

**AUSTWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:**

Austwick Parish Council: Councillors Peter Goold (Chairman), Barbara Tibbatts, David Dewhirst, Mark Robinson; North Yorkshire Councillor and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Member David Ireton; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Conservation and Community Gary Smith; North Yorkshire Police Community Support Officer Julia Runciman; Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Rob Ashford; Parish Council Clerk Marijke Hill; and eighteen members of the public.

**1. Apologies:** Parish Councillor Kate Smith, Revd. John Davies, and Mrs Vaughan-Williams.

**2. Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting and matters arising**  
The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 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**

Give or take a couple of days, it is exactly a year since we were last here together for an Annual Parish Meeting.

There have been no changes to the Parish Council membership in the last year, and I would like to thank my fellow councillors, Barbara Tibbatts, Kate Smith, David Dewhirst and Mark Robinson for all their support and also to thank Marijke Hill, our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, for all her hard work and, in particular, for her valuable advice to me as Chairman during the year.

We have had 8 parish council meetings since I last reported to you – the usual number in a year. With 5 Councillors and 8 meetings, that makes 40 possible attendances. I am pleased to report that, between us, we have achieved 35 out of the 40 – only 5 apologies for absence.

Now moving on to finance. We 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. As we all know, we are living in a time of rising costs and so we decided that we would have to increase our annual income request from £13,500 to £14,500, an increase of 7.4 %. A household in Austwick paying council tax at band D is paying £58 towards our income, which is 2.5 % of the total council tax they pay for the year.

Turning now to the work of the Parish Council, this can be described under three main headings:

Firstly, parish maintenance

Secondly, giving feedback and comments to the National Park on planning applications

And thirdly, 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 in a 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.

So I make no apology for using the same words 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 our costs under control and that we get the best value for our money. I would like to record our grateful thanks to Ben for all that he does for us.

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

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

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

\* The Parish Council is the custodian of 14 benches in the parish. Most of these have been adopted by a resident, each undertaking to apply regular TLC to the bench and its immediate location. We thank each of you for taking on this responsibility. Many will have noticed that we have a brand new bench outside the bus shelter. This was a gift to the parish by Maggie Youdan, niece of the late Elaine Hardy and is inscribed in memory of Elaine. Maggie's generous gift is much appreciated.

\* We have three defibrillators in the parish: one here on the wall of the parish hall, one at Elaine's Tea Rooms in Feizor and one in the centre of Wharfe. Every week, Eddie Styles visits each location, checks the defibrillator is in good working order and reports to me if new pads or a new battery is needed. This is quite a time-consuming commitment – thank you Eddie for doing this for us.

\* We are grateful to Rob Ashford, our National Park Ranger, and to his Access Ranger, Nathan, and to the Three Peaks Ranger, for the work they do to keep the many Rights of Way that run through the parish in good order and for responding to our requests when repairs are needed. Austwick, Wharfe and Feizor are all experiencing a continuing increase in visitor numbers. The parish council has only very limited resources and we rely on the National Park and its Rangers to help keep our environment in good shape.

We'll hear more about this when Rob speaks to us shortly.  
That's parish maintenance, and so now on to planning matters.

It has been a relatively quiet year for planning applications. We have processed only 13 applications this last year, just over half the number we examined and considered in the previous year and the year before that. There were also fewer contentious cases. In 8 instances we reported to the planning officer that we had no comment to make. In four cases, we submitted comments drawing attention to certain aspects of the application and in only one case did we decide to express our concerns about what the applicant was proposing to do.

Three field barn conversion projects have been approved in the last year: Newfield Barn beyond Wharfe, the small barn on Clapham Road near the burial ground and 'middle barn' at Dam House Bridge, Silloth. We are awaiting a decision on Fleet Barn in Wharfe and on the application to put two new windows into the highly visible elevation of Lawson's Barn in Wharfe.

It is worth reminding everyone that you can get a bird's eye view of which planning applications in our parish are awaiting a decision and which have recently been decided by going to the Parish Council's website and clicking on the 'planning' tab.

There is one other matter that may have an impact on the environment in our parish which I should mention. I first reported on it to the Annual Parish Meeting 3 years ago, and again last year. This is the long-running issue of whether Thwaite Lane can be used by motorised vehicles. The lane runs from Slaindale Barn on Wharfe Road up to the top of Townhead and then all the way to the crossroads at Long Lane in Clapham parish, before a track descends to 'the tunnels' leading into Clapham village. By vehicles, we mean use by the public – agricultural and forestry vehicles have separate rights to legitimately use the lane. The National Park made an order in 2007 on an application by the Trail Riders Fellowship, declaring the lane to be a BOAT, a byway open to all traffic. However, subsequent legal cases throw the legality of this order into serious doubt. We have been pressing for a decision on this for several years and I can now report that the case has been sent off to the Planning Inspectorate for an inspector to be appointed and a decision to be made. Along with other interested parties, we have recently submitted our evidence – called a 'Statement of Case' and it is likely that a ruling on the matter will be made by the end of this year.

