



Notes from  
PARISH FORUM MEETING  
at the National Park Authority Offices, Yoredale, Bainbridge  
Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016

Chair: Ian McPherson

*The chair welcomed attendees to the second meeting of the Northern Forum and introduced NPA Officers and Members, prior to asking the attendees to introduce themselves.*

1. Wensleydale Project

Presentation from Gary Smith, YDNPA Director of Conservation & Community. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust have teamed up with local farmers and organisations in a new catchment-wide planning project – to “transform the environment of Wensleydale and its tributary dales for the benefit of people and nature”. Wensleydale’s catchment area faces a number of pressures and issues in relation to the use of water. Engagement events have been held with local communities and representatives of the farming sector to discuss these issues and possible solutions. It is now hoped that a Catchment Action Plan — “Yore Past, Ure Future” — will be published in May 2016, and will be used by the partners to seek funding. Several important strands are already underway, e.g. new woodland planting to extend dormice populations (funded by [YDMT](#)); a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by the [Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust](#) for a project to get local people involved in measuring the quality and levels of water; and, a national pilot of a ‘results-based agri-environment payment scheme’ – a three-year trial involving 20 local farms, which will start in October 2016. It was suggested that these projects might be encouraged to involve local schoolchildren – the next generation of farmers.

2. Right to Buy and affordable housing

Peter Stockton, YDNPA Head of Sustainable Development, updated the meeting on the current position. Under the Government’s expanded right-to-buy scheme, housing association tenants will have the opportunity to purchase their homes at a discount. The intention is that for every house sold, a new house will be built; local authorities will be required to sell off a proportion of their remaining housing stock to cross-subsidise the policy. At present there are no exemptions for rural areas but Housing Associations, National Park Authorities and many other bodies (including CLA and Local Government Association) have lobbied for exemptions for communities of less than 3,000. There is evidence that Housing Associations are now retreating from rural affordable housing schemes.

Affordable housing policy: new Local Plan was submitted to Planning Inspector in January. It is expected that the Examination in Public will be in May. The Plan requires 50% affordable housing from sites with greater than 10 units; for those with between 6 to 10, there would be a payment in lieu. Sites of less than 6 units, still a requirement for local occupancy restrictions, although the definitions have been widened to help with availability of mortgages.

The Government’s Starter Home initiative will make new housing available to buyers under 40 at a 20% discount to open market value, However, after 5 years the discount is removed and can be sold on the open market. NPAs and others currently lobbying to have the discount remain in perpetuity in rural areas.

Discussion around the potential for secondary legislation to enable housing association stock to be sold on open market with s106 restrictions negotiated or removed.

### 3. Neighbourhood Plans

These are discretionary mini local plans for parish councils, with same legal applicability. Within the national park boundary there is currently only one example, in Gargrave (part) although there is a significant Neighbourhood Plan in Upper Eden (within the forthcoming boundary extension area). Neighbourhood Plans cannot be used to block development, and should fit in with overall strategy of local plan; motivating factor in majority of cases is dissatisfaction with local planning authority policy.

### 4. Flood Damage

Brief illustrative presentation by Gary Smith of some examples of the flood damage to rights of way, bridges etc following Storm Desmond, and the restorative/repair work currently being carried out by the National Park Authority, working with Cumbria County Council and landowners

### 5. Boundary Extension

The Chief Executive, David Butterworth, summarised the background to the confirmation of the National Park boundary extension by the Secretary of State at the end of last year, followed by details of additional funding through the grant settlement in recognition of the additional area. National Parks are currently "in flavour" with Government and have been given powers of competence actively to seek additional sources of funding. Confirmed that, at March Authority meeting, Members agreed to Defra recommendations that the Board be increased by three Members, from Eden District, Lancashire County and Lancaster City Councils, with the caveat that the Authority would review its Membership within three years to look at size and representation.

Authority Members are keen to have opportunities to listen to local communities in the new area to hear aspirations, hopes and fears and to create the time to understand and learn about the area. Four roadshows held to date within Orton Fells area, with three more planned in Killington, Barbon and Leck; communication enhanced through information on relevant new webpages and increased circulation of Dales magazine and The Visitor newspaper on website.

Physical presence/location of offices to be reviewed; currently looking at options eg for visitor centre, ranger base, planning surgeries etc; confirmed no change to main offices.

Throughout the meeting, various questions were raised from the floor and these were responded to by officers.

*Any comments on the Forum, or general queries, should be sent to Lesley Knevitt on 01969 652326 email [lesley.knevitt@yorkshiredales.org.uk](mailto:lesley.knevitt@yorkshiredales.org.uk)*

LK  
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