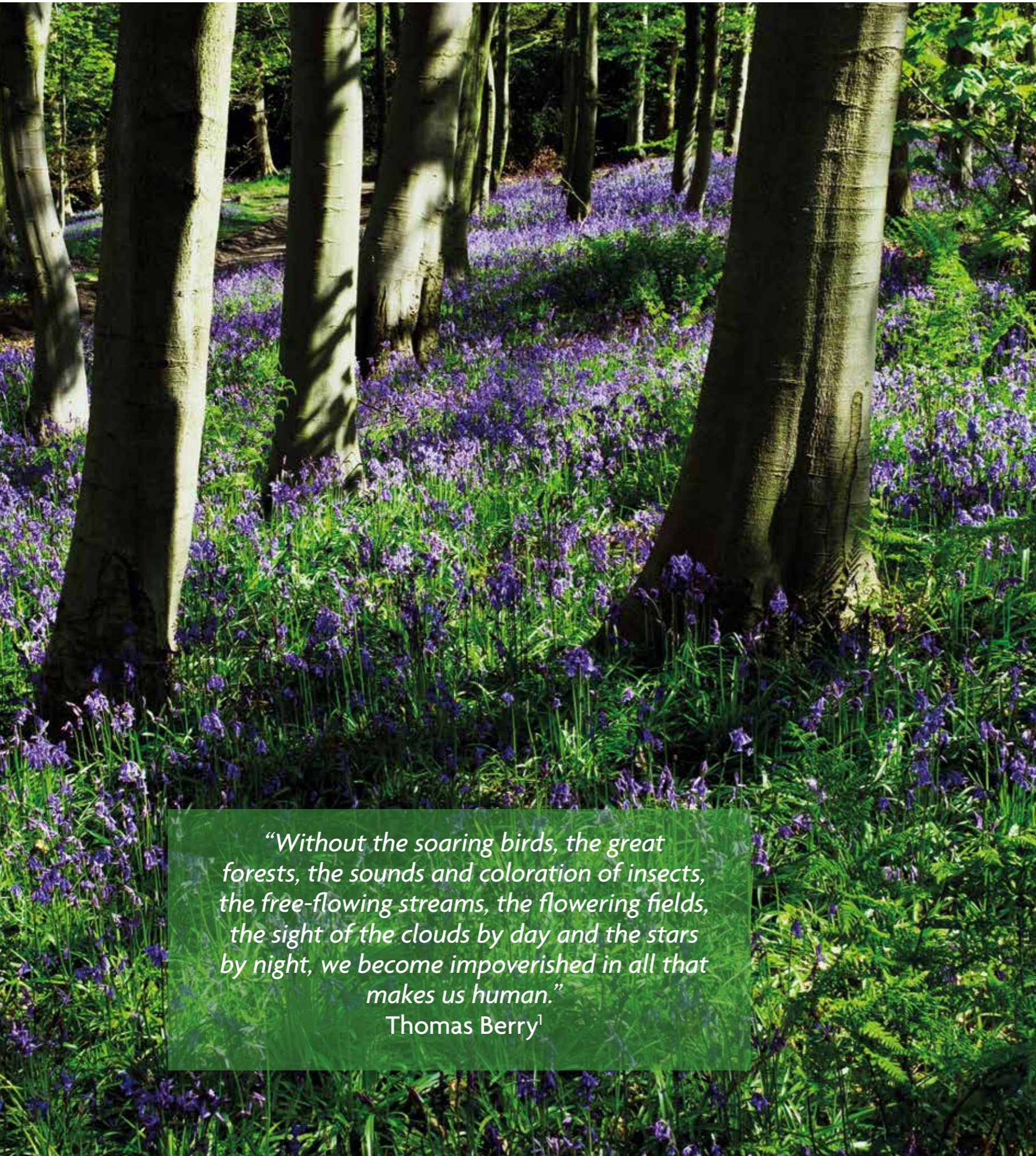




RYEDALE COMMUNITY CHARTER





“Without the soaring birds, the great forests, the sounds and coloration of insects, the free-flowing streams, the flowering fields, the sight of the clouds by day and the stars by night, we become impoverished in all that makes us human.”