The remaining work of the parish council comes under the general heading of acting as the agent on behalf of our residents when action needs to be taken on an issue. With the National Park, we report when we believe work needs doing, we respond to consultations issued by the Park Authority and we attend the various forum meetings and seminars that take place during the year. We report to the County Council's Highways Department when problems arise on the roads, verges and drains.

We make our voice heard where appropriate and we try to keep our ear to the ground so that we stay up to date with events and changes that can have an impact on life in Austwick parish.

Councillors also represent the parish as a trustee on several local charities.

#### **4. Reports from North Yorkshire Councillor, National Park Ranger and the Police**

##### **4.1 Report from North Yorkshire Council Councillor David Ireton.**

It is just over twelve months since the eight councils merged to become a unitary council. This is working well and the restructure is nearly complete.

This has allowed the reduction in the amount of buildings and the costs that were incurred in operating to be rationalised and we are now rationalising our teams of staff but we will maintain a presence in every part of the county.

The senior management team with a reduction of chief executives from eight previously to now one is a saving of £900,000.

A reduction in the management board from previously thirty two officers down to eight is a saving of £200,000.

There have been twenty two redundancies at a cost of £300,000.

The overall restructuring and staffing at all levels is a saving of £4.7 million.

The circumstances we face this year are very much the same as last year with similar pressures. Those are inflation, interest rates, energy bills and oil prices affecting transport costs such as gritter wagons, home care, home to school transport costs and payment rates of the agreed rate of pay due to inflation and the rise in the minimum wage.

The local government sector is under severe challenges with rising demand. Especially in social care where adult social care and children services, especially in educational needs, being over 50% of the council budget.

With this huge amount being spent on care we continue to talk with central government about the challenges and the funding needed for the delivery of these critical services.

The council has 5,500 miles of roads to maintain and keep open. The work on the new section of Kex Gill is under construction and is desperately needed as once again the road is closed due to a land slip. It will be closed until the end of June causing major disruption on the east west connection and at a cost of £750,000 to repair.

We have started the next phase of work on the local plan for North Yorkshire land with the 'Call for Sites'.

I would like to let you know about this important piece of work because, in time, it is likely that sites will be submitted in most, if not all, divisions throughout the county and it is important to understand what this is and more importantly, what this is not.

This is a process whereby we ask landowners, site promoters, developers and other interested parties to submit their sites for consideration in the local plan. These sites can be for a range of uses and can include, but are not limited to, housing, employment and commercial development, retail and leisure, renewable energy

generation and biodiversity or other environmental enhancement schemes. It is important to note that these are not planning applications and therefore, not sites that are up for consideration or development within the short term.

#### **4.2 Report from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Rob Ashford**

##### Public Rights of Way / Ranger Service

The overall condition of crossings on the public right of way network, within the Ribblesdale area of the National Park, are at 93% in good condition.

Once again the Ranger service will be employing seasonal Rangers to assist with visitor management in the Craven area of the National Park over July to September. Austwick and Clapham are included in the areas for the seasonal Ranger to monitor.

In the past year the Ranger service have also been involved in the diversion order of the footpath/bridleway around Dry Rigg quarry to allow the northern tip of the quarry to expand.

##### Projects

The Stepping Stone on the public footpath between Holm Lane and Owlet Hall/The Dalesbridge centre are going to be replaced in the summer. The Parish Council will be aware that the stepping stones at this location have only recently been replaced, due to the poor selection of stone boulders and the works not being to the standards expected, the stepping stones are to be replaced.

##### Other Updates

In the wider Ranger service, work has started on the new National Trail, the Coast-to-Coast Route from St Bees to Robin Hoods Bay, which will be running through the north of the National Park.

