**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Lydford Parish**

**Tuesday 16th May 2023, Nicholls Hall, Lydford**

1. Cllr Skeaping acting as Chair in absence of Cllr Grigg read the Chair’s report on Council activity 2022-23. The report is attached as appendix.
2. DNPA – apologies from Rob the Ranger, an update was provided by Richard Drysdale –
   1. Dartmoor Martial Scheme continues with support from Devon & Cornwall police to combat wrong-doers on moor.
   2. Backpack camping. DNPA’s appeal against the decision to prohibit open camping will take place 18.7.23. DNPA continues to encourage backpack camping.
   3. Farming – issue over payments to farmers from Rural Payments Agency (RPA). There will be a review of payments policy to ensure that there is a viable farming community going forward.
   4. Cash settlement received means that budget is 50% lower than it would have been if it had kept pace with inflation.
   5. Sponsorship from BMW to install chargers at different sites on Dartmoor.
   6. The timetable for installation of Lydford charging machine delayed until late summer 2023 if other negotiations fail.
   7. Brentor car park is in the process of being sold to Brentor Church.
3. Lydford Gorge -
4. Walks – waterfall walk reopened in March 2022 but all other walks remained closed. Plans to have them open in June but that was delayed. Now open. Tuckers Pool path not opening for this year.
5. Visitor numbers “challenging”. Member visits down, “payer” visits in line with expectations. No limit on numbers of visitors this year. Can take 80K but 100K not “doable”.
6. Closure of river path in October 2022 because of safety concerns. Emergency work carried out using hand powered winches. It has finally been reopened. Full Gorge walk now open.
7. Bookshop – still drawing large numbers, beyond expectations. Accepting unwanted books for resale.
8. Volunteering still strong within the rangers but are looking for volunteers to help in other areas, including book shop, accessibility etc. (From Village???)
9. Projects – looking for information on the closed section of railway line that runs through the area, particularly across the gorge site. Cllr Lenton L updated Simon on work of parishioners who currently live in the old station.
10. Community – Community Pass scheme has been started. (As previously outlined) 40 visits from villagers recorded since the start. Does not effect any already allowed / permitted access. Devil’s Cauldron will be closed during winter season for rock work. Good links with local primary and secondary schools.
11. Dogs on leads. Gorge insist that dogs are kept on short leads, particularly as the site is a SSSI. Matches DNP philosophy.
12. None
13. Paul Brookes felt that the existing website is no longer fit for purpose. He suggested a single website containing information from all areas of village activity.
14. Thanks from Chair were expressed for the hard work of outgoing Councillors and welcome to new Members.

**Lydford Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting – 16th May 2023**

**Chair’s Report:**

The 2022 report, compiled by our previous Chair, was completed for the meeting on 10th May 2022 and consisted of 6 headings, this year I have extended this to 11 headings, as follows:

1. Lydford Public Toilets
2. Lydford Village Car Park
3. Lydford Gorge and National Trust
4. Lydford Speed Watch and Traffic Issues
5. TORS Railway Project
6. Climate Change
7. Finance
8. Flags
9. Events and Funding
10. New Parish Council and Outgoing Councillors
11. The Future…

In addition, it was noted that there was no report for 2021 as there was no Annual Parish Meeting possible due to covid restrictions (April 2020 until May 2021). Parish Council (PC) meetings have taken place on a regular basis since COVID restrictions were eased and have taken place in the WI room.

This year’s report (2023) will consist of 9 main points:

**1. Lydford Public Toilets**

It was decided by The PC and with consultation with the Parish, that all financial and ongoing management of these facilities was financially prohibitive and should that the toilets be formally closed in February 2023. From the general comments and contributions from Parishioners it was with a heavy heart that the toilets were finally closed. The cost of managing the toilets were the largest singular regular expense covering utilities, maintenance, and cleaning. In addition, this was not helped by significant vandalism of the toilets in 2021. The toilet block was supplied with a CCTV system (kindly installed and supplied by a Parishioner) - this has now been removed and handed back to the benefactor. Despite ongoing efforts by The PC with Dartmoor National Park (DNP), The Castle Inn and St. Austell Brewery - the issue of charging and management of the toilets is that they will remain closed and not re-open.

