Notes of Southern Parishes Forum meeting
7pm on Wednesday 21 May 2025 at Grassington Devonshire Institute

Chaired by Neil Heseltine (YDNPA Board Member)

Parishes in attendance:
Austwick Peter Goold
Long Preston Liz Palmer

YDNPA:
Derek Twine - Chair
David Butterworth - CEO
Gary Smith - Director of Conservation & Community
Elliott Lorimer - Director of Park Services
Rebecca - Eslick Committees Officer
Sam Parfitt - Executive Assistant [job share] to CEO & Chair - admin support

1. **Welcome and Introduction – Neil Heseltine**
   Neil welcomed everyone to the meeting. Neil is the Parish representative covering the parishes from Malham across to Ingleton. He advised that Richard Ingram (Buckden PC) has been nominated as the other southern parish representative to the NPA Board (replacing Liz Appleton Hall - Conistone with Kilnsey PM). His appointment is awaiting approval by Defra. Richard had sent his apologies for the Forum, along with apologies from Jan Smith (Cracoe PC).

2. **YDNPA Projects 2025/26 – Gary Smith & Elliott Lorimer**
   Gary and Elliott ran through the bigger projects that the Authority has planned this year:
   Farming in Protected Landscapes - £1.5m to provide in grants to support farmers 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 to use'. North Yorkshire Council and Westmorland & Furness Council are both now contributing financially towards this work. Some local projects were highlighted, including engineering works to public right of way at Cawden (Malham) and improvements to unsurfaced unclassified roads at Hunter Bark (Long Preston-Settle) and Mastiles Lane (Kilnsey).
   Active Travel Plans – producing a plan to improve opportunities for walking, cycling, wheeling and horse-riding to improve access between villages or to schools, services and visitor destinations. A draft network map has been developed and the second round of public consultation is ongoing (extended until 26 May), details of which have been circulated to all Parish Councils. It is hoped to have the final Plan complete by July.
   Access & Engagement – continuing a series of projects to provide opportunities for people from under-served groups to access and enjoy the National Park;
   Malham National Park Visitor Centre – a programme of works to improve condition, layout and accessibility of the centre which includes new entrance from the car park; re-roofing and installation of a 'Changing Place' toilet.

Three Peaks – raising £30k through donations through the Three Peaks Project to support the maintenance. Complete further works to the route at Brackenbottom, heading up onto Pen-y-Ghent.
Pennine Way 60th Anniversary – a celebration of the 268-mile long National Trail running from the Peak District to the Scottish Borders. Throughout 2025 there is a rolling exhibition along the trail which explores the many ways in which the Pennine Way National Trail inspires us. It will come to Malham National Park Visitor Centre 6-29 June.
Natural Environment funds – as part of legal agreements, funding is available every year to support projects to improve the environment around Swinden Quarry & Dry Rigg Quarry. Grants are available in all the surrounding parishes, and those along the main transport routes. Parishes are encouraged to promote the fund. Austwick PC advised they have received funding from Dry Rigg fund for a wildflower project.
Dales House Birds Project - led by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, a 3-year, Lottery-funded project working with communities in Malham, Clapham and Settle to help 'house birds' recover (house martins, house sparrows, starlings and swifts).
Heritage work - investigate and repair Dudderhouse cairn; working with Linton Parish Council on the restoration of Linton clapper bridge; and complete rescue excavation work at metal detector find on site at Austwick.
New base for Rangers at Langcliffe – building work well underway on the development of the new southern area ranger base at Langcliffe Quarry. It is anticipated that work will be completed in the summer to allow the ranger team to move from their existing base at Stonedykes Barn. The new purpose-built base will provide a workshop and up to 10-desk office space. Solar panels with battery storage and EV charging points will also be installed.

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. These will be considered by the National Park Board at its meeting at end of June. All information is available on the website: https://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about/national-park-management-plan/

4. **Miles without Stiles – Elliott Lorimer**
Elliott gave a short presentation on the work that the Authority is doing to improve accessibility by making some routes suitable for all ages and abilities. The work takes inspiration from words of John Dower in his 1945 report which was instrumental in the creation 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 public rights of way in the National Park are accessible for all ages and abilities – meeting the target set in the last National Park Management Plan. The new draft Management Plan outlines ambition to increase this percentage.

Example shown was Aysgarth National Park Centre which has been developed as an accessibility hub and now has two all-terrain wheelchairs, free to use, which can access the new 2.5km 'access for all' route. The route runs from Aysgarth Falls NPC, through private farmland – and provides benefit to the farmer through new fencing that helps with stock management control and prevents issues with dogs off leads. Similar accessibility improvements are planned for Malham. In addition, YDNPA is working with Yorkshire Water to investigate further accessibility improvements at Grimwith Reservoir.

Long Preston PC asked if anything is being done to establish a safe crossing where the Pennine Bridleway meets the A65 at Long Preson. Elliott advised that Pennine National Trails team have been looking again at options for a suitable crossing. It has also been raised with North Yorkshire Council Highways as part of the Active Travel planning work. A crossing at the other end of the village to the existing crossing is being investigated.
Long Preston PC also aired their concerns at the traffic speed through Long Preston and whether traffic calming measures could be considered by NY Council.

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 few years, the full final draft of the plan was published for formal consultation in March (copy sent to all Parishes). The deadline for comments was 6 May. 60 responses have been received. All responses will go on to a Planning Inspector who will hold a public 'examination' of the Plan – likely to be held 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.
   GS also noted that the Government has made or is considering some significant changes to national policy, including: Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023; National Planning Policy Framework review; and Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025 (emerging). These had been covered at the recent webinar for Parishes on Development Management

6. **Ideas for future Forum meetings**
   The Chair gave a reminder that the Autumn meeting will be held online for all PCs to attend and asked parishes to consider items of interest that they might share with other PCs at a future meetings.

7. **Any other business** – nothing raised.
   The meeting closed at 8.30pm.