

**AUSTWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MONDAY 16th May 2022
DRAFT MINUTES**

Present:

Austwick Parish Council: Councillors Peter Goold (Chairman), David Dewhirst, Mark Robinson, Kate Smith; Marijke Hill (Parish Council Clerk); North Yorkshire County Councillor, Craven District Councillor, and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Member David Ireton; Craven District Councillor, Lead Member Greener Craven, and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Member Carl Lis; Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Community Engagement Officer Ellie Parker and 13 members of the public.

1. Apologies: Parish Councillor Barbara Tibbatts; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Rob Ashford; North Yorkshire Police; and Reverend John Davies.

2. Minutes of the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting and matters arising
The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 24th April 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by Cllr Peter Goold, Chairman of Austwick Parish Council.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council

It is almost exactly a year since we last held an Annual Parish Meeting and we have had some changes to the Parish Council membership in the last year. Last July, Sarah Wiltshire left us as she had moved to live outside the parish and Ian Smith retired after many years of service to the council, firstly as clerk and then as a councillor, latterly as Chairman for a number of years before handing over to me. The Parish Council thanked Sarah and Ian for their service and their contribution to our affairs. The vacancies were advertised and, In October, by co-option, we welcomed Kate Smith back onto the Parish Council and Mark Robinson joined us as a new councillor.

All five councillors submitted their nomination papers for the local election ten days ago, and as there were no other nominations, it was an uncontested election and we were all re-appointed. I would like to thank my fellow councillors, Barbara Tibbatts, David Dewhirst, Kate Smith and Mark Robinson for all their support to me as chairman, and also to thank Marijke Hill, our Parish Council Clerk, for all her work and her advice to me and to the council over the last year.

The Parish Council meets eight times each year. I am pleased to report that all our meetings this last year have been held 'in person' here in the parish hall. Out of 38 possible meeting attendances by councillors, we only had 3 apologies for absence.

Now moving on to finance. We always set our annual budget each year in December, as the basis for our 'precept request', our funding, which is part of the council tax that we all pay. A number of our costs have risen, and so we decided that we would have to increase our annual income request from £12,500 to £13,000, the first increase for four years. A household in Austwick paying council tax at band

D is paying £66 towards our income, just over 3% of the total council tax amount.

Most of the work of the parish council falls into three areas

Parish Maintenance

Planning applications

Acting on behalf of everyone in the parish when something needs to be done on any particular matter and being the voice of our community on consultations and when opinions are asked for.

So I will now briefly report on each of these in turn.

Parish Maintenance

Our biggest single expense is in looking after the village greens and the road verges and generally keeping the parish tidy and in good repair. It is a well-known fact that parish councils throughout the country have a real and increasing problem in finding contractors to undertake this kind of work, let alone to do it to a good standard and at a reasonable price.

I make no apology for using the same words this year as I have used before: we are very lucky in Austwick to have Ben Shanks – otherwise known as Craven Garden Care - to do this work for us. He lives here, he knows us and he knows what needs doing and when. Ben works closely with us to make sure we keep within our budget and that we get the best value for our money. I would like to record our thanks to Ben for all that he does for us.

Still on maintenance matters, there are several other people I would like to thank:

Charlotte Wilkinson keeps the bus shelter clean and tidy for us every week, and our thanks to her for that.

Litter picking: the parish council owns 8 litter-picking equipment kits and has a copious supply of strong bin bags. 6 of our 8 kits are at present out with residents who use them to collect rubbish from the road verges and bridleways in the parish. We are very grateful for the work they do. If anyone would like to join this band of volunteers, just speak to David Dewhirst or me and we can arrange for a kit to be issued to you for your use. In anticipation of a litter problem that arose last summer and might happen again, we have opened a good channel of communication with the proprietors of both Dalesbridge and Orcaber camping and caravan sites, who have asked us to inform them immediately if we believe any of their visitors are contributing to a litter problem, and they will help us in any way they can.

Again on the subject of self-help: the parish council owns 14 benches around the parish. Following our appeal last year, 9 of these are now adopted by residents, each of whom has undertaken to give his or her bench regular 'TLC' to keep it and its location in good repair – our thanks to each of you for taking on this responsibility.

Thanks to Kate Vaughan-Williams for continuing to lend us a corner of her field for disposing of our grass cuttings.