**2. Lydford Village Car Park**

Negotiations are ongoing at present with regards to the village car park. The PC with Dartmoor National Park (DNP), The Castle Inn and St. Austell Brewery are working towards a solution that serves the parish, visitors and DNP with regards charging rates, electrical charging points (ECPs) for vehicles and overall management and maintenance of the car park. An update will be forthcoming very soon on this topic.

**3. Lydford Gorge National Trust**

The PC is pleased to report a developing and strong working relationship with The National Trust (NT) at Lydford Gorge. The PC receives regular updates from local NT representatives. In addition, this strong working relationship is healthy for our Parish and Parishioners giving updates on free entry processes for Parishioners and dealing with any related and Lydford Gorge issues.

**4. Lydford Speed Watch and Traffic Issues**

The Speed Watch (SW) Parish Programme had a very slow start, but is now going with momentum to deal with the ever-present concerns from Parishioners about speeding through all areas of the Parish. The PC now have a small number of Speed Watch volunteers, which will need to motivated and managed by a nominated Parish Councillor to ensure that the Speed Watch group moves forward and does not faulter as evidence needs to be gathered in order to the trial of local 20mph limit, which as a Parish is well supported. The Speed Watch group needs to be proactive like the Mary Tavy Speed Watch group to effect change. Therefore, it is recommended that the Councillor that manages this programme shares ideas with Mary Tavy. Speeding issues within Lydford village continues to be a concern and a priority for Parishioners.

**5. TORS Railway Project**

Once again, following the re-establishment of the Okehampton-Exeter service, reopening the line to Tavistock via Lydford is being discussed openly. Tavistock-Okehampton Reopening Scheme (TORS) is seeking Government funding to examine the case to reopen the line. The previous PC Chair held an online meeting with the TORS Director and no significant progress has yet been made but the PC will keep a close eye on developments and report any updates.

**6. Climate Change**

The installation of ECPs is ongoing and is explained in item 2 above.

**7. Budget and Finance**

In 2022 it was decided that the precept was to be raised to maintain a stable financial position in the face of increasing costs. The council is still able to consider reasonable requests for grants to support local initiatives, but these must be in-line with Parish wishes and supported by the PC. LPC accounts remain in good order and are well managed. We have however, had some large bills recently with regard to the untilities for the toilets, which included an alleged water leak.

**8. Lydford Flags**

It was agreed by LPC thus year, in consultation with Parishioners, that both the Union Jack and Devonshire County Flag would be flow in unison at The Village Hall. The flags need to be purchased and a Coucillor needs to take responsibility for the upkeep and flying of any flags on the appropriate national occasions (see LPC policy on Flag flying in the village agreed and reviewed in 2023).

**9.** **Events and Funding**

The PC have supplied funds to numerous events in the village such as HM Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee celebrations, Beating the Bounds 2023 and HM King Charles III Coronation and will continue to do so subject to funds and the PC’s support.

**10. New Parish Council and Outgoing Councillors**

Welcome to our new Councillors.

Thanks and appreciation to our previous Councilors: Steve, Asa, Ruth, Chris and Brian.

**11. The Future and LPC**

Lydford is a politically diverse village with proactive members of The Green Party, Independants, Labour and Conservatives. This is, therefore, important to continue to represent our Parishioners and be independent, non-biased and open and transparent being ever cautious of any and all threats to Lydford village, its culture, history and natural beauty. Therefore, planning, fundraising and all other activities must be thoroughly examined in order to support our parishioners, but at the same time protecting Lydford village and its environs.

**12. Final Thoughts**

I would like to share my sincere gratitude to my fellow Councillors for all their hard work and to our Parish Clerk of course, whose efforts, efficiency and support is appreciated by all on the PC.

The outgoing Councillors, many having served for two or more terms, will be missed greatly especially for their skills, knowledge and experience. I wish them all well in their future endevours and personally thank them all for their professionalism, healthy debate and good humour!

Councillor Neil R. Grigg

Current Chair

Lydford Parish Council