



Brafferton & Helperby Parish Council

Chairman's report for the year ending 31st March 2024

Welcome to the Annual Parishioners' Meeting. This is the Chairman's report for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

On 6th May 2023 we celebrated the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. The Council funded a coronation mug for every child in the village to mark the occasion, and which I hope still survive on mug racks across the Parish.

The village celebrated over the Coronation weekend with the 'Big Help Out' followed by a very well attended big coronation picnic on the sports field with touch rugby, tug of war, music, pimms, cakes and more. Estimates were that about 200 people attended the celebrations. I'd like to thank Councillor Matt Boyle for helping to coordinate the event and the many other organisers and contributors who played a central role in laying on such an enjoyable event.

The picnic underlined the strength of our community which is at its best when different groups of people step up to do their bit and become involved in making things happen. It is one of the real strengths of our community which we should all encourage.

Many people commented afterwards that they thought the event should be repeated. A similar village picnic event was held last weekend.

North Yorkshire Council

The new unitary North Yorkshire Council came into effect on 1 April 2023. The Parish Council now deals with North Yorkshire Council on all matters, in particular, planning. Planning currently remains organised on the old District Council basis so the same planning officers who looked after planning matters in Hambleton have been retained in North Yorkshire Council.

Footpaths, access and traffic

In April 2023, the condition of the footpath on the south side of the Raskelf Road was raised. It sloped badly into the road and was difficult for disabled people to walk along safely and for people in wheelchairs and with pushchairs to navigate easily.

At the Parish Meeting last May, the ability for wheelchair users to travel around the village was also raised, and the condition of the same footpath was raised again, in addition to other areas where the need for access improvement was identified.

Following the 2023 Parish Meeting, the Parish Clerk and I accompanied a wheelchair user around the village so we could better understand the issues they faced. As a result of this insight an access report was drafted and approved by the Parish Council and was submitted to the North Yorkshire Council Cabinet Member for Highways and the Highways Department.

In parallel with the access issues, there has been consistent concerns raised from across the community about the speed of traffic in and out of the village, the proximity of traffic to pedestrians



on Main Street, the need for improvement and renovation to the traffic calming measures on Main Street and at entrances to the village and the hazards of the bend on the Boroughbridge Road.

A traffic report was also drafted and approved by the Parish Council. It was also submitted to the North Yorkshire Council Cabinet Member for Highways and the Highways Department.

I was due to meet a Highway Engineer from North Yorkshire Council's Highways department to discuss all aspects of both reports today. Unfortunately, the Engineer had to postpone the meeting, so I am not able to provide you with an upto the moment report on where the Highways Department are in getting things done, but you will have seen that the pavements on the Raskelf Road have been resurfaced and are much improved.

I am hopeful that further improvements will be made but given the Parish Council has no control over these matters I do not know when any improvements or works will happen. The Parish Council will be kept updated.

It is difficult to get anything done without evidence and data. Thanks to the efforts of Roger Clements, our Parish Clerk, and Blake Edwards we are now able to capture and download the data from our Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS). This hasn't been straightforward, and we will continue to record it so that we have an accurate picture of traffic volumes at different points in the village and also traffic speed at it enters/departs the village.

We currently have a developing picture of traffic speeds and volumes from the York Road and Boroughbridge Road:

- York Road – 84.8% of motorists drive within the speed limit. 14.8% drive between 30-40 mph and 0.4% drive between 40-60 mph.
- Boroughbridge Road – 72.7% of motorists drive within the speed limit. 26.3% drive between 30-40 mph and 1% drive between 40-60 mph.

Overall based on all the traffic (169,600 vehicles) that has been measured 74.9% of motorists obey the speed limit. 24.2% drive between 30-40 mph and a dangerous 0.9% drive between 40-60 mph (1519 vehicles).

As this project develops, we will obtain much clearer visibility of the actual traffic situation in terms of volume and speed and how it changes over time. We will be able to focus actions, resources and support where it is most needed based on clear richer data and not assumptions or guesses.

We will collect Raskelf Road data in due course.

Cobbles

At the start of the year, we were hopeful that we would receive a sum of accumulated CIL money from Hambleton District Council which would have been sufficient to repair the cobbles in the area of the notice boards and to continue with repairs in front of Kirkholme in the vicinity of the war memorial.

Sadly, the Hambleton's offer was not approved by North Yorkshire Council and therefore the work has not been able to proceed further at this stage.



I have approached Councillor David Chance from NYC to explore both short term and long term funding options and I hope to welcome him to the village so that he can see our requirement in due course.

We have been able to continue with some minor repairs. Repairs were undertaken to the cobbles in front of the surgery making access slightly easier and we hope to put a proposal to the Parish Council improve the access to Drury Lane in the coming year using some CIL money from recent developments in the village.

Trees

As was reported at the previous Parish Meeting, the Parish Council has a duty to manage the trees on its property and Roger Clements our Clerk manages a programme of surveys and inspections to ensure the Council meets its duty of care for the safety of the public. A liability of £4,764 arose when essential tree work was identified to reduce an ash tree suffering from ash dieback on a Raskelf Road allotment and to fell a large conifer near the road on another Raskelf Road allotment. This unforeseen work has now been completed, and we will continue to monitor the condition of trees owned by the Parish Council on an ongoing basis.

This work underlined the unforeseen nature of some of the Council's work and also the need for robust reserves.

