

Thirsk and Malton Conservative Association

Chairman's Report for 2022 AGM

2021 was a difficult year for the Association in many ways, and as I write this report, I believe that we are not out of the woods yet. More of which later.

This will be our first physical AGM for three years. Whilst Zoom has been a live saver in many ways, I welcome the opportunity of meeting everyone in person rather than on a screen.

It has been an interesting and challenging time since I became your Chairman in June 2021. I think all of us were deeply saddened by the untimely death of Linda Folwell, my predecessor. We did not realise how ill Linda was until it was quite late into her illness and her death in May 2021 was a personal shock to me, and I am sure others. Added to this Linda's predecessor, Martin Dales died recently. Again, a huge shock to the Association. Our condolences go to his wife Hazel for her loss.

Without doubt the biggest area of political activity over the year was the change to a unitary authority in North Yorkshire. I believe that there was a general consensus that there was a need for change, which will mean the demise of all the district authorities in the county, including Ryedale, Hambleton and Scarborough. This change has involved an enormous amount of preparation starting with over 30 candidates being approved in October and November 2021 for the election in May 2022. Following this, in January 2022, we held the members' meeting for the selection of candidates for the 15 divisions within the Thirsk and Malton parliamentary constituency. The selected candidates worked extremely hard over the many months culminating in last month's elections. We were successful in eight of the 15 seats, and very close in at least three others which in good times we would have won. Their work was not helped by the national picture of cost of living increases and an unpopular government.

The district councils mentioned earlier in my report will run in parallel with the new Unitary Authority until they cease to exist at the end of March 2023. There will still be a local presence within the "old" districts after that date, the scope and range of which is to be decided.

Fundraising during 2021 was difficult. This was due to a combination of members' reluctance to attend events due to Covid, and the national restrictions on gatherings which varied over the year, and at times were quite confusing. Hence planning events was complicated. This is now being exacerbated by the squeeze in incomes due to the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living increases.

Our membership stands at 710 and hopefully we can build on this in the coming months.

Kevin Hollinrake, our MP, has been hugely supportive of me personally and the other officers of the Association for which my thanks.

I would like additionally, to thank my fellow officers: Cllr Sue Graham (Treasurer), Cllr Keane Duncan (Deputy Chairman Political) and Cllr Claire Docwra (Deputy Chairman Fund Raising and Membership) for all their help and support of me.

Cllr Keane Duncan is stepping down at this AGM after serving for 5+ years.

My thanks go also to our President Kenelm Storey and our Vice Presidents and Trustees.

To run an association the size of Thirsk and Malton requires teamwork, and my personal thanks also go to Melanie and Gilly at 109 for their support to myself, Officers and Members.

It has been an unprecedented time and the Officers, Executive Council and staff team are continuing to work on your behalf to ensure that the Association is ready for any challenges that come our way in 2022/23.

Kind regards

Robert Hall

Chairman | Thirsk and Malton Conservative Association

Following the recent elections this May the existing branches will be changing; this is in discussion at the moment and will hopefully be in line with the 15 new North Yorkshire Council divisions.