**LYDFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

**CHAIR’S ANNUAL REPORT – 13/05/25**

The Council – I would first like to thank all councillors for their debate and support over the last twelve months. It’s been a steep learning curve for me, as chair, and I have been relying heavily upon the support of the council’s Clerk for advice and guidance, thank you John. I would also like to mention Nick Skeaping who stood down as a councillor this year and thank him on behalf of the parish for his long and devoted service, thank you Nick. Nick’s departure left a position to be filled on the council and Mr Anthony Purnell was duly co-opted, welcome Anthony, and I think I speak for all councillors when I say I look forward to ‘working’ with you.

 The last twelve months – plenty to report.

* The village car park – DNPA started charging for the car park opposite the Castle Inn from Monday 3rd February. Since the introduction of charges, the car park has been noticeably empty with drivers now parking on the village road as was predicted would happen during the consultation process. This is envisaged to become more of a problem as summer visitors arrive.
* Car Park toilets – DNPA have informed the council that they will be reopening the toilets after refurbishment, hopefully in May. Monies raised from the car parking charges will be used for maintaining and servicing them.
* Disabled Parking bay on School Road – huge concern was raised, by the public and the council, (who received no prior notification of the installation), when the disabled parking bay appeared outside a property on School Road. Having made several enquiries and explanation requests Devon Highways have made it clear that it will not be removed or relocated. The bay itself is an ‘advisory’ bay only and anyone can park in it, disabled or not.
* 20’s Plenty – we are told that the speed limit through the village is due to be reduced to 20mph within a couple of years, if funding allows, it was therefore decided not to pursue the 20’s plenty campaign.
* Affordable Housing – the council is in the process of developing a questionnaire specific to Lydford, which will be used to ascertain if there is a need for affordable housing within the parish.
* Lydford.co.uk website – a new website has been introduced, Lydford.co.uk, which replaces the old Lydford Parish Council website. The Sports Field and the Nicholls Hall also have access to the site to post events and news items. The site is still a ‘work in progress’ and will develop further in the future.
* Playground – the last twelve months has seen expensive repairs to the playground to keep it safe for use to the point where Council’s funding for such repairs has now run out. A new agreement has been negotiated with the Sports Field Committee who will take over the maintenance and repairs using a £2500 donation they have received for that sole purpose. The Parish Council will continue to insure the play equipment and pay for annual inspections by a recognised body. At some point in the near future a decision will have to be made as to whether to keep the playground facility, which would need funds to be raised in some way either through fund-raising events or through the council precept, or to lose the playground.
* Dog waste – following concerns regarding the level of dog waste not being ‘picked up’ on the Sports Field the Castle Inn kindly donated a dog waste bin. The Council and the Sports Field Committee have agreed to share the cost of having the bin emptied weekly.
* Emergency Resilience – Lydford Parish Council were encouraged to develop an Emergency Resilience plan which could be initiated in the event of a major emergency affecting the village. A plan has been developed and a volunteer Community Emergency Response Team has been formed to put the plan into operation, should it be necessary. The plan can be found on the Lydford.co.uk website. Parishioners are encouraged to read it. A second plan, ‘The Home Emergency Plan’ is also in the later stages of being introduced. This will also be available on the Lydford.co.uk website with printed copies being made available to any household in the parish that requests one.
* Lydford Community Focus Group – This new group was established, with the full backing of the Parish Council, in an attempt to bring together all sections/groups of the community to work to a common goal, ‘improving lives and the environment of parishioners. To-date we have held a few meetings and set a few objectives building upon suggested ideas from meeting attendees ranging from litter picking to a volunteer group for a maintenance day at the sports field.

Looking ahead – I would like to see,

* a decision made on the future of the playground
* more projects and initiatives supported by the Parish Council
* a Parish Council policy which formalises the council’s approach and decision making with regards to planning applications
* more parishioners attending Parish Council meetings

Steve Hulett.