There will be some changes in the Ranger service with the 'North Yorkshire' area of the National Park in the coming year. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's core budget from DEFRA has been frozen since 2020, and with inflationary pressures our core grant has been cut in real terms by half since 2010. The YDNPA Ranger service maintain the public right of way network under a delegation agreement from local councils that cover the National Park and recently approached the new unitary councils that cover the National Park area, North Yorkshire Council and Westmorland and Furness Council, to ask for financial support to continue the Ranger programme. The Ranger service is a priority programme at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority which carries out works under the highways delegation agreement on public rights of way network. This involves statutory duties which the Council would normally undertake, such as surfacing on the Public Rights of Way network, and other works which go above and beyond these duties, such as the grants to cover 100% of the works and maintenance of the infrastructure on the network, such as gates, and stiles.

Westmorland and Furness Council agreed to a three-year settlement whereas North Yorkshire Council has rejected any assistance.

This now means there will be a two-tiered system in operation from April onwards,

where there will be cuts to the operations of the Ranger service within the North Yorkshire Area of the National Park. On the ground this means we won't be able to respond to repairs as quickly as we have done previously and project to improve the rights of way network could be cut altogether.

The YDNPA and the North York Moors National Park Authority's Ranger services are still in dialogue with North Yorkshire Council to see if there could be a contribution to the rights of way budget in future years.

Where this might affect Austwick Parish Council directly is the ongoing maintenance and assistance with the infrastructure on the Public Rights of Way network and the annual strimming and vegetation clearance around the parish.

#### Changing of the guard

After 7 ½ years at the Area Ranger for Malhamdale and Ribblesdale Rob will be leaving the role at the end of May, although he will not be going far as he will be staying with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and moving onto a new role within the Authority based in Grassington.

Rob has recently applied and been offered a new role as the 'access and recreation team and project manager' at the YDNPA. This is a new role within the Authority looking at 'active travel' offer in and around the National Park. The first initial flagship project the role will be tasked with is the Hawes to Garsdale railway regeneration project which aims to convert the disused railways into multi user route suitable for bikes, walkers, wheels etc. There could be potential for active travel projects within the Ribblesdale area of the National Park.

#### **4.3 Report from North Yorkshire Police Police Community Support Officer Julia Runciman**

The total number of reported incidents in the parish and the wider area has decreased slightly from 113 last year to 96 in the year 2023-2024. Over half of these reported incidents, 56 in total, were related to general police administration, abandoned calls, and hoax calls. A further 16 incidents have been reported in relation to civil disputes, concerns for safety and welfare, and domestic disputes. Road related incidents, such as highway disruptions, manner of driving, speed, and three road traffic collisions counted for another 18 reported incidents. The six remaining reported incidents were related to five reports of theft and one report of a light aircraft crash in a field nearby.

#### **5. The National Park's Management Plan 2025-2029 Speaker: Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Conservation and Community Gary Smith**

The overall aim of the National Park Management Plan is to deliver National Park purposes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public. And in doing so to try and foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

The Management Plan is a statutory plan for the National Park, produced by local

partnership, and contains long-term ambitions and short-term objectives. Of the 49 objectives mentioned in the Management Plan, 20 have been achieved and a further 26 objectives are on-course or show some progress.

The objective to obtain Dark Skies Reserve status to enhance its night sky was achieved in December 2020.

The farming in protected landscapes objective is to provide a locally tailored locally delivered, grant programme that helps to maintain, restore and improve the outstanding natural capital and rural heritage. Farmers and landowners have been awarded 174 grants worth £2.4 million to meet the objective.

The Government confirmed in August 2022 that the Coast-to-Coast path would become a National Trail.

There has been some progress on the objective that 30% of priority habitats outside SSSIs are in good condition, as in reality 19% are in good condition, down from 22%. There is a more co-ordinated hen harrier nest protection and 15 hen harrier nesting attempts have been recorded across the Yorkshire Dales and Nidderdale area in 2023. There have also been 6 confirmed persecution incidents of raptors recorded in the National Park in 2022. The Management Plan would endeavour to end illegal persecution of raptors.

The objective to restore all degraded peatland to ecologically and hydrologically functioning bog has been partly met in that restoration works have taken place across more than 23,000 hectare since 2009.

Well over 1,000 hectare of native broadleaved and mixed woodland has been created since 2018.

36 Apprenticeships and 8 trainees have been appointed, focussing on the skills, that are essential to maintaining the National Park's special qualities.

Of the 400 new dwellings to be built in a range of tenures, sizes, types and prices, 300 have been completed.

A public consultation on people's top issues regarding the Management Plan, received over 1,100 responses and the top 6 issues were identified as:

1. Help nature to recover by retaining, restoring and connecting important habitats;
2. Protect rare and threatened species, including ending illegal persecution of birds of prey;
3. Reduce pollution and improve the water quality in rivers;
4. Increase natural carbon stores by planting new woodland, restoring peatland and improving soil management;
5. Help younger people to live/work in the National Park;
6. Keep the rights of way network in good condition and improve options for cycling and sustainable outdoor recreation activity.