Thomas Berry¹

Ryedale Community Charter

To record and establish the cultural heritage of the villages and towns of Ryedale, and to declare our rights and responsibilities for its improvement and protection for future generations.²



Declaration

We, the Community and People of Ryedale, have come together and produced this Charter to set out our “Cultural Heritage” which consists of our tangible and intangible assets. We declare that if our Cultural Heritage or the essential character of our community is harmed, then the quality of life is diminished. These are the assets that we have inherited, are stewards of and want to pass on to future generations. As a community we declare our basic rights and responsibilities for improving and safeguarding these assets for the future.

This Charter pertains to any development within the community which impacts on our Cultural Heritage or essential character. As the Charter is a direct expression from the people, it must be a material consideration in the planning process and decision making, is a factor for impact assessment under environmental legislation, and must be given equal weight by planners and other decision makers to other factors in the evaluation of Sustainable Development.

1. Thomas Berry (1914–2009) was a cultural historian and writer who urged humans to recognise their place on a planet with complex ecosystems in a vast, evolving universe.

2. In Ryedale we are pioneering the concept of a Community Charter. We started with six communities (**Gilling East, Oswaldkirk, Cawton, Coulton, Grimston and Stonegrave**) who wanted to work together to create a charter for their local area. These communities have shared what they most value about the place where they live and what they would like to protect for future generations: both the changes and improvements they’d like to see. This is a long-term initiative. The Ryedale Community Charter is a living, breathing document which will evolve over time as more villages and towns across Ryedale have the opportunity to consider and share thoughts about the future.

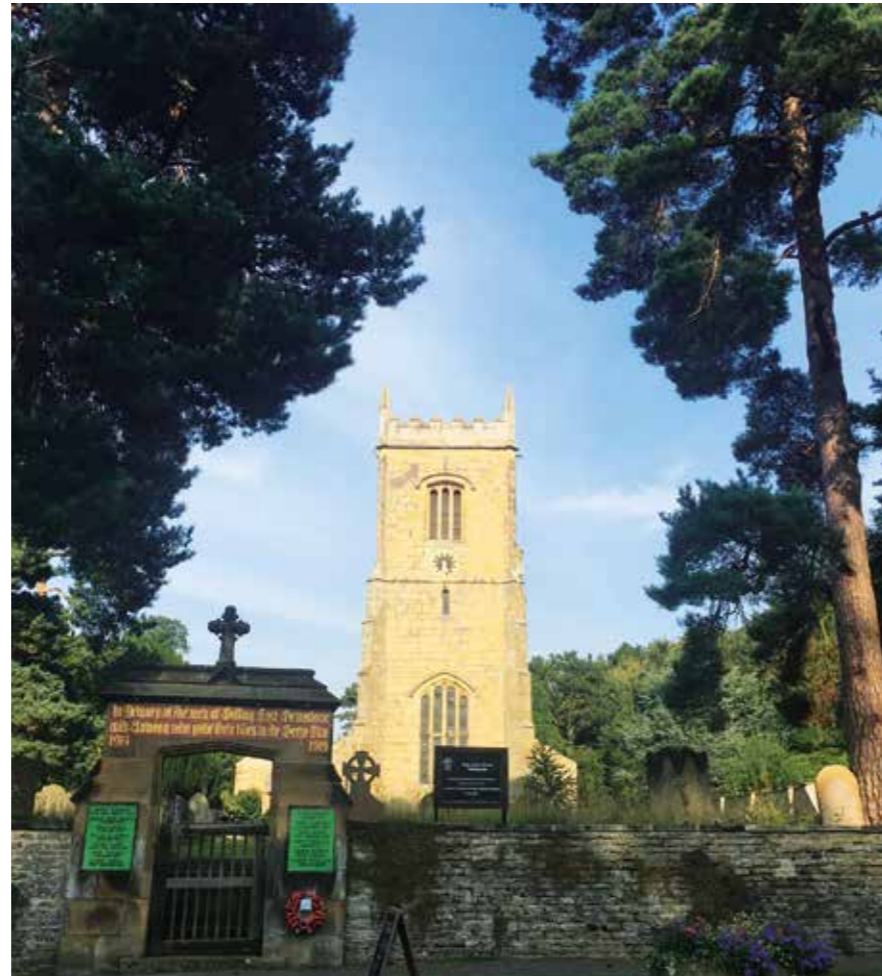
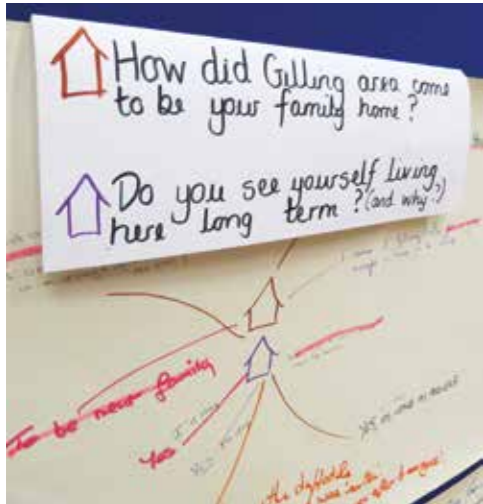
Our tangible and intangible assets