Funding

The requirement to fund the tree work was identified last year and is the principal reason behind the Council's financial reserves dropping below the amount which the Council feels is desirable for a Council of our size. For a Council with our annual precept income of circa £15,000 we aim to have budgeted reserves of circa £10K. At the end of the last financial year our free reserves were £7050 about £3K less than the ideal, but better than had been originally budgeted. This year, providing there is no unforeseen unbudgeted expenditure (for example more tree work) our outturn is anticipated to be circa £8500.

The Council's strategy is to rebuild its reserves over the next couple of years so that we once again have the contingency necessary to deal with unexpected events. I'd like to assure parishioners that we have a clear glidepath to improved financial resilience over the next 2-3 years.

Allotments

We had hoped to repair the old brick building on one of the allotments on the Raskelf Road and bring it back into use with CIL money from Hambleton District Council. Sadly, like the money for the cobbles, this money did not materialise, and we have had to fence off access to the building for safety. Our aim with this allotment is to clear it of junk and repair the building when funds are available to enable the allotment to be brought back into use.

The Council has started to fund incremental fence repairs and replacement for the Back Lane allotments. Our aim is to invest annually until that work is complete and new fences are in place.

The Council has funded two skips to remove accumulated rubbish and scrap from the Back Lane allotments which has improved the environment and made the allotments more attractive for



parishioners to occupy. We aim to hire a skip for allotment holders on the Raskelf Road this year to help clear up and improve those allotments.

Swing Bridge Repairs

North Yorkshire Council owns the bridleway down to the swing bridge and the bridge itself. As reported at the last Parish meeting NYC have plans to improve the approaches at each end of the bridge to make it safer for pedestrians and horses and to create mounting blocks at each end of the bridge to enable riders to dismount and mount safely so they can lead their horses across the bridge.

We were told that the repairs and upgrades would be completed last year. We've now been told that the work will still be undertaken, but NYC has had staffing issues which prevented the repairs going ahead as planned. Staff have now been recruited and we have been informed that the work will be undertaken 'shortly'.

A hole has also appeared on the floor of the bridge. Our Parish Clerk will report the damage to NYC so that it be repaired and ensure pedestrian and horse rider safety.

Several people have raised concerns about the sycamore trees that have been planted along the bridleway believing them to be an inappropriate type of tree for that setting and likely to cause damage to both path and bank. Other members of the community however, welcome the trees so we want to make sure that the right decision is made about the trees, although this is not an area for which the Parish Council has responsibility. NYC are sending their area bridleway officer to visit so that they can take a view. It may be that the sycamores are replaced with different, smaller trees. The Parish Council will discuss the outcome of the bridleway officer's visit in due course and the outcome will be reflected in the relevant Council minutes.

Developments

Last year I spoke about the concern that the Parish Council had about cumulative overdevelopment in the village, and its effect on the village's infrastructure, services and the traffic impact. I also underlined the Parish Council's support for appropriate development that enhances the community and enables sustainable growth.

Last April development began on 5 houses on the Raskelf Road, and later work began on 28 houses on the Boroughbridge Road. Planning has been approved for 2 dwellings in St Peter's Close with a further 2 houses still awaiting a decision. A likely 37 houses potentially being erected this year.

The planners have currently drawn the line against expanding the village beyond its current built environment with the rejection on appeal of 5 dwellings on the Boroughbridge Road and 4 houses on what was formerly the Oak Tree public house's overflow car park.

We will continue to assess each proposed development on its own merits.

Pilmoor Solar Farm

Continuing on planning matters, I think everyone should now be aware of the proposed 50-year project for a 230-acre solar farm to the north of the Raskelf Road adjacent to the railway line. About two thirds of this proposed project is in our parish, the remainder is in Raskelf. The solar farm if it goes ahead will be able to generate 49.99 MW and will be the largest in the area. It is a significant infrastructure project.



A presentation was held here in the village hall earlier in the year and a large number of people attended. At a subsequent Parish Council meeting approximately 20 members of the public attended the discussion that was held about the planning proposal and had the opportunity to put their views. The issues raised can be broadly summarised as follows:

- There was a recognition that a move to carbon neutral and secure energy sources by the UK was necessary.
- There were concerns about the impact the project would have on wildlife and their transit routes which may also affect road safety.
- Concerns were raised about the positioning of the substation close to Brafferton Spring Wood
- There were concerns about the proximity of the development to Brafferton Spring Wood, the Raskelf Road and in particular Bishop's House.
- It was felt more could be done to screen the development from the Raskelf Road and Bishop's House.
- There were concerns about the use of land which was suitable for growing food.

The Parish Council has chosen to adopt a neutral stance to the solar farm reflecting both the opposition and support identified for the proposal within the community. The Council suggested improvements to the scheme reflecting the environmental concerns raised. Subsequently, there have been some improvements to the proposal around margins and screening.

A decision is likely to follow a NYC Planning Committee meeting later this month.

Council business and thanks

In April, Councillor Andy Gale was co-opted onto the Parish Council. I'd like to thank Andy for stepping forward.

On the Land & Maintenance Committee Steve Laux, a co-opted lay member resigned because he was moving away from the village. I'd like to thank Steve for the substantial amount of work he has undertaken across the village over several years from cobbles to fencing to tree planting. He has made a significant contribution to the community and the work of the Parish Council. I'd also like to thank Dan Knight who has stepped forward as a lay member on the Land & Maintenance Committee.

I'd like to thank my fellow councillors for their contributions over the last year and their support of the Council's business. Having councillors that 'do their bit' is very important to both the Council and the community.

Finally, I'd also like to thank our parish clerk, Roger Clements, for his work on behalf of the Council. There is a great deal of work undertaken behind the scenes which keeps council business moving along and which benefits the community. I'm very grateful for the time and effort he puts into the role of clerk.