Notes of Northern Parishes Forum meeting
7pm on Wednesday 23 April 2025 at West Burton Village Hall, West Burton, Leyburn, DL8 4JY

Chaired by Allen Kirkbride (YDNPA Board Member - parish representative for northern parishes)

Parishes in attendance:

Aysgarth	John Dinsdale
Bainbridge	James Peacock
Burton-cum-Walden	Richard Nolan
Burton-cum-Walden	Jane Ritchie
Hawes & High Abbotside	Emma Blades
West Witton	Dave Brown
West Witton	John Hunter

YDNPA:

David Butterworth	CEO
Gary Smith	Director of Conservation & Community
Elliott Lorimer	Director of Park Services
Derek Twine	Chair
Rebecca Eslick	Committees Officer
Susan Allison	Executive Assistant to CEO & Chair - admin support

1. Welcome and Introduction – Allen Kirkbride

Allen Kirkbride welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. YDNPA Projects 2025/26 – Gary Smith & Elliott Lorimer

Gary and Elliott ran through some of the bigger projects that the Authority was planning this year:

Farming in Protected Landscapes - £1.5m to give out in grants to support farmers and landowners in the National Park to carry out works that benefit nature, climate, people or place.

Rights of Way – programme of works to keep 90% of the rights of way easy. NYC is now contributing financially towards this work.

Active Travel Plans – producing a plan to improve opportunities for walking, cycling, wheeling and horse-riding in order to travel between villages or to schools and services. A draft network will be published at the end of April [the second round of public consultation] and will be sent to all Parish Councils. **Action: EL**

Access & Engagement – continuing a series of projects to provide opportunities for under-served groups to access the National Park.

Coast to Coast – completing the infrastructure needed now that the Coast to Coast has been designated as a national trail (1,820 km). Main project will improvements to the route at Mossy Hill - laying stone flags along 1.5km. A question from the Chair was asked as to how much km/miles of route sit within the YDNP. [1]

Garsdale to Hawes multi user route – continuing legal preparations for creating a multi-use route along the former Wensleydale rail line. Noted that the route can be converted back to provide a railway if such an occasion arises.

[1] The total Coast to Coast route within the national park is 81.8km. To note that this total includes both the low and high routes through Swaledale. Of the total, the low route accounts for 17.6Km of the length and the high route 15.8Km of the length.

Tees Swale Naturally Connected - 5th year of funding to strengthen natural capital on farms in Arkengarthdale, Swaledale and Teesdale. Work includes restoring grasslands/hay meadows, tree planting and events for farmers to share experience/knowledge.

Ure Dales Landscape Recovery Scheme – a new project being developed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, focused mainly on peatland restoration along the southern edge of Wensleydale to Garsdale. YDNPA carrying out wildlife surveys to help support the project.

Pennine Way 60th anniversary – the route celebrates its 60th anniversary tomorrow. Exhibitions being held along the route – currently at Dales Countryside Museum at Hawes.

3. National Park Management Plan update - Gary Smith

GS gave a quick recap of the work done so far to produce an updated National Park Management Plan for 2025-30. The final public consultation setting out the proposed objectives (sent to all parish councils in January) closed in March. Responses were generally very supportive. The main point that came back was to make sure that the Plan reflects the fact that many local groups (including parish councils) play important roles in looking after the National Park. The Partnership that produces the Plan has considered the responses and agreed final proposals. The next steps are:

- publish the consultation results on the Authority website;
- the Authority to be asked to adopt the final Plan at the June AGM meeting.

GS asked best to include references to the role of Parish Councils in helping to achieve the objectives in the Plan (not practical to list 100+ parishes or ask them all to identify which of the 40 objectives they want to help with). It was suggested from the floor that something could be included in the introduction to the Plan to explain the role of PCs.

A question from the floor asked whether the NPA had engaged with the Stop Ure Pollution campaign. GS affirmed that the NPA was already involved in work and partnerships to mitigate pollution – including metal mine pollution; diffuse pollution from farming; and sewage systems. Yorkshire Water has plans to upgrade 10 sewage treatment works in the NP to deal with the storm overflow issues (including those at Reeth, Marske, Hawes, Thoralby and West Burton. JR noted that PCs can be helpful eyes with these situations and can report what is going on their patch.

JR requested a paper copy of the National Park Management Plan once it is finalised. **Action: GS** promised one to her but asked all to note that the wealth of information on the website which includes consultation responses and summaries is by far the best place to find all the information together – not just the finished document.

4. Miles without stiles – Elliott Lorimer

Elliott gave a short presentation on the work that the Authority is doing to open up access by making some routes suitable for all ages and abilities. The work takes inspiration from John Dower's report of 1945 which was instrumental in creating National Parks: **'National Parks are for people of every class and kind, from every part of the country. They are not for any privileged or otherwise restricted section of the population but for all those who care to refresh their minds and spirits and to exercise their bodies in a peaceful setting of natural beauty.'**

Currently 10% of routes are suitable for all ages and abilities – meeting the target set in the last National Park Management Plan have already both been met. Recent projects include:

Aysgarth NP Centre - has been developed as an accessibility hub and now has two all-terrain wheelchairs for free use, which can access the 2.5km access for all route. The route runs through private farmland – provides benefit to the farmer through new fencing that helps with stock management control and prevents … by dogs.

'Changing Places' toilet facilities have been installed at Hawes and Grassington and are envisaged for both Aysgarth and Malham NPCs for the future.

As well as providing a more inclusive visitor experience, it is hoped that these projects will help put more money back into the tourism industry by attracting a more diverse visitor type.

5. Local Plan and national planning policy update - Gary Smith

The Local Plan is coming towards the end of its long preparation process. After 7 informal consultations over the last 3 years, the full final draft of the plan was published for consultation in March (copy sent to all Parishes). The deadline for final comments is 6 May. All responses will then go on to a Planning Inspector who will hold a public 'examination' of the Plan – hopefully this Autumn. If the Plan is found to be 'sound' it should be adopted in Spring 2026. Once adopted it will replace all the different planning policies in different parts of the National Park.

The Government has made or is considering a number of significant changes to national policy, including: Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023; National Planning Policy Framework review December 24; and The Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025 (emerging).

During discussion, it was noted that the Authority had not been able to allocate as many housing sites in the north of the National Park as it would have liked. The Authority is working with NYC to try to identify 'exception sites' (for affordable housing only) to try to increase housing for local people. The Chair noted that sites had been very difficult to find in the north of the park and that this was due partly to the topography and a lack of sites being put forward by landowners. GS agreed to follow up an individual query about two of the housing sites. **Action: GS**

6. YDNPA Financial situation – David Butterworth

The CEO gave an up to date on the Authority's financial situation. The main revenue grant from Government is £4.7m, compared to £5.2m last year. He asked all to note that this is the same amount as the Authority received in 2006-7. However, it has been topped up by a one-off £1.5m capital grant this year. The Authority will also generate over £6m from other sources – taking total investment to nearly £13m. Raising our own funding is now fundamental to how we operate. Every £1 deducted from our grant, effectively cuts £2 out of the economy of the area.

7. Ideas for future Forum meetings

All were reminded that the Autumn meeting will be a single online meeting to which all parishes in the National Park will be invited. There were no further suggestions for other items to be covered.

8. Any other business

A query about the costs of running a playing field and whether the NPA could help. Suggested that NYC should be first contact point – Councillors have local grant funds. Other suggestions included Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and Community First. The YDNPA Chair offered to email other suggestions to the Parish concerned. **Action: DT**

New NYC refuse scheme now being trialled in other areas before coming to the Dales. This is an NYC issue and any queries should be directed to NYC.

Query about who to contact if s106 occupancy conditions are being breached. GS noted that this is a good example of where the eyes and ears of the local residents are very helpful and to let YDNPA planning team know if there are any contraventions so that it can be investigated.

Parking in villages was also raised as a concern. This is the local Highways responsibility if there are any issues which need addressing.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.