Notes of Parish Forum Zoom meeting

Wednesday 12 October 2022 (7:00-9:00pm)

Parish Attendees:

1.	Kyle Blue	Orton
2.	Rob Charlton	Grassington
3.	Rebecca Fay	Threshfield
4.	Lindsey Ibbottson	Marske & New Forest
5.	Alyson Jones	West Witton
6.	Kevin Lancaster	Sedbergh
7.	Menna Lewis	Orton
8.	Margaret Longworth	Orton
9.	Ian Macefield	Kettlewell with Starbotton
10.	Naomi Meredith	Marske & New Forest
11.	Richard Phillips	Hudswell & District
12.	Mark Robinson	Austwick
13.	Mike Rose	Settle
14.	Darren Strafford	Melbecks

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority ("YDNPA") Members:

Neil Heseltine	Craven West Parishes & Chair of the YDNPA
Libby Bateman	South Lakeland, Cumbria & Lancashire Parishes
Liz Hall	Craven East Parishes
Allen Kirkbride	Richmondshire Parishes

NPA officers attending: Gary Smith (Deputy Chief Executive), Peter Stockton (Head of Sustainable Development), Rebecca Swift (Education Officer). Admin: Clare Tamea (Committees Officer), Sam Parfitt (PA to the Chief Executive & Chair)

1. **Welcome**
   The meeting was Chaired by Neil Heseltine (one of four parish members on the Board and also Chair of the Authority). The Chair welcomed attendees, introduced NPA representatives and explained the principal purpose of the forum: to have greater dialogue and communication between the YDNPA and Parishes on current issues and challenges being faced, with the aim of having positive and constructive discussions.

2. **Ambassador Schools Programme**
   Rebecca Swift gave a presentation on this programme, which aims to develop teachers' confidence in delivering outdoor learning and environmental education across the curriculum. Learning outdoors has resulting health and wellbeing benefits to children, who are more connected to nature. The staff are trained and then the school becomes a host for other schools. Rebecca confirmed that the education included learning about the Countryside Code. She welcomed expressions of interest as she is looking for 5 more schools join the programme from January 2023.

3. **Greenhouse Gas Assessment for the National Park**
   Gary Smith gave a presentation on the recently received results of a baseline assessment of greenhouse gas emissions for the Yorkshire Dales National Park, produced by Small World Consulting, who had carried out similar assessments for all our national parks. The assessment was intended to provide a comprehensive review of the

'greenhouse gas footprint' of each national park across key sectors, including industry, residents and visitors. The assessment used a "consumption-based" approach which would complement the existing "production-based" data.

There was a lot of discussion about these results. Emissions from residents was generally higher than the national average, which was to be expected due to the rural nature of the area hence the need to travel more for services and also the higher proportion of older, stone properties which may require more heating and are less insulated. Ian Macefield pointed out that there would be a different distribution across the national park, for example some areas have lots more visitor emissions than others. It was acknowledged it was a very complex area. Lyndsay Ibbottson asked what could be done about improving public transport in our rural, geographically large area by more "joined up" transport.

Gary explained that many of the actions needed to reduce emissions would be outside the remit of the YDNPA. It was agreed that everyone needs to do their own part to reduce emissions and that there were lots of discussions to be had, including with the new unitary authority, to see what everyone could do.

Offsetting by woodland planting, peatland restoration, improving grasslands and regenerative farming were all important steps we could take to reduce the overall carbon footprint in our national park. Kyle Blue expressed the view that the government's decisions over the future of farming and agriculture will impact on the success of these measures. Kevin Lancaster, who is also Chair of a Commons Association, explained that the lack of progress and clarity over future government policy was presenting difficulties – there was an immediate need to put in place plans for the future. Those present also expressed some alarm over the messages coming from Government over the recent weeks about the possibility that the new Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) might not be going ahead and that laws to protect nature may be scrapped. Some of those present said they'd lobby where they could to ensure the environment remained a key basis of future government policy.

It was felt that the baseline assessment provided some really interesting and useful data and further analysis would be welcomed.

4. **YDNPA's Housing Statement**

Peter Stockton gave a presentation on the YDNPA's Housing Statement, which condenses the key points of YDNPA's housing policy into 8 succinct statements. The statement was welcomed by those present, as a concise "expression of intent".

Richard Phillips asked what was meant by the term "affordable housing" and Peter explained it was defined by national housing policy and was based on incomes of residents of a particular area.

Peter also explained that some of the statements of intent could be delivered through YDNPA policy and others would only be delivered by working in partnership with others, for example YDNPA doesn't build any properties itself so would be looking for others to build affordable housing.

5. **Reducing the number of unoccupied** homes
As part of the item on YDNPA's Housing Statement, Kyle Blue, Chair of Orton Parish Council, raised the question of how to reduce the number of unoccupied homes. Kyle

said that a survey of Orton had shown 20% of residences in the village were now second homes. Could additional council tax be imposed? Orton PC would support this. Peter confirmed that North Yorkshire unitary council had taken the decision in principle to raise council tax for second homes and it may be that Westmorland & Furness unitary takes a similar decision.

During the consultation on the new local plan, there had been a lot of support for a "permanent occupancy" provision for new houses rather than these being allowed as second homes or holiday lets. At the moment, a restriction that a home can only be used as a permanent residence can only be put on new homes rather than existing ones, but there was a scheme in Wales where they were looking at imposing occupancy restrictions when an existing house was sold – it would be interesting to see if this is successful.

Rob Charlton said that there's currently a tax loophole - some second home owners pay business rates not council tax. It was thought the Government was bringing in some rules to address this.

Ian Macefield thought that a home-owner should need to apply for a "change of use" to use a home as a holiday let.

Ian also said that some second homes are an important source of work for local traders. Peter agreed this was so, but that overall the feeling was there were too many unoccupied second homes (at least 21% of all homes in the national park, as at 2020 – expected to be higher once the 2021 results come in, and up from 15% twenty years ago).

In summary, there was a lot of support for increasing council tax (none of which is paid to the YDNPA), to see if this reduces unoccupied homes, and to look to see what other measures may help with this.

6. **National Park Management Plan – progress update**
   Gary gave a presentation which showed that most of the objectives had been achieved or were on course and highlighted the key successes and the areas where more progress was needed.

7. **Developing the Local Plan - update**

   Peter gave an update on progress towards developing the new Local Plan 2023 – 2040, which would cover all areas within the national park. The sixth consultation would be on the possible development sites, and was expected to take place later in 2022.

8. **Any other business**
   Gary gave a reminder of the Parish Council Planning Training Event, taking place on 20 October 2022.

   The Chair thanked those present for coming.