Notes of Northern Parishes Forum meeting
7-9pm on Tuesday 23 May 2023 at Thoralby Village Hall

Chaired by Allen Kirkbride (Secretary of State Parish representative for northern parishes)

Parishes in attendance:

East Witton	Richard Wells
Grinton & Ellerton Abbey	Geraldine Coates & Mark Jones
Hudswell & District	Richard Phillips
West Witton	Dave Brown & Alyson Jones

Officers:
David Butterworth (CEO)
Gary Smith (Director of Conservation & Community)
Peter Stockton (Head of Sustainable Development)
Sam Parfitt (Job-Share PA to CEO & Chair) & Rebecca Hill (Committees Officer) – admin support

1 Welcome and Introduction

Allen Kirkbride welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Jane Ritchie of Burton cum Walden PC. Allen was disappointed at the level of attendance from Parish Councils.

2. Visitor Numbers/Visitor Management

David Butterworth gave a detailed presentation of visitor numbers and trends in the National Park over the past five years. Currently there are around 5 million visitor days to the National Park: approximately 4 million day visitors and 1 million staying visitors. The key trend has been a growth in tourism in the 'shoulder months' (i.e. outside the main Summer season). After very high levels of summer visitors in 2020 and 2021, based on a range of NPA data, numbers last year (2022) were back to pre-Covid ie 2019 levels.

The NPA has activity counters at various locations around the Park, as well as data from car park tickets sales which give a good indication of visitor trends and numbers. The NPA cannot control visitor numbers, but we do put out behavior messages via on-site posters; free walking leaflets; social media posts; and through our walking app. We also have staff and volunteers out and about.

On-line sources are becoming increasingly important, and are one of the main ways visitors get information - over 2 million people visit our website every year. We have Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts, and our social media content now regularly reaches 1 million people a week.

Last year we launched two new walking apps. One free GPS enabled walking app with 35 different walks and a Three Peaks App which costs £2.49 (proceeds help fund the Three Peaks Project). Our Apps are now installed on over 28,000 individual smartphones. These apps also have key messages for visitors.

David highlighted the messaging around dogs is very difficult to covey because for dogs on public rights of way it's a legal requirement to keep the dog 'under control' only. The NPA adds 'preferably on a lead…' which isn't a legislative requirement. However, on open access land dogs must be kept on a lead between 1 March and 31 July each year (except in the coastal margin) and at all times near livestock.

We know the demographics of our visitors through the NPA's visitor surveys. Demographics of visitors altered during Covid to under 45 years old; now back to over 45's. The 2022 survey demonstrates satisfaction levels are high with people having a good experience in the Park. Survey results are published on our website - Tourism facts and figures page. The latest survey is here
https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/01/P1231-YDNPA-Visitor-Survey-2022-Report-Final-14_12_22-PDF.pdf

Concern expressed by Grinton PC about cyclists not always following rules, particularly large scale cycling events. Any issues can be raised with the area ranger based at Reeth.

3. Local Plan Update

Peter Stockton gave an update on progress with the Local Plan setting out the consultations that have taken place since the NPA Board Members decided to have one single Plan for the whole of the National Park.

The most recent consultation (No. 6) was about possible housing sites for development by 2040. Trying to find enough sites to meet the housing target of 50 new dwellings per annum (850 over the plan period 2023 – 2040):

- Target to be met primarily on new allocated housing sites (only way to make affordable housing viable);
- Sites to be focused in larger villages and centres that still have services;
- New or revised 'housing development boundaries' that will allow small housing developments in smaller villages.
- More focus on local need – all new housing will be for 'principal' residency only (so can't become a holiday home or second home); more variety of housing types and sizes (esp 1 and 2 bedroom properties).

In response to a question on how principal residency would be enforced – this policy would only apply to new housing. There would be a legal agreement with the developer, or planning condition on approval. Principal residency has already been introduced in North York Moors, Northumberland and Cornwall. The Unitary Council would charge the appropriate Council Tax.

Impossible to get a perfect distribution of sites across the Park, as depends on landowners being willing to put sites forward. Many sites ruled out because of things like flood risk, highways access etc. YDNPA is still open to look at any better sites which are put forward.

The results of consultation will be reported to Members of the NPA at their meeting on 27 June. The next stage will be to do more detailed work to take account of all the comments and complete investigations of site constraints and any alternative sites put forward. Final proposals will come to Members for a decision in September. The full plan – including the 'preferred' housing sites and development boundaries – will be published for consultation at the end of the year.

All consultation details are still available on NP website:

https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/park-authority/living-and-working/planning-policy/local-plan-2023-40/consultation-no-6-land-for-housing-development/consultation-no-6-maps/

4. Update on Projects

David Butterworth gave a brief overview of the significant projects for 2023/24 which included:

- Farming in Protected Landscapes – Defra programme to help farmers and land managers make the transition to a new system of support. Scheme is managed by YDNPA with a Local Assessment Panel considering applications and determining which projects are approved. It can fund anything from hay-meadow restoration to new educational facilities and business plans. £1.5m available this year, and £2.2m in 2024/25.

- Westmorland Dales – the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership, led by the Friends of the Lake District, is entering its last year. Partnership is funding a range of community projects to enhance the local environment, develop skills, improve access and celebrate local culture.
- Three Counties –a new project being developed in the Upper Lune area. YDNPA is working with the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, Forest and Forest of Bowland AONB. It's at the initial stages and if successful will be a £4m Heritage Lottery funded scheme for projects in the communities grouped around: Connecting people to the landscape, nature and heritage
- Rights of Way – continuing programme of investment to keep rights of way in good condition (91% of routes in the National Park are now 'easy to use', compared to 82% 5 years ago). Investment for 2023/24 will include: 800m of bridleway at Bowderdale; extensive repairs to footpath at Havera, Sedbergh; and, replacing Thringill Bridge, Mallerstang in partnership with the parish council.
- Catchment Sensitive Farming - national programme run by Natural England but delivered by YDNPA in the National Park. Provide local expert advice, training and grant support to enable farmers to take action to reduce agricultural pollution. Will be engaging with around 150 farmers in 2023-24, and around half of these will lead to Countryside Stewardship grants for works that will help reduce pollution.
- Sustainable Development Fund - £155,000 available in grants for 2023/24 to support local projects that bring economic, social and environmental benefits. Many Parish Councils and community groups have already taken advantage of this fund.
- Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected – a partnership with North Pennines AONB with a £9m, 5-year programme, supporting farmers and landowners in Swaledale and Teesdale to restore, expand and connect priority habitats. 2023-24 will be the third full year of the programme, and will fund: habitat restoration; new native woodland; training for farmers and local contractors; young trainees; educational visits from urban school groups; and a wide range of events and activities to promote the value of Swaledale/Arkengarthdale.
- Grow Back Greener Led by the Woodland Trust with funding from the Nature for Climate Fund and delivered by YDNPA in the National Park. It funds the creation of new native broadleaf woodland. Funding in 2023/24 to create 60 ha of new woodland.
- National Park Management Plan - The Management Plan is the statutory document which guides the activity of many organisations operating in the National Park. We will be starting the process of updating the current Plan (2019-24) at the end of the year. All Parish Councils and Meetings will be consulted.

5. Ideas of future forum meetings:
   - Replacing Plastic usage in farming – this item had been put forward at Southern Forum
   - Water Quality in our Rivers was suggested.

The meeting closed at 9pm.