

# CROSTHWAITE AND LYTH PARISH COUNCIL

## DRAFT FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031 [OUTLINE FRAMEWORK]

### FOREWORD

This Strategic Plan for Crosthwaite and Lyth Parish Council ('the Council') has been prepared to guide its vision, objectives, and actions over a 5-year period and as a response to challenges in completing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NP).

Though well advanced, the external financial support essential to complete the NP has been withdrawn. Efforts are underway to secure the additional funding required totalling some £6,000; however, unless or until such funding is obtained, the development of the NP is paused.

In the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan, the Council has concluded that it is appropriate to provide the residents of Crosthwaite and Lyth with clear insight of what the Parish Council is trying to achieve and how it expects to deliver this. The Strategic Plan, based on priorities identified in the work-up of the Neighbourhood Plan, will identify what the Parish Council plans to focus on for the next 5 years and will be used as a guide each year to set the budget for the following financial year.

### INTRODUCTION

Crosthwaite and Lyth is a rural parish in the Westmorland and Furness district of south Cumbria extending to some 3,248 hectares. It is a sparsely populated area - the 2021 Census recorded a parish population of 700 (rounded to the nearest 10) with a significantly higher proportion of residents in older age groups than the average for England and Wales. The main settlement at Crosthwaite lies 5 miles west of Kendal, 5 miles north of Grange-over-Sands and 3 miles south of Bowness-on-Windermere.

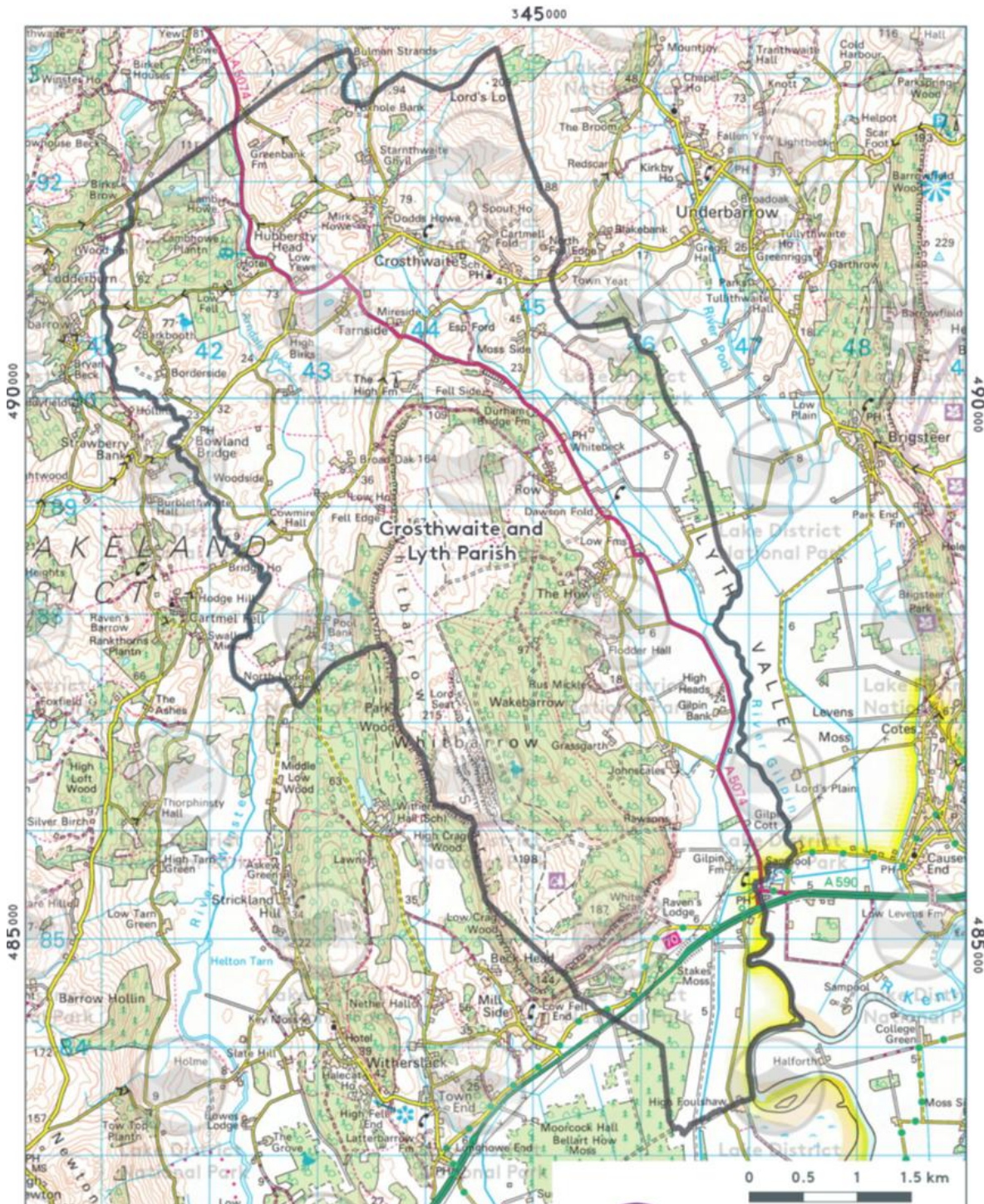
The entire parish lies within the boundary of the Lake District National Park and exhibits a distinctive and scenic South Lakeland character. The landscape in the north and central part of the Parish comprises low hills and small-scale rocky outcrops within a patchwork of pastoral fields. These are punctuated by pockets of woodland and plantations and crossed by narrow lanes which connect the village to outlying hamlets and scattered farms. Hedges and stone walls line the roads and there are views towards the higher Lakeland fells in the north and Morecambe Bay to the south.