The Authority will set up six 'drafting groups' to prepare draft objectives for the new plan, and the NPMP Partnership will then look at the objectives and agree what to take forward. The full draft Management Plan will be published before the end of 2024 for public consultation and it is expected that the new Management Plan will be adopted in March 2025.

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

Members of the public raised the following three matters:

\* The Parish Council has installed three defibrillators in the parish and a course to refresh how to carry out resuscitation would be welcomed. Mr Colin Renwick, a retired local GP, agreed to organise this.

\* Before the start of and during events, such as running, cycling, or walking events, dog walkers in particular might be confronted with users of the bridleway in a race situation. It would, therefore, be helpful if a notice could be put up to warn dog owners. The Chair, Cllr Goold, replied that the Parish Council is not always notified of events taking place, but when the Council is notified, it will ask organisers to publicise their events.

\* Speeding issues through the village are a concern, as well as street parking, in particular at the corner of the village shop. NYC Cllr Ireton, reaffirmed the North Yorkshire Council policy to not install 20 mph limits, only consider 20 mph zones, such as the creation of bumps and chicanes in the roads. As such measures are not appropriate for the village, the Parish Council will consider looking into asking the Highways Authority for advisory signs. The Chair, Cllr Goold, also reiterated that on-street parking is effectively slowing down all traffic.

On behalf of the Parish Hall Council the Chair, Lindsey Smith, reported that, thanks to a very generous legacy in the will of Joan Crompton, who lived in Austwick for many years, we were able to install a new audio visual system in the large hall. It comprises a ceiling mounted projector, speakers mounted on a ceiling beam, a bluetooth facility for playing audio material and an induction loop for hearing aid wearers. There is an induction loop for hearing aid users in both halls. It is proving to be a great success and is being used by groups for slide presentations and music in addition to being used for the film nights.

Thanks were also expressed to the hall trustees and other volunteers involved in organising and helping with the film and quiz nights which each took place once a month from October to March. Both attracted people from Austwick and further afield and between them raised over £1,000 to support the hall's upkeep. The trustees are also grateful to our caretaker for assisting hall users and maintaining the hall in such good condition.

Mark Stickland, co-Chair of the Street Market Committee reported that the annual event, including the fell race will take place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> May.

As usual the roads through the village will be closed from 9.30 am to 4pm for the event to take place.

There will be all the usual stalls including bric-a-brac, spares, children's toys, hog roast, bacon butties, WI refreshments, skittles, brass band, jazz band, Thwaites dray horses etc. and of course the fell race. This year there will be a new children's entertainer, Professor Robanti, and some Alpacas, but the basis of the street market is as it has been for many years – a fun event for everyone whether from the village or outside.

The aim of the event is to raise funds for the parish hall as well as the Playing Fields. Hopefully we will be able to raise a similar amount to previous recent years.

The theme for the cuckoos and children's fancy dress parade is "Olympics", and with



a small prize to be awarded for the best cuckoo in the village, feel free to go ahead and decorate your own cuckoo and in turn decorate the village for our many visitors over the bank holiday weekend.

The event is able to go ahead only with the help of an excellent organising committee and a plethora of volunteers from all over the parish. Truly the work of the people of the parish for the benefit of the parish.

On behalf of the Playing Fields Committee Craig Smith reported on a busy year trying to keep up with repairs to boundary walls, play area and pavilion upkeep. Thank you to the Parish Council for maintaining the grass in the children's play area. In the play area we have had to carry out various emergency repairs whilst we have obtained quotes from contractors for repairs and replacement equipment. We had a funding application with the masons for repairs work, unfortunately it was unsuccessful due to our current funds in the bank. But we have been encouraged to apply again once we have sent some of those funds on the allocated works in the play area.

In the last month we have had Playdale carry out refurbishments to the larger children's playing frame, and the small children's main play equipment. There are a couple of items left to repair on those pieces of equipment and the total has been approximately £8,000.

The team swing had to be decommissioned and removed and as this has been one of the most popular piece of equipment for the children, we have also prioritised its replacement, which happened last week. This costed approximately £5,700.

We are now looking at raising funds for a new adventure trail with quotes coming in at between £12,000 and £15,000.

None of the work mentioned would have been possible with out the kind donations and the community's hard work that has included the Street Market £5,928, Open Garden £2,440, Ingleborough Estates £250, and Masons £100.

