

ALDWARD AREA PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSEMBLY CHAIR'S REPORT FOR 2025/26

The Parish Council has been very active during the last year highlighting the important role it plays in the local community.

Following the public inquiry in March 2025 examining the proposal to increase the Aldwark Bridge toll fees, the Secretary of State for Transport's decision to approve the toll increase was published in August. Although this was a disappointing result, the PC initiated contact with Alex Bell, the bridge owner, to see if he'd be willing to share information on the bridge's operation (vehicle usage, income and costs), and to understand his longer-term plans for the bridge. Alex kindly attended the PC meeting in September and confirmed that he will honour the green tickets, which many regular users had previously purchased, but he has no plans to offer discounted tickets in the future. He shared his ambition to fully automate the crossing – this would remove the single largest recurring cost of staffing but is not without some significant technical challenges – at the moment we have no indication of when/if this will be implemented. Alex has since also updated the PC to confirm that the brick arches of the bridge need significant repair, and has promised to share details of this in due course.

The PC has secured £500 from the Friends of Aldwark and £496 from North Yorkshire Council's locality budget to help fund a number of repairs and improvements to the Aldwark Play Area. It's anticipated that these works will be completed in summer 2026, together with a clean of play equipment by local volunteers.

The Aldwark Arms unfortunately closed its doors and the property has recently gone on the market. We wait to see if anyone will be take it on and reopen it as a pub/restaurant.

Development works have continued at the Aldwark Manor Estate with works largely completed on the new leisure/spa facilities.

In Flawith, development works have continued slowly on the Chapel Farm site whilst the new housing site between Drover's Lodge and Broadacres has been completed.

The defibrillators in Aldwark, Flawith and Youlton continue to be maintained and are registered with Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

Following a nasty accident on the bend in Youlton, the PC has liaised with the North Yorkshire Highways team resulting in some signage improvements and the application of new SLOW road markings.

Litter picks have taken place by volunteers across the parish during the year – thanks to all who have given their time to help keep the local area looking as tidy and litter-free as possible.

The roll-out of additional broadband capacity across the parish has progressed over the past year with Quickline installing fibre in Aldwark and Flawith. Works to connect up Youlton are, we believe, in progress. The new fibre is expected to go live in summer 2026.

There have been some personnel changes on the PC during the year with the resignations of Andy Follington and Richard Padgett (thanks to their invaluable contributions). Lynette Evans has joined the Council representing Aldwark with a further co-option to fill the remaining vacancy anticipated in early May.

Finally, the PC has had meetings with Great Ouseburn and Linton-on-Ouse parish councils to get to know our neighbouring parishes and to share knowledge and learnings.

John Topliss
Chair of Aldwark Area PC
May 2026