Collectively we have agreed that the following tangible and intangible assets³ constitute our Cultural Heritage and character, and that these underpin the foundations of the health, well-being, cohesion and identity of our communities and our natural environment.

1. The distinctive and attractive character of our natural and built environment as a positive place in which to live and work

We are proud of our visually attractive villages, set in scenic countryside, with the distinctive character provided by trees, woodland copses, field boundaries, rural roads and tracks. We value the sanctuary provided by our homes.

We support our strong small and micro business sector, e.g. mobile businesses and services, Post Offices, libraries, hairdressers etc. which rest on local innovation and entrepreneurship and is the bedrock of local economic resilience. Provision should be made to support and promote the diversity and growth of small businesses into the future in order to provide sustainable livelihoods for future generations. We celebrate our strong sense of neighbourliness.



How did Gilling come to be home?

3. The assets listed were collectively agreed over a series of public meetings. In their descriptions, care has been taken to remain faithful to how they were perceived and expressed by the people. It was collectively decided to include some features that lie beyond the geographical boundaries of our council area because they were still deemed to be constitutive of our shared local Cultural Heritage.

2. Our inclusive and supportive community, in which individuals and families can thrive, and in which they may safely bring up children and care for the elderly

We hold on to a strong sense of stewardship and collective commitment to protect the economic and environmental health of our area. We celebrate the vibrant life of the community and a wide variety of communal activities. Our parish magazines share information about events, facilities and issues and thus contribute to our strong identity.



What do you hope for your children and grandchildren living here in 20 years and what are your concerns?



3. The vibrancy and strength of our community, evidenced over time, enabling us to achieve many things

The public spirit and initiative of our community, is demonstrated in our thriving village halls, children's playgrounds, leisure facilities, and in our efforts to preserve and enhance the amenity of our villages. Maintaining the strength and vibrancy of our community is reliant on a strong core of volunteers.



4. Community amenities

We value the medical, educational and other services available to us and have a collective commitment to sustaining and improving their quality for the health and well-being of the community.