The two conservation verges – on Graystonber Lane and Clapham Road – continue to improve. We have benefited greatly in the last few years from the interest and support given to us by the Wildlife Conservation Officer at the National Park, and from grants we have received from the Park for development of these verges. All our spending on these conservation verges comes from grant income and not from parish precept money. Most recently we have received funding to allow us to plant 7 new sizeable trees on the two verges – Hawthorns, Field Maple and small leaved Limes – as part of the ‘Queen’s Green Canopy’ initiative to mark the platinum jubilee. In carrying out this commemorative planting work, we were able to collaborate with Austwick WI in arranging for the planting of their own Jubilee tree on one of the verges. The National Park has promised us further funding in the next few months for the next phase of development of the verges.

Planning matters

Last year at this meeting I reported that we had processed 18 new planning applications during the year and that it was an all-time record number. This year a new record – 19. All but four of these were, in our view, not contentious and we agreed to respond to the National Park, our planning authority, to say that we had no comments to make. In the case of a major refurbishment project to a bungalow, we asked the planners to impose conditions to protect ‘neighbour amenity’ during construction and in the case of a barn conversion, we expressed concern to the National Park that the submitted plans were unclear regarding the number and location of proposed doors and windows. On another barn conversion proposal, we expressed concern to the planning officer about a proposal for a late addition of a new window opening and asked that an alternative solution to the problem be adopted instead. We are awaiting the decision on that one.

That leaves just one other planning application – and no prizes for guessing what that is. The Ingleborough Estate’s plans for forestry work in Clapham have been discussed and action decided at every one of our 8 meetings in the last year. The Estate’s plans involve the resurfacing of Thwaite Lane all the way to Austwick and then the use of that bridleway and the narrow roads through the centre of Austwick by heavy goods vehicles firstly carrying surfacing stone and then all the extracted timber in future years. I will not go over all the story again – it’s all there in our meeting minutes on our website. We objected, the parish council’s first formal objection to a planning application for over ten years, we presented our objections to the National Park’s planning committee, we received vigorous support from two members of the planning committee, Carl Lis and David Ireton, and support from other committee members, the plans were approved by the narrowest of margins – the chairman’s casting vote – and so all that is now history. Our task from now on is to monitor events when the work starts, and take any steps we consider necessary in the interests of our parish community, which we will certainly do.

On planning applications generally, we have designed new pages for the parish council’s website under a tab labelled ‘planning’, so that residents can see, at any time, what planning applications have been made and are awaiting decision, and which ones have been approved or refused.

Other work of the parish council comes under the general heading of acting as the agent of our electorate when action needs to be taken on an issue, and keeping ourselves up to date and well-informed on matters that affect us in and around the parish. We deal with parishioners' enquiries, we respond to consultations asking for our opinions – we respond to these on a highly selective basis, or we would have no time left for anything else – we represent the parish as trustees on several local charities, and we contribute to the National Park's parish forum meetings, one of which two of our councillors will be attending in just a few days' time.

4. Reports from County and District Councillors, National Park Ranger and the Police

4.1 Reports from North Yorkshire County Council and Craven District Council

Report from North Yorkshire County Councillor David Ireton.

The proposal to move from 8 councils to one single unitary council was accepted by the Government without modification and will be more efficient with less duplication and less expensive.

The County Council is committed, along with the District Council partners, to make the transition as smooth as possible so that on the day of change in April 2023 all services will be safe and legal and residents should notice no change in delivery. The elections on 5th May this year was to the new authority, with 90 Members in 89 wards serving as County Councillors for one final year, then become Unitary Councillors for another four years; District Councillors will continue for one more year until April 2023.

Parish Council elections are being aligned with this timetable so Parish Councillors will be elected for five years, thereafter elections will be held every four years. There will be no charge for this year's elections, and it is an aspiration of myself and many in the new council that parish councils should not be charged for regular elections as this is often a large percentage cost to the precept.

Working together we have come through another year of the pandemic. We could not have done it without our partners but also our amazing volunteers, both organised ones and individuals.

Almost half of the County Council annual spending goes into Adult Social Care and looking after vulnerable children.

We continue to support our schools to give every child an excellent start in life.

We only agree to the process of closing small village schools at the request of the governing body, and where all other options have failed.

Report from District Councillor Carl Lis.

As all of you will be aware Craven District Council will cease to exist at the end of March 2023, so this will be the last District Council Local Members report to the Parish Council.

Quite a slice of District Officers' time is now being spent attempting to ensure that the changeover to the new Unitary Authority is as unproblematic as possible.

