

## Annual Chairman's Report Lydford Parish Council: a personal view without prejudice.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all my fellow councillors and our expert clerk for all they have done for the parish over the last year. Thanks too go to the rare but but in some cases loyal attendance of members of the public. We have also had excellent help from our borough councillors over the year.

We have had consistent up-dates from the National Trust over the situation at the gorge with the on-going erosion that has forced the closure of the lower river walk in our unique local feature. Councillors understand the mixture of economics and climate change developments involved but are not fully behind the decision taken and the Trust has always tried to balance custodianship of a fragile natural environment with the needs of a tourist attraction. Parishioners who care, especially those involved in the hospitality sector should follow developments on this issue with close attention.

The biggest issue facing Lydford Village discussed endlessly in meetings is the forthcoming car park charges for our CP opposite the Castle Inn. All parties effected by the decision taken by the Dartmoor National Park over this have fully engaged with the process. Opposition to the scheme has been strong and well represented by the PC but to no avail. The DNP are the owners of the land and have resurfaced it ready for charges to begin. It is a disgrace that Central Government have squeezed the country's National Parks financially forcing the authorities to look at other revenue streams. Lydford CP is a special case being important for the villagers and not just a car park for tourists like, say, Post Bridge and Bellever. Congestion will occur and this may force a change of heart but I doubt it. The DNP is vulnerable to losing support over this and other issues some of which have affected Lydford. Often the DNP turn down planning we as a council approve of and conversely accept others we have rejected. They have also failed to help lead any initiative we have had as a council to build small one-off properties linked to what is called 'affordable' for our village sighting their policy of places like Mary Tavy and Okehampton bearing the brunt of new builds. We have never asked for large scale development but parishioners should look at the ever increasing average age of the residents and where our young people will live in the future. There is a general lack of passion for any new houses but arguably that is short sighted.

We have in past years tried to keep the public lavatories open but short of charging residents through their rate payments for a facility they are unlikely to use the uncivilised decision by West Devon to close them will remain the case in the foreseeable future.

There have been many cases where the council have needed to request Highways to take action on road issues and as you will find on the nation network we have our share of pot holes and advise residents to report issues directly to Devon Highways.

We have engaged with our wonderful local school over the year and with the Church, Nichols Hall and the sports field. It should be noted that councillors are working on a new Lydford website news of which will appear in our clerk's monthly reports and the Parish Magazine.

The over riding issues with any form of local government is lack of money and residents should not expect every service of old to be performed by the bodies that once did them. Your village is your concern and if you want it litter free and all the drains cleared of your leaves then take action. We as a council are always willing to help or facilitate action and would love to see more parishioners turn up at our monthly meetings to see what we do and help us improve our commitment and your lot.