On-Line Autumn Parish Forum

Tuesday 4 November 7:00-9:00pm

Parish Attendees

Askrigg & Low Abbotside	Allen Kirkbride*
Austwick	Kate Smith
Casterton	Ken Humphris
Clapham cum Newby	John Dawson
Dent with Cowgill	Andrew Povey
East Witton	Richard Wells
Embsay with Eastby	Judith Benjamin
Garsdale	Chris Simmonds
Grassington	Louise Close
Hazelwood with Storiths	Georgiana Head
Hawes & High Abbotside	Emma Blades
Kettlewell with Starbotton	Ian Macefield
Kirkby Malham	Neil Heseltine*
Long Preston	Ann Kay & James Bellis
Mansergh	Lizzy MacKinnon & Peter Robinson
Marrick	Grace Bryant
Ravenstonedale	Chris Rose
Reeth	Lorna Bleach
Rylstone	Jasper Sheedy
Sedbergh	Douglas Thomson & Kevin Lancaster
Settle Town	Mike Rose
Threshfield	David Duthie

* Secretary of State (Parish) appointed Board Member

1. The meeting was Chaired by Derek Twine – Chair of YDNPA who welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the presenters.

2. **Affordable Housing in North Yorkshire – presentation slides**

Presenter: Rachel Tait, Rural Housing Enabler, North Yorkshire Council

Rachel introduced the role of rural housing enablers and the importance of affordable housing in sustaining rural communities. There is also a community-led housing enabler who works alongside the 3 Rural Housing Enablers

Rachel shared data on house prices vs. income levels, highlighting affordability challenges:

- Median house price in North Yorkshire (2022): ~£250,000
- Average house price in the Yorkshire Dales (2024): ~£337,000
- Median income in Yorkshire and Humber (2024): ~£34,000

Explained types of affordable housing:

- Social rent (~60% of market rent)

- Affordable rent (~80% of market rent)
- Shared ownership and discounted market sale

Emphasized the impact of housing shortages on:

- Local businesses and recruitment
- Social care provision
- Community sustainability

Described rural exception sites: small-scale developments tailored to local needs, often 8–12 homes, designed to blend with village architecture.

Outlined the enabling process: community engagement, housing needs surveys, site identification, planning support, and post-build tenant assistance.

If anybody has any interest in community-led housing or wants to know more, please contact ruralhousingenablers@northyorks.gov.uk

Q&A with Rachel Tait:

- **Allen Kirkbride:** Suggested repurposing former holiday cottages as starter homes. Rachel noted challenges due to high prices and energy efficiency standards.
- **Kevin Lancaster:** Shared past experience from South Lakeland where similar efforts were limited by affordability.
- **David Duthie:** Asked about the number of affordable homes. Peter Stockton (YDNPA Head of Sustainable Development) advised that 68 affordable homes have been completed across the National Park since 2020.

  YDNPA data on numbers of houses permitted completed in the National Park each year, including affordable homes is available here: https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2025/09/Final-24-25-AMR.pdf

3. **Production of Clapham Neighbourhood Plan (2025-2030) presentation slides**

James Innerdale gave a presentation on the creation and adoption of a neighbourhood plan for Clapham-cum-Newby parish.

Timeline & Process

- 2017–2018: Initial meetings and formation of a steering group.
- 2019: Community survey with a 60% response rate.
- 2021: First draft of the plan; delayed by COVID-19.
- 2021–2025: Multiple revisions, consultations, and external reviews.
- 2025: Plan adopted following a successful referendum.

Community Engagement

- Strong emphasis on consultation.
- Website maintained for updates and transparency.

- External facilitator used for focus groups to ensure unbiased feedback.

Key Themes in the Plan

- Housing (affordable homes for young people, downsizing options for retirees)
- Built and natural environment
- Economy and business
- Community facilities and infrastructure
- Travel and communications

Challenges & Lessons Learned

- Navigating two planning authorities (YDNPA and former Craven DC – now North Yorkshire) and changing council structures.
- Difficulty engaging younger demographics.
- Some community desires couldn't be included due to planning constraints.
- Importance of understanding existing local and national policies.
- Need for clear record-keeping and use of skilled facilitators early on.
- Received nearly £20,000 in grants (now discontinued due to government cuts) which supported consultation process, ie printing, promotion, room hire, website, technical reports, and planning consultants.
- Community-led approach was vital: "You said, we did."
- Community energy wasn't explored – although at the time the Plan started out it wasn't something that came up.
- Importance of identifying what makes the area locally distinctive.

James added the YDNPA were very helpful at the various important stages, giving help and guidance that they needed. The Plan will be formally adopted by the YDNPA at the December NPA meeting. This will be a legal document which Government will take notice of.

4. **National Park Management Plan - Presentation slides**

Presenter: Gary Smith (Director of Conservation & Community)

The Management Plan is a statutory document updated every five years, created by a local partnership (not solely the authority). It includes 6 long-term ambitions and numerous short-term objectives. The latest Plan is available on the Authority's website together with details of how it got produced. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan 2025-2030

It was adopted in June and formally launched in October.

