

## **Bilbrough Parish Council - Chair's Report 2026**

It's been an eventful year for the parish, to say the least. Quite literally, plans are afoot. With proposals for a significant housing development and an application for the construction of an entire new street coming on top of the ongoing saga of The Three Hares, Bilbrough is currently - as some have termed it - 'under planning siege'. The situation surrounding the container field on Cat Lane was finally decided at the time of writing with the application refused. However, the game of planning 'whack-a-mole' may well continue as this coincides with the NYC reopening its Call for Sites for potential future development.

The outcome of every planning proposal has an impact on the village - physically, practically and aesthetically - so the Parish Council always takes care to consider each matter on its own merits while representing the best interests of the community. Although many of these issues are emotive and the official processes surrounding them can be hugely frustrating, the PC endeavours to interrogate each case with diplomacy, fact and reason.

This approach has undoubtedly served us well in the fight to save The Three Hares. Despite the pub's ultimate owners being the second-richest people in the UK (according to the Sunday Times 2025 Rich List), our community has helped to defeat the initial planning application, the subsequent appeal, and an aggressive legal attempt to overturn the pub's recent re-designation as an Asset of Community Value. As we await the decision on the second appeal (the second application being summarily dismissed by the LPA), the PC applauds everyone who has actively supported this 200-year-old village institution. Whatever the outcome, the community has shown tremendous unity in the face of corporate misrepresentation and prejudice.

On another battlefield, Cllr Davison and I met with Deputy Mayor for Policing Jo Coles back in September to discuss the escalating traffic problems in the area. Incidents on the A64 are becoming a weekly occurrence and the local roads simply cannot cope with the sudden surges in traffic as drivers take detours through the village (including HGVs which ignore the weight restriction on Back Lane). Alongside the obvious safety issues (narrow roads, blind bends, lack of pavements, etc), this is a clear argument against any proposals that seek to dismiss local traffic as a problem. Frustratingly, and despite regular requests from the PC, DM Coles' team have yet to take any action or made any contingency plans. We remain on the case but urge residents to air their concerns and report incidents to the Policing office - ideally with photos or videos - at [info@northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk](mailto:info@northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk).

Staying on the roads, residents have also been negatively affected by changes to the provision of school transport which kicked in at the start of the 2025/26 academic year. NYC's new 'nearest vs catchment' policy means that many local children are now ineligible for free transport. The PC, and particularly Cllr Paradine, has actively supported local parents in opposition to the move, but unfortunately it seems that the authorities are more interested in speculative cost-cutting than fairness and common-sense. We will continue to support local parents in this matter.

Since the PC makes every effort to maintain the character and integrity of the village and its surroundings, we were happy to reinstate the annual contribution to the upkeep of St

James' churchyard. This lapsed some years ago for reasons unknown, but will hopefully help to ensure that Bilbrough will always have its little corner of peace and tranquillity.

The church is, of course, largely run by volunteers - as is the Village Hall. Without the enthusiasm and commitment of a dedicated few, these social hubs would cease to exist - at least in any functional sense. Likewise, all parish councillors are unpaid volunteers whose motivation is purely to serve the greater good. (The clerk receives a salary as an administrator and financial officer but takes no part in decision-making.)

Although the Village Hall and Parish Council share the same website - for entirely practical reasons - it's worth clarifying that they are two separate bodies. What's more important is that the wider community recognises that parish councillors and hall trustees give their time and effort completely freely, with the sole intention of making the village a safe, attractive and sociable place to live.

On that note, on behalf of the parish I would like to thank Brian Bussell and Samantha Dalton who have recently stepped down from the VH committee after years of sterling work. As Chair, Brian has secured funding and overseen many recent improvements (not least the new kitchen), while nobody has done more than Samantha to keep the hall running on a day-to-day basis. They will be hard to replace but replace them we must. I therefore urge anyone with the village's social wellbeing at heart to become a trustee. It doesn't hurt and it really is a case of the more the merrier (and easier!). Just drop a line to the committee ([bilbroughvh@gmail.com](mailto:bilbroughvh@gmail.com)) and they'll be in touch.

Similarly, the Parish Council urgently needs new blood. The community faces a constant stream of challenges and they just keep coming. Without the PC, all actions and decisions relating to the parish would be made at the regional level by officials with little or no connection or even familiarity with the area. (Not long ago, I attended a planning committee meeting where a district councillor passed judgment on the 'character and heritage' of Bilbrough despite having never been to the village and having no idea where it was.)

Bilbrough has fantastic community spirit - the fight for the pub is proof of that alone. But the issues thrown up in the past year prove that we need to show more of the same. It's not just the pub but the whole parish that's an asset. But preserving what we've got takes work. And making it better takes even more.

It's all too easy to leave it to someone else. My message to all residents: please don't.

Elliott Noble  
May 2026