Green New Dales Conference – the Challenges

At the end of year one of the climate emergency nearly 100 local politicians, conservation experts and members of the general public joined together to consider what has been achieved, to identify the challenges and to understand jointly the next goals for our response to the climate emergency in the Yorkshire Dales. The conference was organised on Zoom by Friends of the Dales and the North Craven Heritage Trust.

All involved with the well-being and enjoyment of the Yorkshire Dales need to play their part and understand and support what others are doing. We issue these challenges to national & local government at all levels, landowners, farmers, businesses, statutory & voluntary sector organisations, visitors and individuals. We hope that they will inspire our programmes for action.

Bruce McLeod (Chair, Friends of the Dales)
John Asher (North Craven Heritage Trust)   October 2020

THE Challenge:

To enable the Yorkshire Dales, those who live in them, work in them, visit them and love them to move up a gear to mitigate and adapt to climate change, encouraging nature recovery and sustainable development.

We challenge all our people to:

- Mark 2021 with a radical change in mind set in light of climate breakdown and the pandemic. This is a challenge and an opportunity that we should collaborate to co-create.
- Retrofit insulation in their homes, taking care with moisture control in older houses.
- Understand and practice the 'circular economy'[1].
- Reduce waste, including excess consumption of food and food waste.
- Increase use of public transport and EVs.
- Reduce single-use plastic, avoid unrecyclable plastic and recycle all packaging materials.
- Work together and across boundaries to meet these challenges.

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[1] *A circular economy is an alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life*.

We challenge all our farmers and landowners to:

- Understand and put into practice the 'less is more' model (less input, less intensive) on our hill farms, which are front-line workers in the climate emergency.
- Take up available support for restoration and safeguarding of habitat.
- Maximise the carbon capacity of our peatlands.
- Plant more of the right trees in the right place for the right reason, including agro-forestry.
- Plant trees without plastic guards.
- Simply eliminating grazing from some areas to allow cover to regenerate naturally can be appropriate and sustainable.
- Create riparian buffer zones to slow the flow, reduce erosion and prevent nutrient pollution.
- Involve next generation e.g. through apprenticeship schemes.
- Emphasise profitability and balance with nature rather than production in order to make farms more resilient: farming economics should be about profit, not income.

We challenge all our businesses to:

- Reduce road traffic, particularly from our quarries.
- Improve energy efficiency.
- Generate and use more renewable energy.
- Design out waste, allowing easier recycling and remaking.
- Avoid packaging where feasible, otherwise use safe, sustainable and easily recyclable / home compostable materials
- Work with local authorities and the voluntary sector in Community Action Partnerships.
- Reduce waste, especially food and single-use plastic.
- Involve next generation e.g. through apprenticeship schemes.
- Prioritise local suppliers and locally-produced goods.
- Develop capability for sustainable, responsible tourism – providers of tourism services tend to be incomers – there is a need to spread the benefits to farming community.

We challenge all our voluntary sector organisations to:

- Encourage a change of mind-set across all sectors of the population – less is more, no return to 'normal'.
- Networks and networking - need to connect, collaborate and share expertise towards common goals, including a more "circular economy".
- Work with local authorities in Community Action Partnerships.
- Involve next generation e.g. through apprenticeship schemes.
- Landscape partnerships to leave a legacy of engagement by partners, YDNPA, young people and young farmers for the future.
- Encourage tourism towards education, volunteerism and participation in all aspects of land management.

We challenge all our visitors to:

- Increase use of public transport and EVs.
- Understand and practice our desire for a 'circular economy'.
- Learn about, and engage in, activities and voluntary work to safeguard and improve the Dales.

We challenge all our local government and statutory authorities to:

- Measure, monitor, report and publicise our progress in lowering environmental impacts.
- Encourage a transport framework to increase use of walking, cycling, rail and bus so as to improve public transport for residents and visitors.
- Provide more and faster EV charging points.
- Develop an affordable low-carbon housing prototype for the Dales.
- Review the spatial distribution of development – are developments in remote locations 'a good thing'?
- Develop transport hubs – especially the Skipton Station triangle.
- Lower the impact of waste through education and lower carbon in its collection
- Increase tree cover using native trees, the right trees in the right place, and not at the expense of other valued habitat e.g. moorland and wildflower meadows.
- Ensure, with the voluntary sector, that there is sufficient planning and negotiating capacity to negotiate additional woodlands.
- Plan for additional training and opportunities for employment in creating and managing woodland.
- Improve our understanding of the effects of burning grouse moors on peatland restoration.
- Improve water quality by ensuring watercourses are protected from livestock impacts, septic tanks and private sewage works work efficiently and only discharge to soakaways.
- Educate businesses, residents and visitors about the benefits of the 'circular economy'.
- Involve community in choices about landscape development and evolution.
- Involve next generation e.g. through apprenticeship schemes.
- Plan for increases in summer mean temperatures by 2-5°C and winter rainfall by 10-30% in the Dales by 2080: the most intense precipitation events observed today are likely to almost double in occurrence for each degree of further global warming.
- Mitigate flooding by slowing the flow via comprehensive Natural Flood Management and Sustainable Drainage Systems for towns and villages.
- Make tourism sensitive to local concerns and environmental impact. We can use, for example, the enjoyment of rivers, through wild swimming or fishing, as a means to draw attention to ecosystem and the responsible use of resources and landscape.

We challenge national government to:

- Develop a more ambitious public transport framework to increase use of walking, cycling, rail and bus.
- Ensure that stronger environmental improvement capability is at the forefront any re-organisation of local government.

- Set ambitious policies to create and support a circular economy, fostering meaningful jobs and regenerating resources and ecosystems.
- Provide, by direct intervention if necessary, the grid infrastructure for fast EV charging in sufficient locations to ensure that EV drivers are confident about coming to the Dales.
- Improve incentives and provide good practice schemes for the insulation of older buildings.
- Plan for greater investment in flood mitigation.
- Legislate for tighter discharge permits for sewage treatment plants.
- Through DEFRA, draw up a Landscape Structure Plan for 30 years hence – have a vision.
- Move quickly to provide certainty for upland farmers and landowners about long-term funding support (especially for woodlands), and ensure that the new Environmental Land Management scheme is designed and funded to a level that ensures farmers and landowners are properly rewarded for the provision of the wide range of public goods that the public holds dear.
- **Adopt as guiding principles "the polluter pays" and "public funds for public benefit".**