5. Our rich history, its monuments, its human story, its farming and its spiritual and cultural heritage

Our Story

Our story is a conversation between individuals and the collective community of the past, the present and the future. It is a narrative that defines, sustains and inspires us. It includes personal individual memories of growing up in this area and community memories. Our community narrative underpins our individual and collective responsibility for ensuring effective stewardship and sustainable development for the part of the country in which we live. We celebrate our:

Local historical sites and monuments

Some of our valued sites symbolising historical events and movements, not only of local but of national importance, are Rievaulx Abbey and Terrace, Nunnington Hall, Castle Howard, Gilling Castle, and Helmsley Walled Garden.

Farming heritage demonstrated in

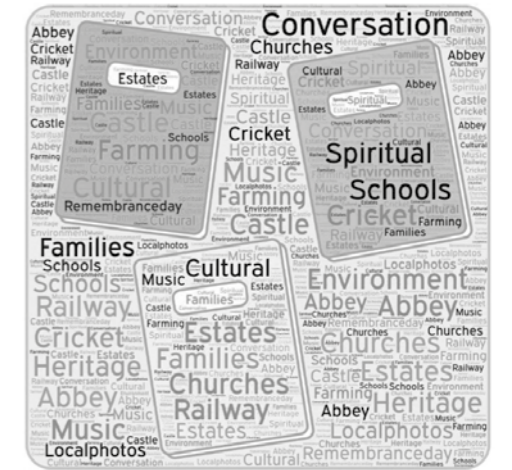
- History and tradition: the land shaped by farming
- Agricultural shows
- Local markets

Spiritual heritage expressed in

- A calm and peaceful valley that “nourishes the soul”
- Beautiful historic country churches and Ampleforth Abbey as a religious centre
- Various faith groups
- Choral music

The Arts

We take pride in our stimulating arts and musical environment, including the Helmsley Arts Centre, the Ryedale Festival, Helmsley Community Library, Ryedale Family History Society and our various museums.



Is the history of the area important to you?



Aims and aspirations

We aim and aspire to:

- Protect, maintain and improve our natural environment, using careful stewardship and a commitment to sustainable development and natural communities.
- Increase our resilience in adapting to climate change and environmental damage, mitigating their effects and raising awareness of more sustainable ways of living.
- Ensure a prosperous future for succeeding generations, affordable housing to buy or rent, access to quality education and rewarding job opportunities for all, should they so desire them.
- Improve and integrate the public transport system and roads.
- Further develop our local identity, community awareness and social responsibility.
- Develop mutual trust and respect with our elected representatives and third parties, and encourage them to help sustain and improve our tangible and intangible assets.
- Preserve local participation in the planning process and promote the observance of the “precautionary principle”.



Basic Rights and Responsibilities⁴

We the community and people of Ryedale, hold to the following Rights and Responsibilities which we believe are fundamental to the safeguarding of our Cultural Heritage, including a well-managed environment, upon which the well-being of our present and future generations depends.

Article 1: The right to exercise stewardship over our Assets

This Charter declares a basic right for the people of our community to exercise stewardship over our agreed Assets. These Assets form part of our Cultural Heritage, which is essential to our wellbeing as a community.

We assert our right to safeguard our Cultural Heritage – stressing that we have a shared responsibility, along with other stakeholders, to ensure that all developments in our community are sustainable and are within the spirit of this charter.

Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

Under the right to exercise stewardship of our assets, we have the responsibility to safeguard them and enable them to flourish.

Article 3: Principles for public participation in planning

In fulfilling our responsibility under Article 2, in relation to any application for development within our territory, we lay down the following principles:

- (a) The Precautionary Principle is the basic test for evaluating any proposed activity – in other words, if it cannot be proved that harm will not ensue from the proposed development, it should not be allowed to go ahead.
- (b) We have a right to take part in the planning process in order to exercise appropriate stewardship over our assets.
- (c) We also have a right to monitor the outcome from any planning agreement, including the operation of any conditions which it may contain.

In exercising our right to sustainable development, we have the following responsibilities:

- (a) We must ensure that all interests, including those of wildlife and the environment, are represented and given an equal hearing.
- (b) We acknowledge a right to life for all species on the basis of their contribution to ecosystem balance.

