

WESTERN PARISH FORUM MEETING NOTE

Held at People's Hall, Sedbergh, Monday 11 September 2017 at 7pm

Parish Attendees:

Bandlyside	David Dent
Barbon	Roger Grove
Casterton	Ken Humphris & Enid Hastings
Crosby Ravensworth	Ginny Holroyd
Dent	Graham Dalton
Firbank	Alan Tattersall & Gordon Chivers
Garsdale	Annette Colton
Ireby with Leck	Kathryn Hyde
Kirkby Stephen	Alex Birtles
Mallerstang	Val Vamplew & Ian Murray
Nateby	Sarah Middleton
Sedbergh	Janey Hassam & Jim Atkins
Smardale & Waitby	Gillian Dargue & Rosemarie Lees
Tebay	Adrian Todd

YDNPA Representatives:

Ian McPherson	Parish Member (Secretary of State appointed)
David Butterworth	Chief Executive
Gary Smith	Director of Conservation & Community
Kathryn Beardmore	Director of Park Services
Mark Allum	Head of Access & Engagement
Chris Clark	Parish Member (Secretary of State Appointee)
Julie Payne	Committees Officer
Sam Parfitt	PA to CEO & Chairman
Nick Cotton,	Member (Cumbria County Council appointee)
Valerie Kendall	Member (Eden District Council appointee)

Ian McPherson (Chair of the Western Parish Forum) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Authority staff and members who were in attendance.

He explained the Forums are currently running as a pilot to ascertain whether regular meetings between the National Park Authority and the 98 parish councils/meetings in the Park serve a useful purpose. The meetings are intended to provide an opportunity to let the National Park know what Parishes think and to allow a two-way discussion about any and all National Park issues relevant to parish councils/meetings.

This was the second meeting of the Western Forum. The pilot is in its third year and its success, or otherwise, will be reviewed at the beginning of 2018.

The agenda for the meeting comprised the following topics:-

1. Promotion of Parish Initiatives (Gary Smith)

Parishes were encouraged to take the opportunity at these forums to share innovative ideas/activities/projects that parishes have done – so that others can learn from them. There will be a slot on the agenda for a Parish Council or other local representative to give a presentation. Examples given were Community-Led Housing Schemes (e.g. [Hudswell community housing](#)) and the [Wharfedale Venturer](#) Bus Scheme, which will feature on the agendas of the North and South Parish Forums.

Links are available on the National Park website regarding possible funding for projects (via the Sustainable Development Fund) <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/parish-councils-and-meetings>

Action: Parish Councils are invited to suggest other parish council or community projects where the NP could invite people to come and talk about at future forum meetings.

2. National Park Management Plan Update (Gary Smith)

A powerpoint presentation was given on issues for the new Management Plan (2018-2023) arising from the recent 'Your Dales' consultation. 623 replies received via email questionnaire, with many others from postcards and 2 drop-in sessions held in the area. A report summarising the feedback is available on the website.

http://www.yorkshiredalesmanagementplan.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/1001814/Report-of-consultation-August-2017.pdf

The consultation has helped identify the issues and concerns of residents, visitors and certain interest groups.

Drafting groups will now start work on formulating objectives for the new Plan. An Annual Forum (workshop on draft objectives) is taking place in November. This workshop will be open to all bodies within the National Park to attend, including Parish Councils (invites will be sent out). The drafting groups will then submit proposals for objectives to the Management Plan Steering Group who will finalise the draft Plan in February, prior to an 8-week consultation period on the draft Plan. It is hoped to get to a final Plan for approval by the National Park Authority at the end of June 2018. The Plan will be launched in July 2018. All the organisations involved will sign up to achieving the objections, with a legal obligation to have regard to National Park purposes.

There was a discussion on the challenges faced in rural areas for affordable housing and provision of jobs/businesses to retain and attract young families to live and work in the area. The high proportion of second homes is affecting housing stock in the National Park. Although there are no legal powers to intervene on second home ownership, the National Park Authority is currently in dialogue with local councils to see if they are 'politically' up for imposing new restrictions on second homes and trying to attract more young people and families to live and work in the area. Parishes present were generally in favour for the potential to restrict second homes and were encouraged to raise this issue at their individual meetings.

Action: David Butterworth to produce bullet points to give focus for discussion for those present when reporting back to their Councils.

