



Brafferton & Helperby Parish Council

Chairman's report for the year ending 31st March 2025

Welcome to the Annual Parishioners' Meeting. This is the Chairman's report for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

Footpaths, access and traffic

Following the 2024 Parish Meeting I finally met with a Highways Engineer to discuss the Access and Traffic Report that your Parish Council had submitted to Area 2 Highways Department in 2023. We walked round the village where I showed him the issues that had been raised by parishioners with access problems and explained the traffic issues that had been raised in general.

At that meeting he undertook to:

- Refresh the white lines in Main Street to highlight the presence of pedestrians for drivers
- Refresh the 30 mph roundels on the approach to the village
- Apply for funding for an accessibility scheme in line with the PC's access report.

It was pointed out to me, and I know that the situation is unchanged, that budgets were constrained, and this work would not happen immediately. I have asked for an update from Highways and hope to receive one over the next few weeks to understand where the village is in the list of priorities. I hope to update the Council over the next few months.

As regards the pedestrian walkway on Main Street or other highway enhancements that the Council believes are necessary, I was told that there is no funding available to refresh the pedestrian walkways or for highway improvement. Also, Highways now only uses black tarmac not coloured tarmac, hence the mess we have with patching on Main Street. The Highways Department will also not introduce 40mph buffer zones as was requested by a resident on the York Road as they are not supported by NY Police.

Swing Bridge Repairs and the bridleway

North Yorkshire Council owns the bridleway down to the swing bridge and also the bridge itself. This is not an area for which the Parish Council has responsibility, but we do have an interest in the maintenance and long-term condition of the bridleway and bridge as they are used extensively by the community.

For the last two years we have waited for NYC 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 remain assured that the repairs will be undertaken but we do not have a timetable.

We have had a visit from the Bridleway Officer who has agreed that the multiple sycamore trees that have been planted are not in appropriate locations and should be removed. NYC are content that volunteers remove the saplings. The Parish Council will coordinate this work over the next few months.



Although the bridleway is not the Parish Council's responsibility, the wooden fence and gate to the village green are its responsibility. Parishioners will remember that recently the fence which we believe was erected around the year 2000 partially collapsed and needed to be fixed. This has now been completed, and we have moved the gate to make access easier for tractors cutting the grass.

Bridge Street Access and the Lychgate Area

There have been numerous issues over recent years with vehicle access and parking in Bridge Street. Irresponsibly parked cars have prevented oil deliveries to some properties for example. There is also the ongoing problem of a deteriorating road surface on the unadopted road which makes access difficult for some, especially those with mobility issues.

We very much support the residents of Bridge Street coming together to fund an improvement of the unadopted road and I understand that significant progress has been made towards implementing a plan. The Parish Council will also play its part by reprofiling the lychgate bank. This will widen the road sufficiently to enable cars to be parked without hindering access for other vehicles. As many bulbs and plants as practicable will be saved from the bank and replanted but the Council does not envisage maintaining a flower bed or anything similar that requires cultivation or substantial ongoing management on the newly profiled bank.

Pedestrians in the lychgate area will also recognise that in recent years there has been a deterioration in the condition of the area due to vehicle traffic and surface water run-off. We want to improve this area and hope to come to the village with a plan in due course.

Blocked gullies and surface water flooding

Surface water flooding can be an issue in our village. Often this is caused by blocked gullies. Whenever a blocked gully is reported our Clerk raises it through the Customer Portal. All Councillors have been briefed to report blocked gullies to the Parish Clerk, and I encourage parishioners to let the Parish Clerk know if there is surface water flooding and to take a photograph of it or if they identify a blocked gully. Our Clerk can then use it to inform the Highways Department via the Customer Portal. This is the most effective way of reporting issues and getting something done. We have had some success with this process, although it is often not as fast to fix as we would like.

The other more pressing concern is that the drains taking away the surface water are blocked and cleaning out the traps under the gullies is not sufficient. The pipes connecting to the drainage system are often blocked, especially down the Raskelf Road. We have raised this concern with our Councillor and Highways and will continue to do so. I understand that budgetary constraints are the underlying reason for this continuing problem.

Footpath to the Sports Field

Aligned with the problem of surface water flooding is the condition of the road and the roadside along the York Road towards the Sports Association entrance. In wet weather the condition for both motorists and pedestrians is unacceptable. Access to the sports field particularly for young families is poor with families obliged to walk in the middle of the road. The Council has started a conversation with NYC to identify how a footpath might be funded from the bench to the entrance for the Sports Association and what its specification should be. We will keep the community updated on progress.



