

Harrogate: local heroes fight back

Paul Allen

Drive North from Leeds and at the bottom of a long hill you'll find a sharp right-hand bend in the main road followed by a narrow bridge over the River Wharfe. To the ordinary motorist this is a straightforward bottleneck that could be sorted out with a half-decent bit of civil engineering. To the tourist it means you're near one of the stateliest of homes – Harewood House. To the more speculative traveller however it's the border crossing to another country: North Yorkshire.

You may think I'm exaggerating, but ask yourself why they've never sorted the bottleneck out, in the interest of safety or the local economy. They *want* to be separate, and they (the people who speak for Harrogate) would probably argue that avoiding the risk of being swallowed up by Leeds and/or Bradford is the best way of protecting the local authority. The fact that many people who work in Leeds choose to live in Harrogate in no way invalidates this theory. "They want that moat," says Harrogate Theatre's chief executive, David Bown.

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