



## June 2005

Troutbeck is one of the five wards which make up the Lakes Parish of the South Lakes District Council (SLDC), and this document is Troutbeck's contribution to the Lakes Parish Plan.

The other wards in the Lakes Parish are Ambleside, Langdale, Rydal and Grasmere. Although Troutbeck has many similarities with these other wards, it is geographically separate and has many real differences in scale, demographics, needs and priorities.

Geographically the Troutbeck ward is a long triangular area along the western side of the Troutbeck valley, falling between the Trout Beck (river) on one long side, the slopes of Wansfell on another, and running all the way down the valley to the shores of Lake Windermere.

Most of this area is grazing farmland and woods along the valley bottom, populated by a few scattered farms, cottages, larger houses, and the village of Troutbeck itself. Almost every building in the Troutbeck valley is over 100 years old, and many are over 300 years old. The whole valley lies within the Lake District National Park. Most of the village is a Conservation Area and there are many Listed and National Trust owned buildings.

The surrounding landscape is exquisite. The peaks of Yoke, Ill Bell, Froswick and Thornthwaite Crag rise steeply to over 2500 feet to dominate the head of the valley, and the Trout Beck runs through woods and farmland to plunge through steep ravines just before entering Lake Windermere at the foot of the valley.

Within the whole of Troutbeck ward there are about 260 properties. In the most recent analysis around the main village itself we counted 105 houses, of which 42 were second-homes or holiday cottages, and 63 were full-time residences. Several of our second-home owners have visited Troutbeck for decades and make an active contribution to the village community. But many are landlords renting their holiday homes to weekly visitors. Long-term rental housing within Troutbeck village include 5 properties owned by the Holehird Trust, 3 by Lakeland Housing Association and 7 by private landlords, one large house converted to student flats, and in the Troutbeck valley there are 6 tenant farms mostly owned by the National Trust.

The village of Troutbeck itself is really a collection of tiny hamlets strung out for about one and a half miles along the old valley road. It is a truly unique village, full of vernacular architecture in an unspoilt valley setting. It has three traditional pub/hotels, a well-used and recently refurbished village institute, one church, about six B&Bs, and a highly-regarded village shop and post office. The village shop and post office provides many vital services such as banking and essential groceries for many village residents, and is widely regarded as the heart of our village. Although highly popular with tourists, Troutbeck has no official car parks, tourist shops or cafés; many visitors arrive on foot via its network of footpaths and bridleways.

Visitor attractions in the Troutbeck valley include 7 hotels, one Youth Hostel, a National Trust Property at Townend, and a large caravan park at Limefitt which is highly visible but just outside the Troutbeck ward on the opposite side of the river.

There are no schools, and the only visible industries are farming and tourism. Broadband is recently available, and a number of residents do some or all of their work from home. Just three buses a day bypass the village centre during the summer tourist season only; however, by car or taxi Troutbeck is just a few minutes away from supermarkets, shops, doctors, schools, and many high quality tourist and cultural attractions.

Troutbeck's permanent population includes both the traditional Cumbrian community and many 'new' residents who have moved to Troutbeck because of its beauty and tranquillity. Of our survey respondents, 52% were over 65 years of age, 34% were 51 to 64, and 13% were 36 to 50. Only 15% were employed, 23% were self-employed, but over 57% were retired. We have counted about 20 children living in the Troutbeck valley.

There is a long-established and integrated sense of community in Troutbeck. Some local families have lived in Troutbeck for several generations, and many 'new' residents have lived here for over 25 years. Almost everyone knows each other in the village, public meetings are well attended, and the Village Institute hosts many popular social events.

However the farming industry is in economic decline, and property values in the whole of Troutbeck are now well beyond the reach of local people. Affordable housing, the increase in numbers of second homes, an aging population, and the lack of younger families are all major concerns.

A love of the countryside and the community were mentioned in almost every single response to both our questionnaires. Conservation of Troutbeck – as a real village and as a place of beauty – is the primary objective at the heart of our Parish Plan.

### **How We Developed our Parish Plan**

Troutbeck's Parish Plan has been written and agreed by a working group of 11 people representative of all sections of the Troutbeck community. This committee was nominated by a public meeting held in the Village Institute on 12 July, 2004.



To ensure that the Troutbeck Parish Plan is based on the ideas and opinions of everyone in Troutbeck, two questionnaires were circulated; the first in November 2004 went to all recipients of Troutbeck Parish Magazine and to customers of the village shop, and the second in February 2005 went to every household in the Troutbeck ward. The first questionnaire received 57 responses telling us what people thought was best in Troutbeck and how it could be improved, whilst the second, which was compiled by the Lakes Parish Plan Steering Group and less specific to Troutbeck, attracted 55 responses.

### **Environment**

Conservation of the landscape and environment were cited by 74% respondents to our first questionnaire, many mentioning that they wanted to retain Troutbeck's peace and tranquillity and lack of commercialism.

Many people in the first questionnaire mentioned (without prompting) their concerns about over-development and light pollution at the caravan park at Limefitt. Firstly in our Parish Plan we want to find out more about how Limefitt had been allowed to develop to its present size, and to press the LDNPA to restrict further increases. Light pollution, also from Limefitt Park, now dominates the otherwise almost completely dark valley at night, and we want to voice our concerns to both the Environment Agency and to Limefitt's management.

Several people complained about another other eyesore: a long term builders' dump in the village itself, and we agreed that we make

the LDNPA aware of Troutbeck residents' concerns.

Several positive suggestions were made to improve Troutbeck's appearance. 31% of respondents in the second questionnaire complained about litter. The suggestion of volunteer village tidy days would be an excellent way of tidying our lanes and verges, and also reinforcing our community spirit. Other good positive ideas we'd like to include in our plan include a switched light outside the Village Institute to make it safer to walk to parked cars during events, and suggestions for litter bins at lay-bys on the A592.

We particularly liked the idea of improving the appearance of Troutbeck's many wells, and visitor seating areas. To ensure this is done in a sensitive way (and to attract funding) we plan to ask Nature and Heritage conservation agencies to help us produce a Troutbeck-wide plan.

4x4 vehicle and motor cycle use causing noise and erosion on the Garburn Pass 'road' was a concern for several people in both questionnaires; we plan to support the LDNPA's efforts to control these.

Finally, several people complained about the unannounced erection of new communications masts on Applethwaite Common, visible from much of the Troutbeck valley. We plan to ask the LDNPA to advertise all future 'landscape-sensitive' planning applications at a central point in Troutbeck.

### **Buildings**

60% of respondents to the first questionnaire mentioned the need for affordable housing, yet 55% also mentioned the need to preserve Troutbeck's buildings or appearance. A number of suggestions were made for sites for affordable housing and there was also strong support for the conversion of existing buildings.

Following our surveys there have been two well-attended public meetings with the LDNPA, housing associations and National Trust to progress the redevelopment of the old school site and to investigate potential village infill

sites. A planning application for the old school site is imminent, and a new Affordable Housing Action Group is to be formed. We will continue to support their work.

There were many other suggestions for restricting second homes and attracting families to Troutbeck – unfortunately most were either unfeasible or illegal! Perhaps the one positive way we can influence these is to continue to show the world that Troutbeck is a wonderful place to live in, not just to visit.

### **Traffic**

Suggestions for car parks at the Church and Village Institute were well supported. Many however were also concerned at the feasibility and conservation impact of a new car park at the Institute. We concluded that the present highly dangerous on-road parking at the Church makes this a much higher priority.

Speeding in Troutbeck is clearly a major concern, highlighted by 51% of the responses in the second questionnaire (in spite of a proliferation of confusing speed limit signs throughout the village). Various suggestions were made to slow down traffic, and faced with the real possibility of a serious accident soon, we think we have to investigate all options.



Three other popular suggestions were made for Troutbeck's traffic in our questionnaires: "please grit our lanes in winter, fill our many potholes, and trim our dangerous hedges". We hope that we can find a way to persuade Cumbria County Council to increase funding and priority for these.



Lastly several people made an excellent suggestion to build a protected footpath from Jesus Church to The Queens Head on the A592. We agree that this would make safe a highly dangerous yet popular walk for both visitors and residents.

**Services**

There was strong support for toilets in Troutbeck (43% of respondents to the second questionnaire). But there are also strong opinions against, and conflicting ideas on their location and servicing. After much discussion we felt that there was little feasibility of finding an acceptable location or the money to build and service these.

Almost as many people in the second questionnaire 'ticked the box' for mains sewage in Troutbeck (36%). And after a 5-day electrical supply failure across much of Troutbeck in January 2005, we think that we must maintain pressure on United Utilities and the Environment Agency to install mains sewage and to improve our electricity supply.

There was some concern and support for alternative and improved re-cycling facilities for Troutbeck. However we're learned that SLDC intends to implement kerbside household collection of some recycled waste in 2007, and we feel we should wait until we know more about this initiative.

**Community**

We've already highlighted the importance of community spirit in our village. Over 62% of our respondents praised this (together with the

Village Post Office, the Village Institute, and Jesus Church) in our first questionnaire.

There are a large number of activities in Troutbeck during the course of the year. An excellent suggestion was made to strengthen our community: a comprehensive list of events, activities and contacts to be circulated or posted at the Village Institute in order to attract more participants to an even wider range of events.

Finally, but possibly most importantly, we plan to investigate and form a 'Village Association'. At present there is no Troutbeck-based group which could take responsibility for many of the actions identified in this Parish Plan. This new body would replace the Parish Plan Working Group initially to progress the Troutbeck Parish Action Plan. Longer term it would work alongside all existing Village committees (such as the PPC, Village Institute Committee, Social Committee, Women's Institute etc) to meet the long-term needs of the whole Troutbeck Community.

**Our Thanks**

To the Troutbeck Parish Plan Working Group members: Harry Allen, Tony Ashton, Susan Black, Jill Guy, Ken Halliday, Rachael Halliday, Margaret Lewis, Alan Mitchinson, Peter Renison, Brian Liddell, and Doreen Westmoreland

And of course to all the residents of Troutbeck who have given us their support and suggestions and who have completed our two questionnaires.