The eastern side of the Parish includes part of the Lyth Valley, which lies between the limestone escarpments of Whitbarrow Scar to the west and Scout Scar to the east. Whitbarrow, with the prominent cliffs of White Scar at its southern end, is a substantial limestone outcrop and forms the dominant feature in the landscape along the western side of the parish.

Much of the Lyth Valley is the flood plain of the River Gilpin which flows south to join the River Kent at the southern boundary of the Parish. Here the landscape character is low-lying, with pasture, wetland and areas of woodland which give way to estuarine habitats as the River Gilpin meets the tidal River Kent. In places the land is only a few feet above sea level and in times past this wet ground encouraged the development of large areas of bog (mosses) which in turn gave rise to extensive peat beds. These provided an important source of fuel for the local population. Following drainage programmes from the early 19th to the mid-20th centuries the agricultural value of the mosses was considerably enhanced allowing crops to be grown on the valley floor and providing good grazing for livestock.

The farmsteads fringing the Lyth Valley and similarly in the neighbouring Winster Valley have an historic and renowned association with damson production. The Westmorland damson is the smallest but most flavoursome variety of damson and is grown mainly in these two valleys. Damson orchards in the Lyth and Winster are unique, surrounding many active and redundant farmsteads and growing along many hedgerows in the valleys. Blossom time in April is a key seasonal feature of the area.

## Map of the Parish of Crosthwaite and Lyth



The area includes multiple designations for biodiversity value, including areas within Morecambe Bay Pavements Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Morecambe Bay Grade 1 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Witherslack Mosses SAC and Foulshaw Moss (Grade 1 SSSI and SAC). Whitbarrow Fell holds a range of designations: Whitbarrow Scar Local Nature Reserve; Whitbarrow Hervey Memorial Reserve (National Nature Reserve); and Whitbarrow Grade 1 SSSI. The Lake District is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## **Governance**

Crosthwaite and Lyth is a statutory administrative unit operating at a local level and representing the first tier of local government. It plays an important role in promoting the interests of the parish, drawing attention to its needs and supporting the work of different groups in the community.