Cobbles

The PC has used some CIL money to improve the access in Drury Lane by re-instating the cobbles and extending the concrete pathway. As you will know, many parishioners of all ages use Drury Lane and the condition of the cobbles had deteriorated significantly over the years. I'm sure you'll agree that following the recent work, there has been a significant improvement in the access along Drury Lane for wheelchair users, parents with pushchairs and those with mobility issues. The Council has extended the concrete path and reinstated the cobbles up to the Coach House. This was one of the areas identified as requiring improvement in the Parish Council's Access Report and it was within the Council's powers to fix it. Where we can do something and it is within our budget we will do it.

Trees

One of the Council's main responsibilities and one which sometimes costs us money is to manage those trees which are the Council's responsibility. We undertake a risk assessment for every tree we own every 18 months or so. During the last 12 months we had to undertake work to the two horse chestnuts in Main Street to reduce the crowns and move branches away from houses. We also had to fell a large conifer on an allotment down the Raskelf Road which was in poor condition. This tree had been shedding large branches and was tall enough to endanger traffic if it was to fall. The top of an ash tree which had succumbed to ash dieback was also taken off on another Raskelf Road allotment to ensure that the allotment could be used safely. Tree work is often an unforeseen part of the Council's expenditure.

Funding

Our precept has now risen to £17,900 and reflects not only the rise in the cost of living but also the growth in the size of our community. We now serve a community of circa 700 - 800 people. This new precept represents an annual increase of 2.94% in the Parish Precept for a Band D property. Your Parish Council has tried to keep increases roughly in line with inflation. At the end of the last financial year our free reserves were £7,247. Our budgeted outturn was expected to be approximately £8,500. The variance lies with unexpected fence repairs and tree work

Our financial strategy remains the rebuilding of our financial reserves over the next few years so that our free reserves are in the region of £10,500.

With the construction of houses within the parish, we do receive an amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money. This money is designed for spending on what can broadly be categorised as infrastructure projects and does not form part of the free reserves. We will continue to press for CIL money not allocated to our parish to be spent here given the amount of development that has been undertaken.

Allotments

The take up of allotments by the community is very good. The Parish Council now leases 13 allotments on Raskelf Road and 11 in Back Lane. We only have 2 allotments on the Raskelf Road which are unlet, both of which are problematic to cultivate for different reasons.

The Council had hoped to repair the old brick building on one of the allotments on the Raskelf Road known as RR11. We had hoped to use windfall money transferred from Hambleton District Council prior to its transfer to North Yorkshire Council but this was not forthcoming.



The Council recognised the hazard that the building represented, fenced it off and informed our insurers. The allotment was not allocated to a new tenant because of the hazard posed by the building. This was also the same allotment where the unsafe conifer was located.

This proved to be the correct approach as the building collapsed following a storm in November 2024. The remains have now been made safe and I'm happy to report, that a new gate has been erected and the allotment has been let.

Last year the Parish Council hired skips for the removal of debris and waste from the Back Lane. This year 2 skips have been hired to assist allotment holders remove rubbish from the Raskelf Road allotments.

Skips were hired for allotment holders on the Raskelf Road this year to help clear up and improve those allotments.

The Council will continue to invest in the allotments as needs are identified on projects which are within the means of the Council's budget to provide assets for continued community use.

Community Asset - The Golden Lion

The Golden Lion was registered as a Community Asset by the Parish Council in 2020. This meant that when Admiral Taverns, the owners of The Golden Lion put the pub on the market in February 2025 it triggered a moratorium period designed to give any relevant community group the opportunity to form and raise the necessary funds to purchase the business before the pub could be offered for sale to any other party. This moratorium period started during the last financial year and is due to expire on 13th August.

We are fortunate in our village to have a community that can get things done when it chooses to do so. A limited liability Community Benefit Society has been formed, The Golden Lion Community Pub and Hub Ltd. It is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority and a share prospectus has been issued. It is also available online. A huge amount of work has been done to put this in place and they have made good progress to raise the money required to buy the pub, make the necessary renovations and provide the working capital.

