

**AUSTWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
MONDAY 22nd May 2023
DRAFT MINUTES**

Present:

Austwick Parish Council: Councillors Peter Goold (Chairman), Barbara Tibbatts, David Dewhirst, Mark Robinson; Marijke Hill (Parish Council Clerk); Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Area Ranger Rob Ashford; and twelve members of the public.

1. Apologies: North Yorkshire County Councillor and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Member David Ireton; Parish Councillor Kate Smith; and North Yorkshire Police.

2. Minutes of the 2022 Annual Parish Meeting and matters arising
The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 16th April 2022 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

We held the last Annual Parish Meeting almost exactly a year ago. Since then there has been no change in the membership of the Council and the first thing I would like to do is to thank my fellow Councillors, Barbara Tibbatts, Kate Smith, David Dewhirst and Mark Robinson for their contribution and their support to me as Chairman. Next, I thank our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Marijke Hill, for her hard work and for her indispensable advice and guidance to me 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 40 possible meeting attendances by Councillors, we only had 3 apologies for absence.

Each December, parish councils set a budget for the forthcoming financial year and use this as the basis for their 'precept request', being the funding the council receives, and householders pay as part of their council tax. As we all know only too well, we are in an era of rising costs, and so we decided that we must increase our request for this year by £500 to £13,500, an increase of 3.8%. A household in Austwick paying council tax at band D is paying £54 towards our funding, which is 2½ % of the total council tax they pay for the year.

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

This is our biggest single expense. It includes looking after the village greens and the road verges, and generally keeping the parish in a good and tidy state of repair. Once again I am going to use the same words as last year, as I do not know a better way of saying it: 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 grateful thanks to Ben for all that he does for us.

There are other people also involved in the upkeep of the parish and they too deserve our thanks:

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

* There are a number of people who spend their own time litter-picking for us around the parish – thanks to each of you.

* Most of the 14 benches that the Parish Council owns have been adopted by a resident, each undertaking to apply regular TLC to the bench and its immediate location. We thank 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.

* 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 repair. I am sure Rob will refer to this in more detail when he speaks to us shortly.

You will be aware that we have two ‘conservation verges’ in the parish – on Graystonber Lane and on Clapham Road – and that we have been able to invest in the development of these over several years entirely through grant funding that has been given to us by the National Park. We believe these verges are a real asset to the village, both in appearance and in the part they have to play in encouraging wildlife and in protecting the environment. However, I should report that we are at present somewhat uncertain as to their future development, due to changes in the way such projects are funded by the National Park. We are planning to meet the relevant Park officers shortly to clarify a way forward in the hope that the good work on these assets can continue.

Talking of assets, this is perhaps the appropriate point to mention a new ‘asset’ acquired and put in place just a couple of weeks ago. Austwick parish has hitherto had two defibrillators installed – one at the parish hall and the other on the wall of Elaine’s Tea Rooms in Feizor. Aware of the importance of speed in treating a cardiac arrest, we have been conscious that the hamlet of Wharfe is outside the effective range of these two devices. We sought external funding and almost the entire cost – approaching £1,500 – was generously donated by Councillors David Ireton and Carl Lis from their Craven District Council Ward Member Grant funds and by Settle Rotary. We are extremely grateful to each of them and to The Whitaker family in Wharfe for allowing the device to be fixed to their house. We should also thank our local first responder, Eddie Styles, who undertakes voluntary weekly visits

to our defibrillators to check and report on their good working order.

Planning matters

This last twelve months is the third consecutive annual period in which there has been a record number of planning applications coming to us for consultation from the National Park. This last year we have examined, reviewed and discussed 24 planning applications in the parish. However, for 15 of these, after discussion we decided that they were not contentious and that we would not send any comments to the planning officer. For a further 2, we submitted suggested conditions that we believed should be attached to the planning consent. In 5 cases we submitted our serious concerns that the application did not comply with the National Park's planning policies and setting out our detailed reasons. One of these 5 was later withdrawn by the applicant and one has been approved but only after the plans were amended. The other 3 are awaiting a decision. It is noteworthy that each of these 3 concerns a proposed barn conversion. In the remaining 2 cases, we objected to the application as clearly not complying with the Park's planning policies. Both of these were also barn conversions. I am pleased to report that one was refused and the other was withdrawn by the applicant.

