

Elsham Parish Council Annual Chairman's Report April 2024

This last year has been a very busy one, as usual. There has been a focus on wildlife and the environment around us, with great flower displays in the village and work carried out in the quarry. That have also been plenty of planning applications and highways issues for us to process. I thank all of our council members for volunteering their time and being so proactive, and all the many volunteers from the village who have given up their time to help organise events, open and close the play park, join in with our litter picks, and maintain the planted areas. As always, we look forward to the coming year and welcoming new challenges.

Year Highlights

Nature Reserve

The nature reserve remains a beautiful place to walk around at any time of the year, but is particularly pretty in spring when we have snowdrops, violets, then primroses and cowslips, forget-me-nots, bluebells and then the hawthorn in flower. Work has been done and continues to be done to keep patches of ground clear for the primroses and upcoming orchids, to give them space to flower and set seed. This spring, it was very noticeable that the areas with cowslips are increasing, much due to North Lincs' help with keeping down vegetation and brambles in certain areas. On the plateau opposite the gate on Middlegate Lane, where trees were cut down a few years ago, we are now starting to see an increase in the number of wildflowers. Last summer we saw an abundance of butterflies and insects, particularly enjoying the teasel flowers. Deer continued to be seen regularly and although sightings of the Giant Rabbit are rare, it (or they) still seems to be around! With our Tesco grant we purchased six more bird boxes, which were put up in early spring, and the existing bat boxes have been re-secured where necessary. We look forward to the summer show of ox-eye daisies, teasels and bird's foot trefoil.

Play Park

The mole deterrent has done a great job of keeping moles away, and pigeon spikes have been put over the bucket swings to keep them clean. The spider net on one piece of equipment broke last summer, and it was a battle to get Sovereign to come out and repair it, which was very frustrating for us. The bottom half of the park was very wet the first months of this year due to the heavy rain, but the French drains do seem to be still working. Many thanks to the long list of volunteers who open and close the park daily, and to Cllr Jane Ewen for carrying out inspections of the equipment and organising the rota.

Highways

After the great resurfacing done last year, this year has been disappointing in terms of work carried out by North Lincs Highways. Cllr Horner and our parish clerk did a walk around the village with a member of the highways team to highlight all of the issues in November 2023 and we are still waiting for most of the work that was promised to be carried out. These include a new drainage channel on Barnetby Lane and completing the resurfacing into the village; Church Street drainage, which continues to be a problem; resurfacing of paths on Hall Lane and Front Street; and work to make the trees on Doll Lane snicket safe.

Planning

The main planning applications in the village considered since last May have been a re-application for a dwelling at The Old Cottage, Church Street (refused); an application for two Dutch barns on Church Street that was refused, and then resubmitted as an application for two houses, which is still under consideration; an application on Front Street on land opposite the quarry for eco pods that is still under consideration; and an outline planning application for two dwellings at Clematis Cottage on Hall Lane, which was refused. A planning application from 2022 for the Orchard on Front Street was withdrawn in March.

Crime and Neighbourhood Watch

There have been no serious incidents in the village, and although some empty wine bottles and other alcoholic drinks have been picked up on our litter picks, the quantity has decreased considerably. The flashing speed signs continue to be used and provide valuable data about the traffic coming through the village.

Tesco Bags of Help

We have been using the Tesco grant money to purchase hedgehog houses, food and dishes, bird boxes, hedgehog highway markers and wildlife pond ladders. We held a meeting in 2023 for those interested in having hedgehog houses and feeding stations, with a talk by Vee Harness, and to date we have given out 12 hedgehog houses. A couple of hedgehogs are regularly seen on wildlife cameras so we are hoping there will be hoglets this summer.

Villages Newsletter

We continue to publish the Elsham Leader, now in colour, but unfortunately the Low Villages Newsletter is no longer being published due to the retirement of the main designers and producers of the newspaper.

Best Kept Village

We were very grateful for the help of volunteers watering pots over summer last year, and for the volunteers at the autumn and spring litter picks. The amount of rubbish collected is definitely decreasing. The work of Cllr Horner and his wife Di produced colourful displays and we were awarded third in Best Kept Village. The scores were very close and two villages shared first place. There was special mention of the tidiness and well-cared-for nature of the village, with some excellent community planting and wildlife area at Elsham Quarry. We also installed a village herb planter for residents to cut their own herbs, installed a new bench on Front Street after the previous one was damaged, and planted a new hawthorn on the triangle at the top of Church Street to replace the conifer that was there. This year we are also entering East Midlands in Bloom, and experimenting with perennials in the tubs at the village hall to increase the sustainability of our planting. The wildflower beds on Front Street have been expanded and the seedlings are looking good. Thank you to Lewis Dodds for giving us access to the water trough for watering.

Stevenson and Julian Charity Trust Fund

The parish council continues to contribute £500 a year to this fund and to help promote its use to Elsham residents.

Current Projects

Our focus this summer will be on the East Midlands in Bloom competition, and then we can turn our attention to anything else we can do to improve the village - ideas welcome!

Finances remain stable as we continue to deliver within budget so again we have not requested an increase in the precept - a reduction in real terms.

Special events - we were very fortunate to have the local Brassed Off band at our Christmas Tree lighting event, which was well attended. Beacon lighting and a ceilidh are planned for the D-Day 80th anniversary this June.

Council members

There have currently been no changes in councillors since last May, but we are expecting our numbers to reduce by one due to a councillor moving out of the village. We thank Cllr Burton for her valuable contributions to the parish council and village life, particularly in terms of organising many fantastic events that many villagers have enjoyed, and we wish her every happiness in her new home.

Sandra van Oosterhout
Elsham Parish Council Chairman
May 2024