

**KNARESBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR THE  
2025 ENCLOSURE ACT COMMEMORATION**

**Notes of a meeting at Knaresborough House on 29 January 2024**

**Attendees:** Helen Westmancoat (KTC, Chair), Margy Longhurst (KTC), George Eglese (Civic Soc,KFP), Hilary Gardner , David Rhodes, Sue Almond (Historical Soc), Kathy Allday (Museum Assoc), Ruth Bulmer (Museum Assoc), Hannah Gostlow (NYC, KTC), Matt Walker (NYC, Castle WG) , Mark Flood (Lions KFP KTC), Chris Kitson (LLC), Rick Brewis (KFP), Trisha Sanders (KFP), Rowena Lloyd (FEVA), Shan Oakes (KTC/RK, minutes), Bill Rigby (Civic soc/RK),

**Apologies:** Charlotte Gale, Peter Lacey, Sue Vasey, Elsa Wiehe

The meeting was called to consider ideas for framing events around the 255th anniversary of the Enclosure of the former Royal Forest of Knaresborough.

The date of the signing of the Enclosure Act was 13<sup>th</sup> August 1770 (at the Borough Bailiff, now the Commercial Hotel) , so that date in 2025 (Wednesday) is the 255<sup>th</sup> anniversary. That will be during FEVA. (NB August 12<sup>th</sup> is the town's Charter Day).

The idea so far is to plan a small-scale event for this August (2024) as part of FEVA and maybe call it Knaresborough Forest Day as we can make it a celebration of the new Knaresborough Forest Park coming back into the ownership of the people.

The suggested plan for the day on **13 August 2025** would be to start at the Castle with various activities, looking across at the new Knaresborough Forest Park, then walk down Kirkgate to Knaresborough House grounds for a picnic lunch and talks etc, then continue down to Conyngham Hall kiosk and grounds. Those wishing to could then continue up to Knaresborough Forest Park.

For August 2025 Rowena is planning an outdoor semi-immersive production inspired by the Castle Yard Riot (NB new book available from Museum Association or Castlegate Bookshop). The theme of the Riot is the importance of the people using their power to retain their rights of access to the land. The Enclosures took away the people's right of access to the Forest – a massive blow – to be commemorated rather than celebrated.

There was discussion covering the value of the community coming together, protecting green spaces, and looking at how best to celebrate people and place and including practical activities like tree planting. It's the UNenclosure of the forest (the

land going back to the common people) we will celebrate, whilst remembering our history and what happens if we relax too much and allow the 'authorities' to get the bit between their teeth.

Discussion about the former Royal Forest of Knaresborough reminded the meeting of its full extent (over 90 miles of boundary), lack of informed interpretation of its heritage value, and unexploited potential for recreation. The development of the 100 acres of Longlands Common, incorporating Knaresborough Forest Park, was a powerful gesture towards the restoration of citizens' free access to the land, and enjoyment of the benefits of the 'commons'.

In support of this, the meeting heard of emerging discoveries by the Knaresborough Museum Association of ancient settlements, and the potential for more insights to be made available through access to previously unexplored areas within LLC/KFP. We need to learn from the past and from nature. Also shared were ideas for the creative opportunities in drama, music and other artistic initiatives prompted by the idea of a regular date in the calendar. KFP outlined the current thinking on a calendar of events throughout the year aimed at generating interest and cultivating an audience of people committed to supporting the Project, together with a network of agencies with similar aims. We hope for a ballad of Knaresborough Forest and lots of inclusive intergenerational activity.

The chair asked everyone to go away and think about what their respective organisation's contributions to the day, and leading up to it, might be. **Action: ALL**

We originally thought of re-establishing a Knaresborough Day on 13<sup>th</sup> August as an annual event beginning in 2025; however, an opinion was voiced that this needed further deliberation. We can rethink this idea at our next meeting.

Suggested dates are : March 2024 – follow up to this meeting; May 2024 – KFP Beltane walk the land; Aug '24 – FEVA Forest celebration; Aug 2025 August 13<sup>th</sup> Enclosure/ Castle Yard Riot event