Most of the services that the District Councillor provide, including waste collection, have continued to perform very well despite the associated problems that the Covid pandemic has generated. Indeed the District Council continued to perform

exceptionally well in providing the grants associated with the pandemic and provided timely support when it was most needed.

Unfortunately the Planning system is still underperforming although there has been some improvement recently mainly due to the fact that our staffing levels have returned to somewhere near normal.

As the Lead Member for a Greener Craven, I recently gave our annual update on progress towards achieving a Carbon Neutral Craven where I was able to inform our Members of the good progress being made on addressing our emissions as a District Council. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, and Local Government Reorganisations, our District Council is more than halfway through our 'Zero Carbon Craven' project to retrofit our estate. This will result achieving our target of reducing energy use in buildings by 30% by the end of 2023.

We have started to make some progress on using less fuel, buying more efficient vehicles that will allow us to design more efficient refuse collection rounds. And we have worked well with partners on some other areas in the plan. For example, working together with the National Park Authority, the development of a good public electric vehicle charging network across the district is well underway and all towns and larger villages should have a public Electric Vehicle charging point by mid-2022. However, unfortunately, the evidence suggests that we are currently not making the progress that we would need to make to achieve our 2030 target across the district. We continue to see the development of new housing in the district that does not include the highest levels of insulation, nor renewable energy. That is particularly frustrating for me as a member of our Planning Committee where our continual protestations I'm afraid fall on barren legislative ground.

The changes that we need to see to meet our ambitious targets require changes in direction for national funding policy and legislation, particularly for Housing and Transport.

We must continue to raise the need for these changes. If we do not, our ability to reach our ambitious, but essential, targets for carbon neutrality will become beyond our reach.

It is promising that this will be an area of priority for the new North Yorkshire Council. I hope that the new administration will continue to make funding for greener housing, community climate action and better public transport a fundamental part of any devolution deal.

Some residents raised concerns regarding the many second homes and holiday lets within the National Park and asked what measures the Authority take. Cllr Lis replied that a clause in the new Local Plan is proposed for new developments to be sold to principal residents only.

4.2 Reports from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

The Area Ranger had sent a written report, read out by the Chairman.

General

Farming in Protected Landscapes

A new grant funding stream has come online in the past year from Defra, as part of their Agricultural Transition Plan, which is directly administered by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and can be accessed by residents of Austwick Parish (within the National Park).

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is a dedicated grant programme for farmers and land managers in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The programme will fund projects that:

- support nature recovery
- mitigate the impacts of climate change
- provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
- protect or improve the quality and character of the landscape or place

Seasonal Rangers

The Park services department (which the Ranger service sits in) recognised the increased pressure on the honeypots destination in the Craven area of the National Park. The department decided additional support was needed for visitor management within this area of the National Park and gave the go ahead for two seasonal Rangers last year. This was a successful programme, which has meant there will be two seasonal Rangers in post once again this year.

The seasonal Rangers were instructed to welcome visitors to the National Park and provide advice on the ground, as well as litter pick in the area. The seasonal Rangers visited YDNPA car parks and busy location such as:- Burnsall, Austwick, Malham, Horton, Grassington, Clapham, and Kettlewell.

Projects

A section of Hale Lane's Bridleway in Feizor (Pennine Bridleway) was upgraded to a concrete by the National Trails team, due to constant maintenance of aggregate pathway from flood events. The project was completed with the much appreciated help of Booths of Feizor.

The Stepping Stones on the public footpath between Holm Lane and Owlet Hall were due to be replaced last year. Due to a number of factors, primarily the contractor's availability, the stepping stones weren't replaced. Hopefully the stepping stones should be replaced in spring/summer of 2022.

Public Right of Way Maintenance

5 ladder stiles converted to stone step stiles on public rights of way in the Parish of Austwick over the past year. If a ladder stile is due to be repaired/replaced, the Ranger service endeavours to convert ladders stiles to stone step stiles, provided the landowner is in agreement.

The overall condition of crossings on the PROW network, within the Ribblesdale area of the National Park, is at 93% in good condition.

4.3 Written report from North Yorkshire Police.

The Chairman, Cllr Peter Goold, reported that the North Yorkshire Police PCSO continues to provide a written incidents report to the Parish Council at its meeting, usually all minor.