Out of all these planning applications, there is just one I would like to specifically mention – and that is the one for the 8 new houses to be built down Pant Lane. The first point is that this is not a new proposal. The Park's planning committee approved the building of the 8 new houses 3 years ago in June 2020. The developer then discovered that his sums did not add up, but if it had gone ahead as he intended, then 8 open market houses would have been built, with freedom for them to be second homes, holiday homes or even 'Air b&bs'. The developer would have paid a cash sum to the National Park which the Park would promise to spend on affordable homes somewhere in the Park – maybe in Grassington or Hawes, but certainly not in Austwick. What we now have in the proposal approved a month ago – if it comes to pass – is a plan to build just 3 open market houses along with 2 affordable shared ownership homes and the other 3 will have a 'principal residency restriction' meaning they can only be occupied as a main home – so not holiday homes or second homes. So we will have some new properties for people coming onto the housing ladder for the first time. It is a good step forward and the Park's planning department should be applauded for some very creative interpretations of its planning policies in bringing forward this solution.

There is one other matter that may have an impact on our local environment and which has been referred to several times recently in the minutes of our meetings and so I should update you on it. Those of you with very long memories will recall that, in the year 2007, the authorities approved an application by the Trail Riders Fellowship to allow Thwaite Lane to 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. Understandably, there were objections and we have been waiting 16 years for the North Yorkshire Council to submit the case to the Secretary of State for a decision as they are bound to do. Over the last two years, the Parish Council has been pressing for progress bearing in mind the recent

resurfacing of Thwaite Lane and its legitimate use by forestry vehicles. Just last week, a report went to committee at North Yorkshire Council recommending that the case be now sent off to London and I am pleased to say that the report agrees with all the arguments we have been putting forward for this 2007 Order to be quashed. However, we are warned that it may be at least another year before an Inspector holds a public enquiry and comes to a decision.

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. We make our voice heard where appropriate and keep ourselves up to date on matters that affect us all in and around the parish. In the last 12 months, we have attended 3 parish forum meetings and 1 management plan forum meeting at the National Park and we have responded to 2 consultations from the Park on its new Local Plan and 1 from the new North Yorkshire unitary council on its draft charter that will govern its relationship and its communication with parish councils. We also represent the parish as a trustee on several local charities.

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

4.1 Report from North Yorkshire County Council Councillor David Ireton.

North Yorkshire Council Councillor David Ireton had sent a written report, read out by the Chairman.

The new North Yorkshire Council, launched on April the 1st, the merger of North Yorkshire County Council and the 7 District and Borough authorities paves the way for the long awaited devolution deal which is government key policy, meaning that decision making powers are handed to local political leaders.

Millions of pounds in funding will be provided to shape major policies and projects on a regional level.

On August 1st, Yorkshire Day last year, a proposed devolution deal for York and North Yorkshire was unveiled. An investment fund of £540 million is due to lead to benefits, ranging from new and better paid jobs, an improvement in training for skills, to the all-important more affordable housing initiative.

The new authority has brought together the eight councils which provided services to the public. This one single organisation now covers all of England's largest county. More than 80% of staff live in North Yorkshire and take pride in delivering the best service for the community which they serve.

All the support, advice and other services are readily and more easily accessible by means of one telephone number,

One website, one customer service team and one set of face to face customer access points across the whole county.

There is a main office in each former District supported by 30 additional customer access points in public locations.

One authority gives us all the best possible chance of protecting the services our residents value. At this time of exceptional financial pressure on public services we have had to increase the CT to the maximum 2.99% this year, and use the Adult Social Care levy of 2% because of the rising demand for service and inflation hitting the council the same as everyone else. We estimate there is bound to be a shortfall of more than £30 million in the new council's revenue budget for the next financial year. This will have to be covered by a one off use of reserves, after some additional

savings have also been introduced.

North Yorkshire Council has an overall spending power of approximately £1.4 billion, £345 million of which is to be spent on schools,

Because services have been joined up, and spending power has been maximised North Yorkshire Council will save between £30 and £70 million, which will become annual savings. This money will then be used to protect the most important local services at this critical time when each one of us, and every organisation, is feeling the pressure of increased cost.