Out of 49 objectives in the previous Plan; 27 were achieved; 15 showed decent progress; 2 couldn't be assessed due to lack of data.

Successes included: Designation of the Park as an International Dark Sky Reserve; and progress on the Coast to Coast footpath becoming a national trail.

Challenges were: Nature conservation lagged: declining river conditions, habitats, and species; continued illegal persecution of birds of prey.

Key Changes in the New Plan

- Nature and Climate ambitions are now prioritized.
- National targets set by the government are included for the first time.
- New legal duty for public bodies to support National Park purposes.
- Broader engagement: 24 lead bodies and over 60 supporting organizations.

Ambitions and Objectives

Wildlife: Includes 6 highly ambitious (transformational) objectives, especially around national targets—though funding is a major challenge.

Climate: Goal to reach net zero by 2040, with focus on peatland restoration, woodland expansion, and sustainable transport.

Access & Inclusion: Making the park more welcoming and accessible.

Landscape: Preserving features like barns, hedgerows, and dark skies.

Economy: Focus on farming and tourism.

Communities: Emphasis on affordable housing, reducing under-occupancy, and improving digital connectivity.

Parish Councils and voluntary organisations were acknowledged as critical contributors to the Plan's success. Examples of parish-led initiatives are: Dark skies-friendly lighting; Community-led housing; Energy efficiency promotion; Land management for nature.

Parishes are encouraged to explore how they can support objectives.

There was positive feedback on the recent Management Plan forum event launching the Plan.

Discussion covered street lighting and dark skies: East Whitton Parish Council raised concerns about tailoring lighting needs locally – they have dark cowls over their street lighting and have been trying to engage with North Yorkshire with their need for street lighting at night rather than a county wide blueprint. Gary advised that North Yorkshire Council has been generally supportive of Dark Skies Reserves in Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors but perhaps struggles with individual tailoring. He offered to find out more what other parishes have done and this item could feature on the agenda for the next meeting.

5. **Update on Active Travel projects - Presentation slides**

Presenter: Elliott Lorimer (Director of Park Services)

The **Active Travel Plan** was approved in June. It aims to improve walking, wheeling, cycling, and riding routes by:

- Creating strategic multi-use routes (e.g. Garsdale-Hawes).
- Developing local links, such as safe routes to schools (e.g. Kirby Malham).
- Enhancing walking zones in towns/villages with safer road crossings (e.g., Threshfield and Grassington).

There are 21 strategic routes, numerous local links, and walking zones detailed on the authority's website. Proposed active travel routes in the Yorkshire Dales - Yorkshire Dales National Park : Yorkshire Dales National Park

Th Garsdale-Hawes Multi-Use Route Project predates the Active Travel Plan and has made significant progress. It follows a former railway line from Garsdale Station to Hawes (5.5 miles, gentle gradient). Features include viaducts, a tunnel, and missing bridges (e.g., A684 crossing).

A feasibility study was commissioned in 2020, followed by a public consultation showing strong support. Landowner negotiations began in late 2023: 10 landowners agreed in principle; 5 are still in discussion; some objected or were unresponsive.

Legal access is essential due to lack of connecting rights of way.

In September 2025, the authority approved preparations for a Public Path Creation Order under the Highways Act 1980, Section 26. Legal tests include: Public need and enjoyment; Impact on landowners.

The process includes:

- Pre-consultation with statutory bodies.
- Public consultation and potential objections.
- Possible referral to the Secretary of State.

Estimated timeline is 12–18 months.

The route aims to be smooth, low-gradient, and barrier-free where possible. Some gates may remain due to landowner needs (e.g., livestock access).

Next steps:

- Continue landowner dialogue.
- Consult with highways authorities.
- Begin planning and consent processes for infrastructure (e.g., bridges).

6. **Parish Initiatives**

Presenter: Mike Rose (Settle Town Council)

Mike outlined how Settle's local strategy naturally complements the wider management plan, focusing on community well-being and sustainability. He gave the following examples:

- The Council has donated land to the local Scouts group to enable the installation of a disabled entrance and lift. There are plans to upgrade play areas based on community and schoolchildren feedback, with a focus on inclusive equipment for children with disabilities.
- Sustainable Development Funding has been used to replace traditional streetlights with LED Dark Skies-approved fixtures, reducing energy use and supporting the Dark Skies initiative. Streetlight upgrade project – Brighter, Safer, Greener – Settle Town Council
- An active climate and diversity working group has calculated the Council's carbon footprint and is exploring ways to reduce it.

- Castleberg Crag Project: Ongoing efforts to secure funding and continue the master plan in collaboration with the Millennium Trust.
- Community Engagement: Emphasis on consultation and collaboration with the community to guide improvements.

Mike concluded by affirming that Settle's efforts are in harmony with the management plan and that there's no conflict between local development and broader strategic goals.

The Chair thanked Mike for sharing an example of what is going on in an active Parish Council. If people would like to share what you've been doing within their own parish, it's really useful for networking and helps people learn from each other.

The Chair thanked the presenters and everyone for engaging. Parishes are invited to make suggestions for topics to include for the next meeting in spring.

Any suggestions can be emailed to committees@yorkshiredales.org.uk