Notes of Southern Parishes Forum meeting
7-9pm on Thursday 18 May 2023 at Ingleborough Community Centre, Ingleton

Chaired by Neil Heseltine (Chair of YDNPA and parish representative for the south-western parishes)

Parishes in attendance:

Austwick	Mark Robinson
Embsay-with-Eastby	Brian Shuttleworth & Vince Smith
Giggleswick	Martin Saunders
Horton in Ribblesdale	Martin Hanson & Fiona Durham
Ingleton	John Emsley & Andy Weller
Kettlewell with Starbotton	Ian Macefield & Richard Appleton
Long Preston	Liz Palmer & Rob Wood
Settle	David Taylor
Stirton with Thorlby	Karen Darvell
Thornton in Lonsdale	Frank Hasleden

Officers:
David Butterworth (CEO)
Kathryn Beardmore (Director of Park Services)
Peter Stockton (Head of Sustainable Development)
Sam Parfitt (Job-Share PA to CEO & Chair) & Rebecca Hill (Committees Officer) – admin support

1. Welcome and Introduction

Neil Heseltine welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced those officers in attendance, along with Richard Foster and Simon Myers (YDNPA Authority Members representing North Yorkshire Council)

2. Visitor Numbers/Visitor Management

Kathryn Beardmore 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, eg back of toilet doors; 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.

In a response to a question about dogs being on leads, Kathryn 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. While for the walker's safety when being threatened by cows with calves, they should let the dogs off the lead.

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

A question was asked on increased pressures on parking and what steps the National Park is taking. The NPA has no problem with more car parks 'in principle', the question is how often any additional demand arises, where the new car park would be located and how it would be designed and screened. From a planning perspective any landowner can open up their land for parking up to 28 days a year. A good example is the practice taking place in Malham whereby 3 farmers alternate opening up fields to provide additional parking provision at peak periods. Where there are known issues the NPA has granted planning permission for temporary car parks for more than 28 days - Horton being an example.

It was noted that issues also arise because some visitors don't want to pay for parking in car parks, so they will park on pavements/verges or on the road. Providing more car parks won't solve this issue

Horton in Ribblesdale (Martin Hanson) was interested in the Three Peaks pedestrian counter data, and would find it useful to have this data to assist when members of community complain about the Three Peaks and visitor parking. These figures can be made available although it would be a few months afterwards, because of how its downloaded, it's not instant. **Action**: **KB** to follow up.

A question was asked on what is being done to promote less carbon dense travel. It was noted that while the YDNPA is not responsible for public transport, it has produced a public transport statement. This was agreed in March 2023 with the hope of influencing the Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) in making the National Park more accessible to people without a car and in encouraging car owners to choose public transport, over private transport to visit the Dales.
https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/03/Item-8-YDNPAs-Public-Transport-Statement.pdf
Significantly, the National Park Visitor Survey shows 84% of visitors are satisfied with public transport in the National Park.
Simon Myers highlighted that even with subsidised bus fares in North Yorkshire it is evident that people don't use buses.
The NPA does provide travel information for visitors on its website. For those arriving by rail, the problem is onward travel, and where they stay as accommodation is dispersed.

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).

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. The 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. Replacing Plastic usage in farming

This item had been suggested by Karen Darvell of Stirton with Thorlby. At the meeting it was requested this be added to the agenda for the next meeting to have a session at looking at alternative ideas to plastic. Karen was specifically referring to plastic bale wrap – she picks up small pieces whilst out walking. Neil Heseltine and Richard Foster covered the issue about re-use of plastic tree guards.

The meeting closed at 9pm.