There will be tough financial decisions ahead, but by making this change now, we are in a much stronger position to manage the rising costs and increased demands for services.

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. Once again a number of ladder stiles have been replaced with stone step stiles within the Parish.

North Yorkshire Police

The Ranger service continue to work with North Yorkshire Police on Operation Byway – which involves monitoring illegal use of the public rights of way network in the National Park by off road vehicles and encouraging responsible use.

The police have recently utilised an off road motorcycle to monitor areas of concern where there have been reports of illegal use of green lanes.

Projects

The Stepping Stone on the public footpath between Holm Lane and Owlet Hall were replaced by a contractor in March 2023. These were delayed due to numerous factors associated with the contractor, unfortunately the stepping stones are not to YDNPA standards and the Ranger service are looking at options to rectify the stepping stones.

The report of damage to the little bridges has been noted and actioned for repairs by the Ribblesdale Access Ranger.

Washdubs - a report was received from a local parishioner of Austwick on the surface condition of the bridleway. Works were carried out by the local farmer which helped with surface water drainage, we're monitoring the surface condition of the bridleway and seeing if any additional work will be required this year.

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 meetings, usually all minor.

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

Graham Cleverly reported as Chair about two local community associations which are now very much up and running again after the interruptions in recent years during the Covid restrictions.

Firstly the Austwick Field and Local History Society. We have had an interesting and well attended series of events in this Hall since September 2022, with variety of talks on local field and history topics including talks on: curlews, the Horner photographic collection, restoring local buildings and my personal favourite of the season on fascinating swifts. The final talk for the 2023 spring season will be on June 21st when Chris and Judy Leeming will be showing their celebrated record of Austwick during Covid through images and music, with an additional chapter recording life post-Covid and thankfully back to normal in the village.

The society also has 2 summer walks coming soon comprising bird song in Oxenber wood on Saturday June 17th and a visit to Ribblehead with David Johnson on Wednesday evening July 22nd. All members of the society on our database – totalling nearly 100 – will receive details shortly and details of talks.

Our new season of evening talks starts in September and a printed programme is in hand. We have lined up some interesting talks starting with a talk on hen harriers followed by talks including Field Names and Landscape History, and finishing next spring with a talk on fungi.

I should also report that we had a successful open morning in October last year under the “Capturing the Past” project when we invited people to bring any old documents and photos to the Hall. A small team then scanned several hundred photos and other artefacts such as deeds and newspaper articles which are now on the capturing the Past website for all to see.

We also acquired some basic sound projection equipment during the year with a small grant from the Millennium Trust which helps project the sound in the main hall.

Now a few words about the Austwick Village Show. We were blessed with fine weather last summer and the Show was a success after a 2-year gap due to Covid, including the cup ceremony outside for the first time in recent memory in glorious sunshine.

This year’s Village Show is on Saturday 5th August and the Show Schedule is now ready for printing and will be available from Crossleigh Stores for collection with entry forms, from early July. We have a special event this year with a decorated cake celebrating the King’s Coronation and we also have a voucher kindly donated by Ronnie and Clare Lardner for the best new adult entry.

So, let’s hope for the usual high standard of entries and a fine day.

On behalf of the Parish Hall Council the Chair, Lindsey Smith, reported on the first year post Covid.

As spring gets well underway we are looking forward to summer activities involving the Hall such as the Street Market, Open Gardens, and the Village Show. The Street Market is the major annual fund raiser for the Parish Hall and the Playing Fields and Open Gardens will be raising funds for new equipment for the children’s playground at the Playing Fields.

Last autumn the Parish Hall Council undertook a survey inviting views and ideas

about the hall. Thank you to everyone who responded. The comments about the facilities, suggestions for improvements and new activities will help us plan for the future. One of the points made in the survey was the need for energy saving. With the replacement in the autumn of the large hall ceiling lights, all the lighting in the hall now has LED bulbs and most of the windows, including all the large ones are double glazed. Repairs have been made to the roof above the kitchen as well as the installation of new hand dryers.

