



PARISH FORUM MEETING notes

Held at Grassington Town Hall, 7pm Thursday 7 April 2016

Chair: Andrew Colley

NPA Attendees:

Peter Charlesworth – Chairman
Andrew Colley – Parish member on NP Board
Neil Heseltine – Parish member on NP Board
David Butterworth – CEO
Gary Smith – Director of Conservation & Community
Peter Stockton – Head of Sustainable Development
Julie Payne – Committees Officer
Sam Parfitt – PA to CEO/Chairman

Parish Attendees:

Buckden	Garry Schofield; Chris Clark
Austwick	Kate Smith
Clapham	Ann Sheridan
Linton	Kate Hilditch; John Bennett
Beamsley	Mark Kerr
Grassington	Jean Brooksbank; Rob Charlton
Hawkswick	A L Nettleton
Langcliffe	Brian Woollard
Kettlewell	David Beck
Embsay-w-Easby	Brian Shuttleworth

The chair welcomed attendees to the Southern Forum and introduced YDNPA Officers and Members, prior to asking the parish attendees to introduce themselves as they asked questions.

The following topics were covered:-

Tackling Climate Change

Gary Smith gave a powerpoint presentation identifying some potential changes to the National Park arising from climate change. This provided a snapshot of [current activity to respond to climate change](#), and some challenges for the future: improving energy efficiency in traditional buildings; financial rewards for carbon management; and reducing downstream flood peaks.

Degraded peatlands are the biggest source of CO₂ emissions in the National Park. One of the key objectives in the National Park Management Plan is the work of the [Yorkshire Peat Partnership](#) to help farmers and landowners to restore more natural drainage across a further 14,000 hectares of peatland by 2018.

A question was asked if emissions of methane and nitrous oxide from agriculture are measured in any way. An explanation was also given on the [‘Catchment Sensitive Farming’](#) initiative, along with the monitoring of ‘Nitrate Vulnerable Zones’ by the Environment Agency.

Right to Buy and affordable housing

Peter Stockton updated the meeting on the current position. Under the Government's expanded right-to-buy scheme, housing association tenants will have the opportunity to purchase their homes at a discount. The intention is that for every house sold, a new house will be built; local authorities will be required to sell off a proportion of their housing stock to cross-subsidise the policy. At present there are no exemptions for rural areas but National Park Authorities and many other bodies (including CLA and Local Government Association) have lobbied for exemptions for communities of less than 3,000. The authority wants a range of affordable housing in the NP. Shared ownership can continue but Housing Associations, who are responsible for this, are backing off from rural development projects at the moment as they haven't got the cash available.

Affordable housing policy: the [new Local Plan](#) was submitted to the Government Planning Inspector in January. It is expected that the Public hearing sessions will be held in May. The Plan requires 50% affordable housing on sites for more than 10 units; for those with between 6 to 10, there would be a payment in lieu. For sites of fewer than 6 units, all houses would be subject to 'local occupancy' restrictions, although the definitions have been widened to help with availability of mortgages.

The Government's Starter Home initiative will make new housing available to buyers under 40 at a 20% discount to open market value. However, after 5 years the discount would be removed and can be sold on the open market. NPAs and others are currently lobbying to have the discount remain in perpetuity in rural areas. **Stop press.** The latest [amendment by the House of Lords](#) is to extend this to 20 years and to permit local authorities to determine the proportion of starter homes based on their local evidence of demand.

There is now more flexibility with 'local occupancy' restrictions – after 12 weeks of trying to sell there is scope to widen to households in the District (rather than just within the NP boundary). The Authority is hopeful this flexibility will be accepted by the Government Inspector at the Local Plan examination.

The National Park population has declined since 2011 and we are now witnessing a transition to a population dominated by older age groups. The Authority is proposing an element of open market housing on some of the larger sites in an attempt to attract more younger households into the Park.

A parish member commented that there is an issue of infrastructure for commercial operations in the northern dales.

Impact of local authority stretched budgets

Chris Clark – Buckden Parish Councillor gave a powerpoint presentation from a parishioner's perspective of how the Authority could help Dales communities to have more control over community decisions; along with ownership of implementation and responsibility for results. An example given was the [Upper Wharfedale Community Bus](#), along with several community schemes to bring high speed broadband to parts of the National Park.

Chris would like the Authority to increase the commitment to local services and strategically usurp the function of the multi-nationals so that this is the best of all the National Parks.

Communities need to be clear about what they need and the Authority could then act as a catalyst to make things happen by communicating one shared, over-arching vision.

In discussion, it was noted that the [National Park Management Plan](#) (NPMP) sets out [the vision for the National Park](#) over the long term. The NPMP is a plan for the National Park – its communities,

businesses, visitors, and the many organisations that operate there. The Plan was developed by a partnership of local organisations, and included input from many residents. The question, though, is how many people know about the Plan and what's in it?

Chris was thanked for his presentation and other parishes were encouraged to give presentations at future meetings.

National Park boundary extension

The Chief Executive, David Butterworth, summarised the background to the confirmation of the National Park boundary extension by the Secretary of State at the end of last year, followed by details of additional funding through the grant settlement in recognition of the additional area. At the March Authority meeting, [Members agreed to Defra recommendations](#) that the Board be increased (to 25) by three additional Members (one each from Eden District, Lancashire County and Lancaster City Councils), with the caveat that the Authority would review its membership within three years to look at size and representation.

Authority Members are keen to have opportunities to listen to local communities in the new area to hear aspirations, hopes and fears and to create the time to understand and learn about the area. Four 'roadshows' have already been held in the Orton Fells area. Three more are planned in May in the Lune Valley area (at Cowan Bridge, Killington and Barbon). Further information is being provided through the [website](#), and by extending the circulation of the 'Dales' newspaper and '[The Visitor](#)' newspaper.

The Authority is currently examining options for creating a physical presence in the new area, for example for a visitor centre/planning surgery.

Craven East Parish Member vacancy

[Andrew Colley](#) advised his term as a [parish Member](#) on the National Park Authority's Board is coming to an end. The deadline for nominations to represent the 23 parishes within the Craven East area is 3 June 2016. The process is being handled by the Yorkshire Local Councils Association - they will be writing to parishes advising of the process. If anyone would like more information on what the role involves, Andrew Colley and [Neil Heseltine](#) would be happy to advise.

Andrew Colley thanked everyone for attending the meeting and asked councillors to complete the feedback questionnaire in order for the NP to gauge how effective the meetings are in promoting a dialogue between parishes and the Authority.

Future meetings

Suggestions put forward for agenda items at the next meeting were:

- Understanding how SSSI agreements are supposed to work [Austwick PC]
- The decline in moorland birds [Grassington PC]

The next meeting will be held in September/October in the south-west area of the Park – venue/date to be confirmed.

SP
18.4.16