If you haven't already bought tickets for the Bingo on Saturday 25 May please get them now.

Graham Cleverly reported as Chair about two local community associations Firstly the Austwick Village Show. Full details of the classes are in the spring Parish Newsletter. Numbers last year exhibiting were up to pre covid levels. There is a voucher for the best first time adult entrant again this year. The Show is on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August and the entries are welcome in all the classes from adult residents of Austwick, Lawkland, Eldroth, Feizor and Wharfe. There are no restrictions on the children's entries. Schedules for the Show and entry forms will be available from Cross Leigh Stores from early July.

Now a few words on the Austwick Field and Local History Society (AFLHS). The Society had record attendances to some of the informative and entertaining evening talks over the last few months, partly due to the excellent new projection and audio equipment in the large Hall thanks to Joan Crompton's legacy.

The 2024/25 programme is now fixed and programmes will be available at the first autumn talk on September 18th 2024. As described in the Parish Newsletter, the Society is planning to expand its remit so that it can undertake "nature recovery" activities and seek grant funding. Any residents of Austwick and Lawkland Parishes

are invited to contact the AFLHS chair with any suggestions regarding possible environmental improvement schemes in the two parishes. The chair pointed out that the Nature Recovery Plan for the YDNP published in December 2023 provides a useful template for considering potential environmental improvements. The proposal to expand the Society's remit will be put to the AFLHS membership at the AGM in October.

The President of the Austwick Women's Institute (AWI), Sue Dewhirst, reported that the AWI is 100 this year. To celebrate our centenary we are having a party with past Presidents and representatives from the WI federation. We did invite Queen Camilla but she has other commitments and is unable to come – pity.

The AWI is going from strength to strength and membership is increasing, attracting some younger members and from the surrounding villages. Unfortunately we have lost Clapham, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Ingleton and Burton-in-Lonsdale Wis.

I am really proud that Austwick has survived and continues to please members with our full and varied program of events.

Colin Renwick reported as Treasurer of the Austwick Parochial Church Council that the pattern of regular services throughout the year has been maintained with 100 services registered in 2023. Inevitably, we have again lost members of the congregation through illness and deaths within the community and people moving out of the benefice, but our average Church attendance for Sunday services is stable at 19.

We continue to maintain all the resources that we already have in place and in some cases extend them. We distribute a Churches Weekly Newsletter and an informative weekly email to over 150 people, and this, our contribution to the quarterly Parish Newsletter, and a well maintained web presence all keep the church in touch with the wider community. We thank the Parish Council for the grant that they give to support its production.

The following fundraising activities were organised: Christmas Fair, Sales of books, jams, cushions and plants, Harvest Supper (donation to Farming Community Network and Skipton Food Bank), on-line auction (Jumblebee) Christmas Tree sales, Burns Night, Street Market book stall, evening of carols, afternoon teas.

A member of the Church organises collections for The Children's Society distributing and collecting boxes at the beginning and end of the year.

A group of volunteers from the churches of Austwick and Clapham coordinates a monthly Afternoon Fellowship meeting, held usually at Austwick Parish Hall and attracting between 20 to 30 people from our villages to a session including a local guest speaker and time for refreshments. This attracts people from the wider community who appreciate the opportunity to meet together for this social time. We also arrange occasional visits to gardens and other events throughout the year. Our main preoccupation with Church maintenance has been the ongoing water ingress through the west wall. Repairs on pointing and lead flashing below the rose window were undertaken with the help of grants from National Churches Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation and North Craven Heritage Trust.

Unfortunately, the last winter showed that this had not solved the problem and further examinations and investigation from our architect have revealed other areas that water may be ingressing and we are in negotiation with the Diocese about the

most effective way to try and deal with this. Unfortunately such work is always expensive when dealing with a listed building but we hope that our reserve funds will be sufficient to conduct the repairs.

The vestry has been repaired and redecorated and the sink removed with consideration of replacing this with a new unit.

The PCC explored ideas around how to continue to keep the burial ground in the best possible condition for all who visit, and at the same time to develop its potential for encouraging wildlife and biodiversity. A number of people volunteered their time and labour from March onwards, clearing overgrown areas and cutting back vegetation from the surrounding walls. An area of the burial ground has been set aside as a wildflower meadow and advice was taken on how to achieve this. The results in the summer of 2023 were small but we understand this is not unexpected in the first year and we hope for a better display this summer.

We continue to be immensely grateful for all the support offered from members of our wider community, contributing financially and in many other practical ways to helping keep the church an active and valued part of our village life.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.25 pm.