Several village organisations meet regularly in the hall. The Field and Local History Society has speakers on local history landscape and wildlife. Both Austwick Women's Institute and Afternoon Fellowship have speakers on a wide range of topics and organise other activities. Doodlers is an informal art group and Crafty Cuckoos is a crafting group making items to sell to raise funds for the Church, Parish Hall and Playing Fields. There is also a fortnightly table tennis group. If you are interested in finding out more and coming along to one of these groups you can find contact information on the hall notice board.

This winter the monthly film nights proved popular with the large screen, cabaret style seating, a bar and other refreshments. Next season starts on Friday 13th October. Also good fun and popular were the Quiz afternoons and Quiz night. Thank you to all the volunteers involved in organising and helping with these activities. The main objective for the film nights and quiz nights is entertainment and socialising rather than fundraising for the hall. There were suggestions in the survey for other activities such as games nights, e.g. bridge and dominoes. If you would be interested and able to help to organise something like this please contact the Chair, Lindsey Smith.

Information about upcoming events in the hall can be found on the hall notice board, Austwick Parish Hall Facebook page and Austwick Community Chat Facebook page. For information about booking the hall see www.Austwick.org or the Austwick Parish Hall Facebook page.

Craig Smith was appointed recently as Chair to the Playing Fields Association. In the last year the PFA has received grants from the North Yorkshire Council Councillor Locality Budget Fund, which has been used to carry out repairs to the pavilion and replacement of the guttering. The pavilion was decorated outside and inside. The items of play equipment in the children's play area are dated and quotations for the replacement of certain items of play equipment have been obtained. A fundraising campaign is underway and the PFA is in negotiations with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to obtain some funding from its Sustainable Development Fund.

Gwen Cleverly reported that the Austwick Open Gardens Day will be held on Saturday 8th July 10am-5pm.

16 gardens will be open, some have opened to the public on previous open garden days and some are new to the event this year.

The style of garden is very varied, including some which are immaculately manicured and some in the process of rewilding, intentionally or otherwise!

There will be refreshments available all day in the Parish Hall, served by volunteers from the Playing Fields Association.

Tickets will be available 2 weeks in advance from the Austwick Village Shop or from

Gwen Cleverly.

At £5 per adult, children free entry, each ticket will include a voucher for a free cup of tea or coffee and a map which gives details of the gardens and their location.

Funds raised will be donated to the Austwick Playing Fields to assist in the purchase of a piece of children's play equipment.

The event is open to all the local community and to garden enthusiasts from further afield.

Support is now needed in encouraging friends and neighbours to buy tickets and also in offering to bake to add to the supplies of homemade cakes etc for the refreshment team to serve.

Offers of baking - please contact Gwen Cleverly. Thank you.

Mark Stickland, co-Chair of the Street Market and Fell race reported that the annual event will take place on Monday 29th 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, Juggling Jim, 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, though the current cost of living challenges may have an impact on that goal.

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 Parochial Church Council, Church Warden Giles Bowring reported on the Austwick Church of the Epiphany services and attendance. Following the lifting of the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic we continued to provide regular services throughout the year and returned to a more normal pattern. We are in the unfortunate position that we have again lost members of the congregation through illness and deaths within the community and people moving out of the benefice and our regular worshipping community is lower than it was a decade ago, but stable at the lower levels.

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.

The following fundraising activities were organised: Christmas Fair, Sales of books, jams, cushions and plants, Harvest Supper takeaway, Christmas tree sales, Burns Night, Street Market book stall, evening of carols.

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. 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. It was decided not to cut the designated area during the growing season and we were pleased to see that there was a good show of wildflowers, which had obviously lain dormant for many years. 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.

Janet Heap asked if the increased use of motorised vehicles on Thwaite Lane, extracting timber for the Ingleborough Estate has changed the status of Thwaite Lane to a BOAT.

The Chairman, Cllr Peter Goold, replied that the status of Thwaite Lane remains that of a bridleway for members of the public and that the forestry vehicles are legitimately using Thwaite Lane. Recently, a report, agreeing with all the arguments the Parish Council has been putting forward for the application made by the "Trail Riders Fellowship" in 2004 to be quashed, went to committee at North Yorkshire Council recommending that the case be now sent off to the Secretary of State.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.45 pm.