A community purchases will enable the Golden Lion to be more than a pub. It can undertake a range of different functions according to the changing needs of the community. We live in an increasingly insecure world. The more that we as a community can do for ourselves the better. The community purchase of The Golden Lion offers an opportunity to strengthen the vibrancy and long-term sustainability of our community. We will be much poorer without it. I do encourage members of the Parish to support the purchase of this Community Asset.

Dog Poo

It shouldn't be necessary to have to raise it, but there has been a rise in the number of complaints about dog waste. It is profoundly antisocial not to clear up after your dog and to remove the waste to one of several dog poo bins positioned around the village. There are a few irresponsible and anti-social people who walk their dogs along Back Lane and the Bridleway who seem to think they don't need to pick up. Perhaps they forget their bags. The Parish Council has purchased a dog poo bag dispenser which will be positioned at the end of the swing bridge bridleway to see if that improves the situation. There really is no excuse.



Developments

For the last two years I have spoken about the concern that the Parish Council has 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.

The completion of the dwellings on Townend Way and on the Boroughbridge Road represented 33 new houses in the village. (A 10.5% increase in houses in the parish). Additionally, the following developments are either underway or at the planning stage:

- 4 new houses under construction in St Peter's Close
- 8 dwellings proposed on the Raskelf Road opposite Townend Way
- 27 dwellings proposed behind the new estate on Boroughbridge Road
- 4 dwellings proposed on Back Lane on the former Oak Tree Car Park.

This is a total of 43 houses if all are built. Added to the new 33 houses already built this would be an approximate 24% increase in houses (or 76 new dwellings) within the parish from 2023 figures.

We do not believe that the Parish's infrastructure can easily sustain this level of development.

Pilmoor Solar Farm

Planning permission was granted to the Pilmoor Solar Farm project at around this time last year. This is a 50-year project covering an area the equivalent of approximately 330 football pitches and which will generate significant income for the operators. It will be a major piece of infrastructure located largely within our Parish and also within Raskelf Parish.

The community were told very clearly during the planning process that a firm commitment would be undertaken after planning permission was granted to pay a community benefit fund to the Parish Council to support local projects.

Despite several attempts at obtaining this commitment, I regret to inform the community that, as yet, no undertaking to make a community benefit payment has been received. We also understand that the original developers have sold on the project to another Company.

My concern is that the community may have been misled. There is no legislative basis that manages the conduct of these solar farm companies which we can go to that makes these developers do what they said they would do. But this matter is not over. We will escalate it with both the relevant companies, our local councillor and our MP so that we receive a community benefit payment commensurate with the imposition of a major piece of infrastructure within our community. There may not be a quick resolution to this issue, but we will keep you informed of any outcome and of any assistance from the community that may be needed to get a satisfactory outcome.

Village Christmas Tree

The village Christmas tree has been a relatively recent innovation in the village. It was first erected to cheer people up during Covid. The feedback is that it is appreciated, and people like it. We aim to continue to purchase a Christmas tree, and I'd like to thank the Community Association, the



Mooreys and John Fox at the garage for their contribution towards erecting it, decorating it and providing the power for the lights.

Boundary Commission – Proposed Changes

Following the reorganisation of the Local Authority by the formation of North Yorkshire Council, The Boundary Commission is consulting on proposed changes to the wards in which different parishes sit. Brafferton & Helperby currently sits within the Hillside and Raskelf Division. The proposal is that following next year's election we would sit within a new Dishforth and Dalton Division.

I'd be interested to know parishioner's views on this boundary change and whether they feel there is any logic or connection between these different parishes.

Council business and thanks

We have had a change over in Councillors over the past 12 months. Firstly, I'd like to publicly thank Pam Jackson Vickers for her contribution as a Councillor for several years. Pam took an active role and played an important role in ensuring the Council's finances were in order. Her replacement was Councillor Angela Horner. I'd also like to thank Matt Boyle for his years of contribution to the work of the Council and in particular the Neighbourhood Watch. In Matt's place we welcomed Councillor Steve Lewis. I'd like to thank both Angela and Steve for stepping forward.

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. As some of you may know, Roger has decided to retire, and we are in the process of recruiting his successor.

As we all know, Roger undertakes a great deal of work behind the scenes which keeps council business moving along and which benefits our community. We'll mark Roger's retirement nearer the time of his departure, but I'd like to mark my appreciation of the work he has undertaken on behalf of the Council over the last 12 months. I'm very grateful as Chairman for the time and effort he puts into the role of clerk.

Nigel Denison
Chairman