

## **Elsham Parish Council Annual Chairman's Report April 2026**

As always, I start the year's report by thanking everyone who has given up their time, in whatever way, to help the parish council over the last year. We have recently recruited new volunteers and look forward to working with them in the coming year. Volunteers make a big difference to what we can achieve around the village, and this is very much appreciated. Below is a summary of the main actions we have been involved in over the last 12 months. This is my last report as Chair; after 6 years of fulfilling that role I will be standing down as Chair in May but will remain on the council and continue to work with my fantastic colleagues to support Elsham and its residents.

### **Year Highlights**

#### **Nature Reserve**

As winters seem to continue getting milder, each year the first of everything is occurring a few weeks earlier than the year before. This spring has seen wonderful displays of snowdrops, violets, blackthorn blossom and cowslips – on the plateau next to the entrance on Middlegate Lane, which was cleared of trees a few years ago to let wildflowers grow, cowslips have put on a fantastic show and are definitely spreading across the area. Those in the basin are also establishing well and we are starting to see new clumps down there. Last year we installed a new bench in that location and it is a great place to sit and take in the view. The picnic table in the basin has been repaired, and fortunately no other damage has been caused in the last year. Unfortunately, the very hot and dry conditions last year did not suit the orchids or oxeye daisies and they were much less numerous than usual.

We had some trees fall in strong winds, and these were cleared by either NLC, Cllr Lilley or village residents, depending on their size.

We continue to work on collecting the last of the plastic tree protectors that were put around the trees when they were planted over 20 years ago. A team from Anglian Water came out in March for a day to help collect the last of the tubes and at the end of April, another team of volunteers from Nelipak on the industrial estate will be coming for a day to separate the collected tubes from cable ties and wooden posts and bag them up ready for recycling. Many thanks to Jane Ewen who has played a large part in the tube collecting, and to Phil Dunn for offering to take the tubes to be recycled.

#### **Play Park**

Many thanks to Cllr Mick Percy for carrying out inspections of the equipment and highlighting issues. The wet winter meant that the back part of the park was very boggy. This spring we have replaced the main post on one of the pieces of gym equipment that was rotting and will be repairing a bench. We are also looking to give the equipment a thorough clean.

#### **Highways**

The work done last spring on new road channels on Church Street and the new gullies and catch pits on Barnetby Lane was effective to begin with. Unfortunately, over the year and especially in the autumn, the gullies became blocked with leaves and debris. Despite

numerous requests, the street sweeper has not cleared them for us which has resulted in water still running down the road outside of the gullies. It seems that these will only be cleared if we go out there with shovels and do it ourselves.

Accidents have continued to occur on Barnetby Hill at the junction with Newland Hill, and we again requested NLC to look at moving the 30mph sign further up the hill, but the request was refused because the site does not fit the criteria for a 30mph zone. We are therefore liaising with Highways to see if any other measures could be introduced to help prevent these accidents.

We have also worked closely with Elsham Hall to try and resolve the issue of vehicles turning down Hall Lane to access the hall and then damaging verges as they realise they cannot get through and need to turn around. Elsham Hall have installed a new brown tourist sign on the finger post at the end of Hall Lane and we will be monitoring any difference that this makes. We thank Elsham Hall for sending out their gritter on several occasions in the winter to do smaller roads in the village that are not part of NLC's gritter route.

Elsham Golf Club lowered their car park spotlights to make them less blinding for cars passing in the direction of Wrawby, after requests from the Parish Council.

### Planning

The main planning applications in the village considered since last May have been PA/2025/643 for a data centre park next to the industrial estate, and PA/2025/1054 for a Paragraph 84 dwelling off Front Street. The data centre was granted outline planning permission, and the paragraph 84 dwelling was approved with conditions. PA/2026/130 for a detached dwelling on the orchard at the top of Front Street is under consideration.

### Crime and Neighbourhood Watch

There have been no serious incidents in the village. Our litter picks have been well attended and the environment much improved by the work of the volunteers who attend these, and also by those who go litter picking round the village on a regular basis. Big thanks to all of you. The main issues have been cars leaving the road at the Newland Hill junction, often damaging our salt bin and street sign, and lorries ignoring the weight restrictions. The photos taken by one resident led to a driver being fined, so please if you see lorries passing through and not obviously delivering, take a photo and send it to us if you can.

### Community Involvement

We are very grateful to everyone who has volunteered this year. In March 2026 a team from Anglian Water volunteered in the quarry, still collecting up the plastic tree protectors (are they breeding in there?!) and Nelipak are sending a team at the end of April to sort them ready for recycling. Andrew and I prepared a volunteering form to go out in the spring Leader and were delighted with the response – you will no doubt see the new volunteers out and about in the village. We also had a record turnout for our spring litter pick, a sign of the community pride and spirit that is still alive in Elsham despite the pressures of modern life.

### Best Kept Village/ East Midlands in Bloom

In the Best Kept Village competition, marks were very close again, and we came second, with just one mark between Elsham (198) and Low Burnham (199). The judges commented on the community planting as a real strength, and described Elsham as a most attractive and

well-cared for village. The many very impressive gardens were also noted. It was a difficult year because of the very hot and dry weather, but everybody had to cope with the same conditions.

We entered East Midlands in Bloom for the second time, hoping to improve on the silver that we were awarded last year, and we were delighted to be awarded a silver gilt. Both of these results are a reflection of the work done by our volunteers, led by Andrew and Di Horner; this coming year with our new gardening group, the load will be shared among more shoulders, but the displays we enjoy would not be possible without sustained work throughout the year, and we are very grateful for this.

Ian Bowmer has done a fantastic job for several years as our village handyman (it seems that we are forever asking him to reinstate and paint the white posts that turning vehicles keep knocking over!). Ian and his wife are looking to move house so while we will greatly miss his skills, we wish them the best in their new location.

#### 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 maintaining the village community areas with the help of our new volunteers, and improvements have already begun at the Hall Lane finger post bed and the Village Hall. Di and Andrew Horner lead this work and are extremely active in renewing displays, planting and maintaining displays, and coordinating volunteers. We owe them many thanks for the amount of time they give to this.

This year when we considered our budget, there was a £2000 overspend on what had been predicted, so after many years of not increasing the precept (which was a reduction in real terms) we had to increase the precept from £8000 to £10000 in order to continue delivering the same level of service. Our accounts are openly available on our website for anyone who wishes to look at them.

#### Council members

In May 2025 Mark Lilley and Mick Percy were co-opted onto the Parish Council. Cllr Damary Thompson and Cllr Ewen resigned in September 2025, and we thank them greatly for their work over the years, especially Jane's contribution to the play park and quarry, and Deborah's time inspecting the play park. Sue Everett was co-opted in January 2026, leaving us with one current vacancy.



Sandra van Oosterhout  
Elsham Parish Council Chairman  
April 2026