We declare a right for any planning decisions based on these principles to be a material consideration in related decision making, on the basis that our people and the natural environment bear the burden of any risk.

Article 4: Right to Peaceful and Civil Preventative Representation

In fulfilling our rights and responsibilities under articles 1, 2 and 3, we have a right under the principles of lawful necessity and lawful excuse to peaceful and preventative representation if such rights and responsibilities are ignored or abused. This is balanced by a responsibility to ensure that such representation is peaceful and commensurate to the issue at hand.

4. In order to place this statement on a robust formal footing, we affirm that cultural rights are inseparable from human rights, as recognized in Article 5 of the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity. In addition, Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration established a foundation for linking human rights, health and environmental protection (Stockholm 1972, resolution 45/94 UN General Assembly). In the decades since the Stockholm conference, the links that were established in these first declaratory statements have been reformulated and elaborated in international law.



Definitions

Assets means those matters, qualities and assets (both tangible and intangible) listed above under “Our Assets”, which our communities have agreed to be the factors within our territory that we value as fundamental to maintaining the integrity, stability and beauty of our Cultural Heritage for present and future generations.

Climate change is the systematic alteration of characteristic weather conditions over time as a result of external influences. Since the predominant cause of global warming over the last century has been the human-induced rise in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, it has become common parlance to use the words ‘climate change’ to refer to this recent global warming and its climatic consequences.

Community Charters are rights-based documents which set out things in a local area which residents have agreed to be fundamental to the present and future health of their community, and related rights and responsibilities.

Cultural Heritage means a group of resources inherited from the past that are identified, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of a community’s constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, practices and traditions. It includes all experiences of the cultural, social and ecological environment resulting from the interaction between people, places and ecosystems through time; and includes but is not limited to the Assets within that community’s territory.

Ecosystem shall include but not be limited to, the connected web of plant and animal life on the land and in the soils, waters and air, including wetlands, streams, rivers, aquifers, and other water systems. It refers equally to naturally occurring habitats and managed areas such as farmland, both of which have the potential to sustain wildlife, people, flora and fauna, soil-dwelling, aerial or aquatic organisms.

Ethics is defined as a moral philosophy or code of morals practiced by a person or group of people.

Natural Communities means communities of wildlife, flora, fauna, soil dwelling, aerial and aquatic organisms that have established sustainable interdependencies and interrelationships within a proliferating and diverse matrix of organisms within a natural ecosystem, and thus also have sustainable interdependencies and interrelationships with human communities. “Natural Community” means all such Natural Communities.

Participatory Planning means collaborative decision-making processes, operating within existing planning law, which are ongoing and dynamic and centred on direct, effective and engaged participation by residents of our communities, in a manner which is fair, non-hierarchical and transparent and which is facilitated by an independent and impartial third party. Principles for these processes are set out in Basic Rights and Responsibilities, Article 3, above.

Precautionary Principle means that, when an action raises threats of harm to human health or the environment then, in the absence of scientific consensus that it is harmful, those proposing the act must bear the burden of proof in proving that it is not.

Spiritual heritage Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives, religious and secular. In this document it is used to express the quality of being concerned with the human spirit as opposed to material or physical things. It is used in conjunction with ‘heritage’ to identify all the qualities, traditions, features of life that have continued over many years and have been passed from one generation to another.

Stewardship is an ethic that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources. The concept of stewardship can be applied to the environment and nature, economics, health, property, information, theology etc.

Sustainable Development means any development within our community which, following the process for Participatory Planning, is found to represent an overall long-term benefit or zero harm to our Assets; thus recognising and giving equal weight to Cultural Heritage with other social, economic and environmental factors and ensuring we bequeath it to our future generations in a better state than we inherited it.



Contact us. To find out more, go to www.rye-charter.org.uk
or send an email to contact@rye-charter.org.uk



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