3. Protecting and Celebrating the Dark Skies of the National Park (Mark Allum)

The dark skies of the National Park are one of its special qualities. The current Management Plan has objectives to enhance and promote enjoyment of dark skies. Up to now the Authority has included policies within its Local Plan to control external lighting; run events and festivals which have been extremely popular; nominated 3 sites as 'Dark Skies Discovery' locations; and, worked with tourism businesses who want to benefit from being in a dark skies area.

The next step could be the possibility of joining a number of other National Parks in becoming a 'Dark Skies reserve' (a core zone of very dark areas with a buffer zone). The National Park already does a lot to celebrate and protect our dark skies so it would be great to have recognition for this. In addition, it would have potential to boost tourism at the quieter times of the year.

A vital part of the application process for reserve status is the support of local communities and residents. It's not about turning off street lighting, but will look to improve lighting over time. Nobody would be forced to change exterior lights which are in place. There is potential for lighting

improvements for communities or businesses to be supported through the Sustainable Development Fund.

Parishes were supportive in principle of exploring this approach.

4. Future of Farming (Chris Clark)

The presentation proposed that the future of farming in the Dales is the single biggest challenge faced by the National Park. It is anticipated that farmers will receive far less financial support after Brexit, so there is much uncertainty about the future viability of small farms. There is a huge risk of small farms disappearing, which would affect the landscape and local communities.

The English National Park Authorities have been lobbying for more support for farming in National Parks. The National Park Authority has set up a small working group to develop proposals for a new local funding scheme to try to help maintain/increase the number of farms within the area. Initial proposals will be reported back to the Authority in December.

With funding from Natural England, the Authority is currently delivering a national pilot scheme in Wensleydale for a new style of agri-environment scheme. This is a three-year "Payment by Results" project. The big difference between this scheme and current agri-environment schemes is that it carries no prescriptions for the farmer - they are free to manage the land as they see fit in order to achieve a positive environmental outcome or result. The payments, in keeping with all agri-environment schemes, go to meeting the costs to the farmer of managing their land less intensively than they otherwise could to maximise profits.

It is hoped that the pilot will produce evidence of good practice to influence Government Ministers that could be adopted across the country.

Adrian Todd from Tebay PC had submitted the following question prior to the meeting:
How are farmers to be paid after 2022 and how will they be monitored and by which agency? Do you think the tax payer is getting value for money under the present system?

At this point no-one knows what will happen in the future. It is anticipated public benefit will come to the fore with future payments. The 'Payment by Results' pilot scheme taking place in Wensleydale is similar to schemes being run in Europe and Ireland. Chris Clark feels this is an optimistic way forward for the future.

5. Management of Green Lanes (Kathryn Beardmore)

Kathryn explained that the Authority undertakes a detailed sensitivity assessment for each route based on four criteria that reflect the special qualities of the National Park: nature conservation; heritage; surface condition (type of surface, durability based on likely use, and erosion where present - this will be looked at consistently year on year); and, tranquility (impact on other peoples' enjoyment).

Work has started on looking at all routes with possible or proven rights for recreational motor vehicles in the new area of the National Park. Surveys comprise photographs of the route at fixed intervals; and 'loggers' monitoring vehicle usage.

While recreational vehicular use on green lanes may not be seen as an appropriate activity, it is a legitimate one. The Authority has to be open to all the management options which include: working with user groups; information and education; repair; voluntary restraint; working with the Police; and, Traffic Regulation Orders, with the actual solution agreed based on evidence.

Parishes will be consulted soon on the review of the Authority's Green Lanes Management Framework that underpins this work.

6. Questions:

Sedbergh PC had submitted a question prior to the meeting:

'Planning Fees' for enquiries made by Parish Councils - the insistence for payment in advance of making an appointment to discuss an enquiry.

The clerk explained that sometimes there is a delay with issuing a cheque due to signatories required. Also some authorities don't charge Parish Councils for advice. Would the authority consider an arrangement whereby things get moving prior to receipt of payment?

Gary Smith explained that consistently requiring payment up front is a means to ensure that there is a clear agreement between the Authority and the applicant over what advice is needed and when it will be provided. This means the Authority's limited resources can be used to provide an efficient and effective planning advice service. Otherwise, experience shows that the Authority has to spend time chasing non-payers, or re-arranging times for meetings/site visits (people are always happy to reschedule things that they haven't paid for yet!). Parish Councils do receive a 50% fee discount. Any change regarding charges would be a 'political' issue for Members to consider.

Refer to Question from Tebay PC under item 4 above.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and encouraged them to complete and return the feedback forms.

The meeting concluded at 9.00pm