

Minutes of the Preston under Scar Annual Village Meeting held on 20 May 2025 at 6.00pm

Fifteen residents attended the meeting, including five Parish Councillors

As Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Amsden chaired the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting on 16 April 2024

These were agreed as a true record.

2. Issues arising from the minutes of the 2024 Village Meeting

Village Hall – provision of sound baffles – the carpet which had been laid in the Village Hall had helped to improve sound quality and had been well received. The Village Hall Committee would continue to investigate the provision of sound baffles but previous quotes received had been too expensive.

Village Play Area – Councillor Higham reported that North Yorkshire Council had completed its refurbishment of the play area and was now wholly and solely responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. The rabbit holes had been filled in and rabbit numbers had initially reduced. However, numbers were growing again and there were currently 7 rabbit holes and one burrow which the Parish Clerk would make North Yorkshire Council aware of, with a view to these being dealt with during their next inspection of the play area.

North Yorkshire Council had agreed that the Parish Council could establish a wildflower strip along the western side of the play area and this would be progressed in due course.

Cemetery update – Councillor Higham reported that since the last village meeting, the fence posts and fence at the south west corner of the cemetery had been reset and strengthened. The fence and gates had been refurbished and repainted by a volunteer who had done a tremendous job. Fifteen saplings (a mix of Hawthorn, Rowan, Crab Apple and Beech), provided free of charge by the Woodland Trust, had recently been planted with the assistance of volunteers and thanks were extended to John Greene and Julie Harris for their help with the planting. The saplings were very young and it was possible that not all would survive but the first steps had been taken towards improving the environment and softening the appearance of the Cemetery Extension. The possibility of obtaining grant assistance for providing an area for cremated remains and a seating area was being investigated, with a view to these being provided in the vicinity of the Silver Birch tree. If residents had any suggestions for further improvements, they should let Councillor Higham know.

It was confirmed that there was currently a designated area set aside for up to 20 urns of ashes (to the left of the entrance gates), but it was felt that the number of cremations was likely to increase in the future, so this was likely to be inadequate in the longer term.

The possibility of allowing the area of the extension to rewild was raised. The area was cut less frequently than the current burial area and Councillors agreed to look further at the implications of allowing it to rewild pending bringing it into use for burials.

Village Resilience and Household Emergency Plans – Councillor Higham reported that the final plan would be circulated to residents shortly. All Parish Councils were being encouraged to produce such a plan to help guide their local response to any emergency situations and provide valuable information for residents. The plan included information such as where rest centres were located and useful contact numbers. Any suggestions for improvements/additions should be made to Councillor Higham or the Clerk and would be welcomed.

The failure of North Yorkshire Council to grit the West End of the village was raised together with the resulting problems for residents at that end of the village, especially during periods of prolonged low temperatures when the snow and ice became compacted. It was noted that grit bins had been provided but it was not easy for residents to reach them or use the grit them effectively. The Clerk would raise the issue with North Yorkshire Council again.

3. Quarry Planning Application

Councillor Sayers reminded everyone present that a separate meeting about the Quarry application would be held in the Villag Hall on 29 May 2025 at 7.00pm.

To date, 63 letters of objection had been submitted by residents and were available on North Yorkshire Council's Planning Portal and there was still time for those who had not yet sent their objections in, to do so. In the light of the objections and comments already submitted, the Environmental Health Officer had already revised their original response to the application and had now raised a number of issues. Councillor Sayers and David Brooks had recently met Councillor Sedgwick to discuss the application and residents concerns. She had been very supportive and would herself be objecting to the application.

Residents were reminded that if they had any complaint about the quarry's operations, now or in the future they should copy to the Planning Officer and the Environmental Health Officer any correspondence/emails sent to the Quarry Manager so that the relevant Officers at North Yorkshire Council were aware of current and ongoing issues.

4. Biodiversity – update

Councillor Knights reported on ongoing work to identify and record the Parish's biodiversity. The quarry application was of concern to future biodiversity because of its adverse impact on wildlife on the lower moors and it had been encouraging to see the obvious concern for preserving the biodiversity of local environment expressed in many residents' objections to that application.

A link had been established with the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre who had agreed to allow access to their data. Discussions with the Wensleydale Railway would continue to assess the practicality (in view of the training and equipment required) of carrying out an assessment off the stretch of railway running through the Parish.

The Parish Council's new website would include a Biodiversity Page with links to relevant organisations and information and it was hoped in time to be able to use the new site to

develop an open dialogue with residents about the parish's biodiversity, with for example monthly updates and regular features on what flora/fauna was giving joy to residents at any one time.

A resident queried whether the grass verge along Light Lane could be left (partially) uncut in the interests of biodiversity and also reducing grass cutting costs. It was noted that, whilst there was some support for this within the meeting, this had resulted in objections in the past.

5. New Parish Council Website

Councillor Sayers reported on the new Parish Council website which was currently being developed and which it was hoped to launch by the end of June. He outlined some of the features of the site, and the improved functionality over the current site, which included direct links from the homepage to current planning applications within the village on NYC'S Planning Portal and also to its Refuse Collection pages. This would avoid the need for residents to have to search the North Yorkshire Council site for that information in future.

There would also be a facility in due course for residents to sign up to receive updates to the site (such as news items, information about events etc) automatically, rather than to receive them from the Clerk via email. The Clerk would send a link to the new website as soon as it was available for use.

6. Parish Council Budget and Precept 2026-27 and beyond

Councillor Sayers explained that as a result of necessary expenditure during the 2024/25 financial year, the Parish Council now had significantly less reserves to draw on to help fund future expenditure. Some costs, such as the Clerk's salary and grass cutting had increased and, whilst the Parish Council was able to fund all planned expenditure during the current financial year, going forward it would need to look at cutting costs and ways of increasing income, including looking for more grants.

It was noted that ceasing to cut the verge along Light Lane would help the Council save money.

7. Open Forum

Reference was made to the difficulty of judging the kerb line at the junction of Moor Lane with the Tank Road as a result of soil spilling over onto the road. The Clerk would report this to North Yorkshire Council.

8. Chairman's Thanks

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the various Parish Councillors and Clerk for their work during the year, and to those other residents who had again helped with the upkeep of the village and were otherwise supportive.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm