

## GROUP

This past year has been one of mixed fortunes. Doom and gloom on one hand, and after a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Moors National Park with Phil last week, a glimmer of hope and optimism. So now I will try to sum up the losses and wins. The losses are created by the cut backs which the Government have imposed on all local Authorities throughout the country. RoW and Access departments are looked upon as easy targets to save money. They don't directly produce money, they spend it, but indirectly, they produce millions through tourism and improving the health and well being of our Nation.. The NP budget has dropped from 8 million in 2010 to 5.3 million, 2015. So the first savings are on salaries. The NP RoW team had to lose 7 members of staff this year. Karl has now been given the title Team Leader, and has had to merge his present job as RoW officer for the North with his opposite number from the South, who was Emma, as she was made redundant in February sadly, and now he has had to take on the job which Bernie used to do, as Head of park management. A new Ranger Area has been created covering the coast which Bernie is now the new Ranger of. In effect he has been moved sideways, but at least he has a job which some haven't. Not a good situation, as no one can take on 3 jobs and do them as before and the ones left have had to come to terms with being moved and having less support or authority. I myself once had to take on another persons job beside my own and it caused so much chaos, it was eventually spread out among 5 or 6 people. It can't be done, so something has to go. There is going to be a reduction in the service we had before its inevitable. But there is a glimmer of hope. Emma used to come to our Cottage and talk to Margaret and myself and discuss problems and diversions and it was beneficial to us both. The thing I am really proud of is the C2C diversion near the Potash mine, to get people off the road, I suggested this to Emma and she managed to get this approved and accepted before she was made redundant. Late summer our volunteer work party started work on this, but with the changes in Rangers it has interrupted the work. Last week at our meeting I made a claim to the work that was left, so we will have to wait and see. I am always pushing for work to keep you busy. Karl has now approached me to continue where Emma had to leave off, in coming to visit us to discuss problems, so, all is not lost. He also at our meeting talked of the roll of volunteers and the part they had to play in helping and reducing the number of problems which naturally occur, year after year. Its clear that with a reduced supervisory staff they can't cover what they used to do and that volunteers would have to be trusted to supervise themselves, which in all honesty they are quite capable of doing. The work isn't technically difficult, most is just common sense. All we need is a drawing and instructions and away we go. The Rangers job has to change into a more managerial role, Talking to landowners, Checking the site for safety ie making sure that there aren't any drains or electric cables underneath to damage, Ordering materials, having them delivered to site and confirming dates to start and check when finished. The actual work doesn't need to be supervised by them and it frees them up to do something else. I can understand that Rangers may think we are taking their jobs but if we don't do the work, who will?. Their work role will just change, that's all. It happens all the time in industry, Change and adapt is the way of life if you are going to survive. So there is a

glimmer of hope there, that work party's will be seen as part of the natural scene, as necessary to getting these problem numbers reduced. And not as a threat to their jobs. At the beginning of the year we were getting nowhere with our work party ,no jobs nothing. So I set up a meeting with Naomi the Ranger for our Area, and Phil and I met her at the Danby Office of the Park . We explained what we wanted to do and could do and she said she knew nothing about our work party, she had never been told ,and promptly gave us 3 jobs! The fact we had been ignored for a year was worrying, but, we are past that now, and hopefully established. We have been able to accomplish a job a month, from building stiles and board walks to digging drains and ditches and cutting back vegetation. A varied program which it should be. But with the new changes we have to start again now. We have just done a small job putting some signs up at Ayton Quarry for David Smith the Ranger for the South Area ,so that is a good start. Obtaining the trust and confidence and getting people to believe in us is not easy. Its been a long journey but we are getting there and the rewards are, our work being appreciated by the walking community. When we get to supervise ourselves , that will be the break through. NYCC also have had cut backs but their thinking is that 80% of people who walk only use 20% of all paths ,so these are the only ones which will receive their attention and the rest they will ignore unless its a safety issue. There attitude to RoW is very negative as its easy to save money by saying no. Next year they are going to save a million pounds a year by abandoning cutting road side verges. So walking alongside a road is going to be very difficult, and a safety issue. When money becomes more important than safety, and its our money, they are saving, then we should have a say where it is being spent. My opinion of NYCC as I see it I'm afraid is not very high especially where RoW are involved . I go to meetings at Northallerton and listen to reps for the RoW team and despair. One certain man said, he found that Volunteer groups were very hard to control ,and that it was more cost effective and cheaper to employ contractors, than use volunteers. Now what could be cheaper than us. Also they may not even be able to carry out their legal obligations and it may be cheaper to be fined than carry out their legal duty. Having an attitude like that just shows what we are up against Not taking responsibility and just passing it on is easy. “Its not my fault boss ,its the contractor” you can hear them say . Anyone, can do that kind of a job. Its easy. But it takes some one special to say, “the chips are down but we are going to do the best we can, with the little we have, and volunteers are our answer,and saviour,” which we are. Its getting their mind set to change which is the problem but its the only way they are going to reduce the 10,000 problems they have on their books. by listening and reforming their ways and attitude. Fortunately most of our problems are with the NP and the others are within the Scarborough area. But it is still our duty to see that they get done. Many things won't get done simply because their won't be the money to do them but that doesn't mean we just stop reporting them or accept the status quo and there may be many things which we can do ourselves like clearing undergrowth on our Sunday walks. If we all carry a pair of secateurs it would take no time at all, to cut our way through an obstruction, so it is something worth thinking about. Thank You.