5. Presentation 'Wild Ingleborough'

Ellie Parker, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Community Engagement Officer presented a power point presentation on the Wild Ingleborough project, a landscape-scale nature

recovery project, working on the National Nature Reserve and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust nature reserves. The project aims to protect fragile upland habitats, increase biodiversity and provide a refuge for many of the key endangered species which are present on our area. The four key points to achieve these aims are:

- This is a landscape-scale conservation project;
- encouraging nature's recovery through land management and conservation grazing;
- planting trees and other native species where appropriate;
- allowing natural processes to lead the way.

A couple of members of the public asked if this project would lead to an increase in predators. The Officer replied that there is no evidence that an increase in biodiversity would lead to an increase in predators and that nature would be more in balance.

A question was raised about the longevity of this project and the reply was that the land has been obtained in perpetuity and the projects are ongoing.

6. Updates from Local Community Organisations and matters of general interest.

Graham Cleverly reported on two local community organisations, which have been inactive for the last two years.

As Chairman of the Field & Local History Society, Graham Cleverly reported that the spring programme of evening talks on the third Wednesday of each month has started, with the next one on 18th May about "an Icelandic lady's travels to Rome in the 10th century". In June there will be a speaker about Pollinators and in the autumn there is a varied programme including talks on preserving old buildings; curlews; and "Northerners".

The Village Show, to which every resident in Austwick, Lawkland, Wharfe, and Feizor is invited, will be held on Saturday 6th August. A printed programme and entry forms will be available from Cross Leigh Stores from early July and all the classes have already been published in the latest Parish Newsletter. This year there is a special prize for the best "first-time adult entrant".

The President of the Women's Institute, Angela Rogers, thanked the Parish Council for facilitating planting a small lime tree as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative to mark the Platinum Jubilee. The WI is looking for new members to join and an open evening is held once per year.

Sheila Gooch raised concerns regarding the increased number of visitors to Austwick and parking issues as a result of this. The Chairman replied that installing double yellow lines are not an option as there is a lengthy legal procedure to follow and no funding for officers to enforce these, nor are white lines as these are not enforceable. Tourists contribute to our local economy. We may see fewer tourists as transport costs and costs of living generally are increasing.

The Chairman of the Parish Hall Council, Lindsey Smith, reported that the Parish Hall is back to pre pandemic regulations and local organisations and groups are using the Hall more frequently. The Parish Hall Council have had some maintenance

work done to the Hall, such as painting and repairs to the gulleys. The film nights will resume in September. A survey will be carried out to find out what residents would like from the Hall. The Parish Hall Council has vacancies for Trustees to be co-opted.

Gwen Cleverly, co-Chairman of the Street Market Committee reported that the Austwick Street Market, Cuckoo Festival and Fell Race will be held on Thursday 2nd June 2022. This has been an annual event for some 40 years, albeit that the event could not be held during the covid pandemic. The Committee is working hard to meet the needs of current legislation in terms of compliance to health and safety, risk assessment, food hygiene, licences for street collections and more and is looking for volunteers using a range of interests and professional background which would ensure the strength of the Committee and efficiency of planning the event. A new initiative this year is that 44 cuckoos were made and distributed for decoration and display, maintaining the cuckoo legend by flocking back in full plumage, some Jubilee themed. The purpose of this event is to help funding the Playing Fields and the Parish Hall, two key village assets. Individual village groups are also raising money for running their own clubs. Charities are represented on the day, including Ukraine appeal. It is hoped that this vibrant community come together in a common cause and that a fun day for all the family and all involved in Austwick will be had.

Edward Hird, Trustee of the Playing Fields Association reported that last year's flyer, outlining the need to support the playing fields and join the PFA has resulted in the return of two more Trustees, however more are needed. A grant has been received for some maintenance on the pavilion and the procurement of new equipment in the children's play area. The Primary School is involved to canvass children's ideas. The PFA is organising the beacon lighting on 2nd June at 9.45 pm to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, as well as a 'big lunch' event on 5th June.

Judy Leeming asked about the BOAT status of Thwaite Lane and raised concerns that the improvement on Thwaite Lane by Ingleborough Estate to extract wood might lead to an increase in motorised vehicles using the lane. The Chairman, Cllr Peter Gould, reiterated that the status of Thwaite Lane remains that of a bridleway as long as the County Council has not submitted an application made by the "Trail Riders Fellowship" in 2007 to the Secretary of State for resolution and agreed that there is more urgency to see this matter resolved, hopefully in favour of the lane remaining a bridleway, now that this lane is to be improved to allow timber extraction.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance, in particular Graham Cleverly for lending the projector for the power point presentation, and closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.