It is an elected body, and its 7 Members (Parish Councillors) are elected at 4-yearly intervals by those residents of the Parish entitled to vote. Councillors are unpaid and commit their time to improving and maintaining Crosthwaite and Lyth on behalf of its residents. The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually by the Councillors at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May. All Parish Councillors are expected to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct.

The work of the Council is supported by two part time members of staff: the Clerk (or Responsible Officer) who coordinates the work of the Council and the Responsible Finance Officer who manages Council finances.

The Council meets on the first Monday of the month in the Parish Room (except in August, January and when the Monday falls on a Bank Holiday - in which case the meeting is re-arranged). All meetings are open to the public and there is a period set aside for the public to address the Council.

It is aligned to and works in partnership with other arms of local government, most notably the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and Westmorland and Furness Council (W&FC). The former is the Planning Authority for the area which prepares and implements the Local Plan. The Local Plan determines the principles of development for the area and LDNPA periodically consults with communities as part of the process. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee for all planning applications relating to developments within the Parish and submits its views on the appropriateness of individual applications.

W&FC has responsibility for a wide range of local services including highways, waste collections, environmental initiatives and aspects of parish council administration. The Ward Councillor for W&FC usually attends Parish Council meetings and reports on matters of local interest. The Parish Council also works closely with statutory agencies such as United Utilities, Electricity Northwest Ltd. and The Environment Agency to help manage and improve local services.

The Council works to its Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and a suite of approved policies which lay down the rules by which it operates and conducts its business.

## The Purpose of the Strategic Plan

This five-year strategic plan is a high-level document which declares the Parish Council's mission and proclaims its Vision for the Parish. It serves to express the values that govern its work. In turn, these statements form the basis for its actions and targets over the 5-year term and identify the priority attached to these.



### The document will:

- Be simple, concise and accessible;
- Communicate the Council's ambitions to the local community, thereby helping parishioners to have a better understanding of what the Parish Council does - and what its partners do;
- Focus on achievable targets and be used to drive the budget process, plan activities for the coming year and enable the Parish Council to monitor its progress against key priorities;
- Facilitate consistent and co-ordinated ways of working, thereby acting as a guide to decision making;
- Be dynamic in that it will be reviewed and updated at least annually to take account of changing circumstances.

### Crosthwaite and Lyth Parish Council Mission Statement

Crosthwaite and Lyth Parish Council is a forward thinking and outward looking body which works with its residents and in partnership with other bodies to secure social, economic and environmental benefits for the Parish.

This Mission Statement is supported by three strands:

- Ethical Values
- Statutory Values
- Operational Values

These strands integrate to serve the local community through transparency, high standards of governance, working in partnership to secure the delivery of essential services, ensuring financial accountability (best value, proper auditing), asset and environmental management and continuous improvement.

## **Vision**

By 2031 the Parish of Crosthwaite and Lyth will exhibit sustainable development in action supporting a vibrant community that thrives in the present, constructs for the future but which understands and cherishes the distinctive character, environmental quality, cultural heritage and spectacular landscape in which it sits.

### **To deliver the Vision by 2031 the Parish of Crosthwaite and Lyth will have:**

- Remained a vibrant community
- A Parish Council that exhibits best practice in all that it does to deliver the best outcomes for the residents of the Parish
- Embedded sustainable development and have achieved or be on the way to achieving a permanent resident population of at least 80%, including people of all ages and developments that enable younger people to remain and settle locally.
- Improved access to local services including water supply, waste disposal and public transport and be working towards safer roads to encourage use by walkers and cyclists.
- Resilient local facilities including its school, community hall, church, playgroup and local pubs that remain strong through adaptation to changing social and economic environments.
- Thriving local events and societies that are pillars of the Crosthwaite and Lyth community and which underpin a diverse and engaged community of local people.
- Responded to environmental challenges such as climate change and habitat loss so as to have maintained the cultural heritage, tranquillity, natural beauty, spectacular views and various special places in the Parish.

## **Values**

The Values on which this Strategic Plan is based are reflected in the Plan document (Appendix1)