



Notes from
PARISH FORUM MEETING
at The Old School House, Leyburn
7 pm, Tuesday 22nd September 2015

Chair: [Ian McPherson](#)

The chair introduced the concept of the Forum. It is principally intended as a two-way conversation to enhance communication between parish councils and the Authority; emphasis on the bigger picture rather than local issues specific to only one parish. The Chair stressed the value of a dialogue with the parish councils – who had their “finger on the pulse”. The Forum would be run as a trial for two years.

National planning policy

Peter Stockton (YDNPA Head of Sustainable Development) explained recent changes in national planning policy:

- **Conversion of offices to residential use:** This has been permitted development (i.e. doesn't require planning permission) since 2013. 11 offices in the National Park have been converted to new dwellings.
- **Conversion of barns/farm buildings to housing:** This has been permitted development *outside* National Parks and AONBs since 2013. NPAs lobbied for an exemption because the sheer number of barns in open countryside here meant it had the potential to fundamentally damage/change the landscape. However, YDNPA is changing its policy so as to allow some roadside barns to be converted to economic or residential uses. Authority Members would be considering a recommendation (for immediate weight to be given to some of the policies in the emerging Local Plan) at Authority meeting on 29/9/15.
- **Affordable housing thresholds:** explained Government had imposed a national threshold of 11 units, below which there could be no requirement for developers to provide any affordable housing. However in National Parks and AONBs, the threshold had been set at 6 units. Even at this lower threshold, there would still be a very significant reduction in the amount of affordable housing built in the Park. However, following a legal challenge by Reading and West Berkshire councils, the policy has been quashed [see: [Affordable homes threshold quashed by High Court ruling](#) for more details]. Government has said it will appeal or reintroduce the thresholds via primary legislation. In the meantime, the uncertainty is understandably making some developers reluctant to build.
- **Sale of social housing:** Government announced its intention to introduce a ‘right to buy’ for housing association properties. This could have significant implications for the availability of affordable housing in all rural areas, not just the National Park; All previous experience suggests that the plan to build a new house to replace each

house sold is totally unrealistic. There was some discussion on the merits of parish councils acting collectively to oppose the policy/press for an exemption (for communities of less than 2,000 population) through their local MP.

- **Fracking:** Government has announced a third tranche of licences, none of which are in a National Park. The geology of the Dales is almost wholly unsuitable as a frackable resource.

Local Plan update

Peter Stockton outlined the main changes to planning policy in the emerging local plan, including:

- More flexibility for 'live/work' units;
- Clear support for Wensleydale Railway;
- More flexibility for new visitor accommodation;
- Review of locally-important open spaces;
- Allowing continued working of existing quarries where there were additional environmental benefits;
- Requiring small-scale biodiversity enhancements as part of most new development;
- Allowing some roadside barns to be converted to housing for local occupancy;
- A levy on barn conversions for open market housing, with the money being used to fund restoration of other barns.

The current draft local plan was available on the Authority's website <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/planning-policy-section/future-planning-policy-reviews/publication-version-local-plan> . The period for formal representations had now finished. In light of the representations received, the Authority would be considering whether to make any final tweaks, before submitting the Plan to the Planning Inspectorate in the new year.

Trends in the National Park

The meeting concluded with a brief overview of some of the most significant trends in the National Park, and an update on progress on some of the objectives set out in the National Park Management Plan. Parishes were reminded that the Plan, and the annual progress reports, could be viewed on the Authority's website:

<http://www.yorkshiredalesmanagementplan.org.uk/>

Any comments on the Forum, or general queries, should be directed at Lesley Knevitt on 01969 652326 email lesley.knevitt@yorkshiredales.org.uk

LK
28.9.15