

As spring turned to summer my face-to-face visits began in earnest and never have I been more aware of how enormous North Yorkshire actually is. But what an opportunity to explore this amazing county



Declaration on 29 March 2021 [L to R] His Honour Judge Hickey, Johanna Ropner (Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire), High Sheriff, Canon John Manchester (High Sheriff's Chaplain) and His Honour Judge Sean Morris



Presenting a High Sheriff's Award to Helen Lambert for her commitment of over 20 years to Easingwold Community Care which looks after ALL the needs of the local Community – meals on wheels, hospital visits with patients, shopping for the housebound and a chat and check-up for the very lonely

and see what is happening at the grass roots. There are too many highlights to mention, but I've visited community shops and special schools, inspirational prisons and intrepid fire and rescue teams, charities that teach autistic children to ride and a dancing class for the elderly and infirm.

I would like to thank everyone who has been kind enough to give up their time to talk to me so that I could learn more and appreciate what they are doing. The pluck and determination of the people of North Yorkshire is utterly astonishing – some visits have reduced me to tears, many others have brought much laughter but the underlying constant has been the willingness of all the volunteers to help those who are struggling for whatever reason.



Giving Filey hand-made chocolates to Trish Kinsella who runs the Rainbow Centre in Scarborough



Presenting a High Sheriff's Award to Sam Bell, a Scarborough Fire Cadet, for his exemplary conduct and commitment throughout the pandemic

**◆ Venetia Wrigley DL**  
*High Sheriff of North Yorkshire 2020-21*