Notes of Western Parish Forum meeting
7-9pm on Monday 5 June 2023 at Ravenstonedale Community & Heritage Centre

Chaired by Libby Bateman (Secretary of State Parish representative for western parishes)

Parishes in attendance:

Crosby Garrett PM	Richard Sewell
Firbank PM	Gordon Chivers
Mallerstang PM	Val Vamplew & John Prentice
Mansergh PM	Peter Robinson & Bert Metcalfe
Orton	Kyle Blue & Paula Thornley
Sedbergh	Kevin Lancaster

Officers:
Gary Smith (Director of Conservation & Community)
Rebecca Greenfield (Head of Access & Engagement)
Sam Parfitt & Susan Allison (Job-Share PA to CEO & Chair) – admin support

1 Welcome and Introduction

Libby Bateman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the officers in attendance. Libby is a member of Ravenstonedale PC.

2. Visitor Numbers/Visitor Management

Rebecca Greenfield gave a detailed account of current visitor trends in the National Park. Currently there are around 5 million visitor days to the National Park: 4 million day visitor days 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, numbers last year were back to pre- 2019 levels.

The NPA has counters at various locations around the Park, as well as using car park tickets sales to give a good indication of visitor numbers. The Authority cannot control visitor numbers but we can put out behavior messages via on site posters, back of toilet doors; free walking leaflets; social media posts; and through our walking app.

On-line sources are becoming increasingly important - 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 to Three Peaks Project). Our Apps are now installed on over 28,000 individual smartphones! These apps also have key messages for visitors.

Orton PC highlighted the lack of accommodation in Orton for Coast to Coast walkers, with people having to stay in Shap. National Geographic & Pack Horse customers tend to expect high end accommodation. YDNPA is hoping that the Coast to Coast National Trail will bring business opportunities to the area. The new Local Plan will allow farm diversification along the route.

3. Local Plan Update

Gary Smith 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. Comments from Eden and South Lakeland parishes will be especially helpful as NPA still relatively new to the area. 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

Gary Smith 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.

Crosby Garret PC asked if there were any alternatives to the use of plastic tree guards? YDNPA is involved with a number of trials being run by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (but most results have been disappointing). YDNPA and YDMT also collected and recycled over 20,000 guards last year.

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. YDNPA is particularly keen to find sites in the western area of the National Park - if any parishes know of any please get in touch with the woodlands team: trees@yorkshiredales.org.uk

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 for Future Forum Meetings**

The autumn meeting will be on-line, and open to all parishes within the National Park (date to be arranged). Libby encouraged parishes to come forward with innovative ideas where best practice can be shared with other parishes. She offered for someone to talk about Ravenstonedale Community & Heritage Centre.

Libby reiterated that she is happy to attend any parish meetings to talk about her role and how she represents parishes on the National Park Authority.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm