

LAPFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Notes of the Meeting

The Lapford Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Victory Hall, Lapford, Crediton, EX17 6PZ on Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 7.00pm.

Attendees: Cllrs. Jill Down (LPC Chairman), Sue Briant-Evans, Bill Graham, Steven Fletcher, Roy Andrews, Stacey Lumsdon, Ian Wilkie, Steve Keable (District Cllr) & 10 Members of the public.

Apologies: County Cllr. Margaret Squires apologised as she was attending another meeting.

1. Acceptance of notes of meeting held on 30 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting on 30 May 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were duly signed as such.

2. Chairman's Annual Report 2023/24

At the start of this parish year, an election was held in the village, which gave everyone the opportunity to vote and elect those candidates that they felt could best represent the needs of the village. This resulted in some new councillors and subsequently officers.

As a 'first time' chairman, I have to say, it's been quite a year! I can safely say, we are a very proactive council and have a new lease of life!

Below are just a few of our achievements.

- The Kings Coronation event
- The big help out day, tidying and weeding
- Supported the revamp of the posts on the village green, and rebuilding of the wall
- Volunteers planted the Flower container at Barris, and tubs at the top of the village, and The Ark took on the War Memorial planters
- Orchard Centre painted, and some internal works undertaken
- Some village seats painted, by councillors and volunteers
- The Parish Council set up a facebook page as another means of communication
- A councillor is available at every village market
- Autumn Volunteer litter pick and weeding day
- Preparation underway to start a Neighbourhood plan
- Supported the Fibre Broadband Scheme
- Undertook Councillor training/refresher training
- New finger posts for the road signs
- Arrangements for Christmas Tree
- 30 mph limit moved (took over 20 years)
- Encouraged the completion of the Housing Survey
- Additional Road Warden volunteers appointed
- New grit bins
- New and repaired dog waste/litter bins
- Undertook CPR training

During the year, DCC sadly withdrew the mobile library service, despite many appeals to keep it running, it was just not cost effective. We are very fortunate in that The Ark has an excellent selection of books for our use.

I cannot write this report without mentioning the biggest cause of complaints.....POTHOLE! Believe me, we are constantly in contact with the relevant Highways team at DCC.....us and most of Devon. The winter weather has not helped our case, however, we are assured that the bridge will be dealt with shortly.

Looking to the future, Lapford will be starting the preparations for the launch of the Neighbourhood plan, which is a document compiled using information gathered from residents. It will take many months to do, and will involve everyones ideas, so look out for more information, in the meantime, please think about what you would like to see in the village. Your views are vital.

There is an enormous amount of research, planning and time required to do this, so if you have any skills that you feel could help, please do get in touch with an of the councillors, we really do need your help.

Councillors are all volunteers, who have the village and its residents at the forefront of their decisions and actions.....however, we cannot do it all

Thank you to each and everyone of you, councillors and volunteers who have helped in some way, no matter how big or small. We really do appreciate it!

Julie Down.

3. **Reports from the Committees & Groups**

Lapford Congregational Church

Peter Lacey reported on behalf of the Congregational Church.

Services

We hold our weekly service at 11.00am. each Sunday morning except if there is a joint Churches Together service where all three churches meet at one of the three venues. We generally have about twenty attendees plus some children. Twice a month we hold an All Age service with craft activities in which the adults also enjoy. On Sunday June 27th there is an All Age service which will be led by the youth. We have a monthly Messy Church after school for the children which is well attended.

Refurbishment

We are currently refurbishing our Sunday School room which is very damp and, with advice, we are taking action to reduce this.

Windows

The windows are disintegrating and the cost to replace them is approximately £40,000. We have been fundraising for this and have replace the Vestry window. The window fund currently stands at £4,304.51. We have bee given a grant of £9,500 for the Congregational Federation but have to present invoices to draw this down. To raise further funds we are opening up a scheme where members of the public can 'Sponsor a Window' more details to be published.

Finance

We are struggling financially with outgoings outstripping income and are having to use our savings account which is now very low. A serious problem we have suffered has been with EDF with whom the church was on a very high business tariff and EDF did not always adjust their bills in line with the readings we sent them and have been very poor in communicating the growing problem with us. They suddenly took around £4,000 from our account by direct debit, which fortunately we were able to recover under the direct debit guarantee scheme. The ombudsman reduced the bill for us as EDF were claiming for more years than they were

allowed, they also said we should be put on a lower tariff and that EDF had to set up a payment plan with us to clear the debt. The email and contact numbers EDF had given us either did not respond or were unable to help. We appealed to Rt. Hon. Mel Stride for help and he gave us an email address to try and we have been successful in getting a lower tariff and agree a payment plan. However, since then EDF sent a threatening letter to property in Park Meadow Close saying we owed money. I am now being sent threatening texts by a debt collection agency and a threatening recovery letter has been sent by them to an address in Eastington Lane with no connection to the church. We have tried to make contact with EDF via the email address given us by Mel Stride but are now receiving no responses from it, so we suspect it was set up to resolve our initial problem and is no longer manned! It would appear that the resolution of our problem has not been communicated within their organisation. What next??

Lapford Parish Church

Bill Graham stated that the church continues hold its services every Sunday, starting 30 minutes after the bells ring. There is still a strong congregation but as most know the vicar suddenly died during the course of the year and there is not yet an appointed replacement. His wife had been church warden for the last five years and had just stepped down and they were looking to manage the involved work of running the church building which is grade 1 listed.

He clarified that there would be work going on sometime within the next 6 to 8 weeks on the extension and this will involve mechanical diggers being in the churchyard, but not graves would be disturbed as a result.

Lapford Archive

Audrey reported on the progress of the team over the last twelve months, as follows:

In May 2023, just over a year after we started in 2022, the small team continue to sort through boxes and bags in the Orchard Centre on Tuesday mornings 10.00 to 13.00.

These items and pieces of information had been preserved to create a village archive. This is what we have now. It is a continuous process that will possibly never stop, but hopefully will slow down.

With the aim of increasing local interest in the archive and local history, we supported a talk by Todd Gray in November 2023.

At a meeting of the Over 60s in February the group found items that are held in the archive interesting. We will be something similar later in 2024.

At the end of May there is a gathering of school friends from the early 1950's. Then in early June another group do the same. There are so many wonderful stories to be shared before they are forgotten.

Before the end of May 2024, Brian Carpenter (Community Learning Officer) from South West Heritage will visit with the aim to give advice on our progress.

We will continue to work on creating a record of memories in sound, photographs and print of the community of Lapford for future generations.

We have the very small (broom) cupboard in the Orchard Centre. It is full of shelves with only just enough room to turn around. It is a limited space. We obviously would like a larger area but the layout of the Orchard Centre as it is makes it difficult. I believe that Steve Fletcher will be working on this.

Our aim would be to provide space for people to come for research, alongside us as we catalogue.

I thank the parish council for their recent speedy change of locks.

WE have suggested that a large letterbox may be positioned in the Orchard Centre for people to pop in their archive items. May this be considered by the parish council, please?

Lapford Youth Club

Steve Keable introduced himself as chairman of the Youth Club Management Committee. The club was meeting every Thursday and Friday although there were problems because of getting the staffing numbers required. There is a need for volunteers to come along for just a set time each month to help the Youth Club continue to thrive. The finances of the club are buoyant and it is definitely 'washing its face'.

Lapford Youth and Playing Field Trust (LYPFT)

Roy Andrews outlined the fund-raising undertaking for the trust such as Bingo, Car Boot sales a Vintage Rally all of which raised £925 in the year. The money will be used partly to maintain the field with the remainder being put towards new facilities.

Steve Keable reported on the LYPFT work.

1. MDDC play equipment has been taken away, with those costs funded by MDDC and without draw on S106.
2. MDDC are identifying lease or freehold arrangements with Lapford PC.
3. There is no restrictive covenant on MDDC playground.
4. Assume Lapford PC take control of the MDDC playground then. Lapford PC will need to make a decision as to how it will operate the facility.

Likely decisions for the future

1. Lapford to decide if they are to operate the (former) MDDC playground or to enter into a management agreement with another body.
2. LYPFT to decide what type of an agreement they would be willing to enter with the PC. Note: Agreed Dog Policy – minimum 'On a Lead'.
3. LYPFT should prepare a plan of how the (former) MDDC playground would be incorporated into the over-all playing field.
4. LYPFT should undertake consultations with children and the community to determine what plan should be put in place.
5. LYPFT needs to obtain 3 prices for whatever works are required.
6. At that point it will be possible to apply for S106 money and to use this as a match for say a National Lottery Grant Application.

Lapford Poppy Appeal

It has been my privilege to be Lapford Poppy Appeal Organiser for six years now, taking over from Edwin Passmore to continue the long standing tradition of support for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal over many years. The totals raised are humbling and are testimony to all the wonderful collectors and counters and all those who have kindly hosted collecting tins over the years.

Should anyone wish to join the merry band of volunteer collectors, or perhaps order a wreath, my contact details are listed in the Lapford Lookout each month.

Caroline Noon

Lapford Poppy Appeal Organiser

Lapford Church Green Trustees

Bill Graham explained that this charity consisted of the parish councillors as trustees who have met regularly throughout the year to do the following:

- The following works have been carried out by a mixture of volunteers and paid contractors: the renewal & repair of the oak post & rail fencing; the restoration of the bank between the Green & Lower Town Place; & the repair of the Ambrosia bench by the churchyard wall. Huge thanks are due to the hard work of the previous Chair of Trustees, those who contributed time & materials and raised or contributed

funds. The work has been completed to a very high standard so enhancing the centre of the village.

- Two new pedestrian gates have been installed allowing easy access between Lower Town Place, the Green, and the ARK.
- Work is now under way to repair the EVJ bench, to clean the War Memorial and to complete the restoration of the Melissa Lake shelter, the latter work being undertaken by her family.
- Sadly, the Chestnut tree by the Melissa Lake shelter which has been causing concern for some time is now clearly dead despite the Trustees having followed professional advice on its management. Conservation Area permission will now be sought to remove it on safety grounds.
- The Green has been well used by the public, especially as an outside space for those visiting the ARK and making use of the picnic benches. The Annual ACT of Remembrance was held there in November; it will be central to the D-Day commemoration event on 6th June.
- Thank you to the grass cutting contractor for keeping the space so neat & tidy.
- On the administration side of things, a new bank account has been opened and the Charity Commission details & returns brought up to date.

Lapford Celebrations Committee

The Celebrations Committee is a working party of the Parish Council. Its membership consists of four Parish Councillors and two members of the public.

In the past two years it has overseen the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in the village, the events marking the Coronation of King Charles and in the current year it is concerned with the Commemoration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the D-Day Landings event on June 6th and the Parish Big Help Out and Volunteering Day on June 8th. Publicity for and information about both events have been published in recent Lapford Lookouts.

Looking to the Autumn and the inaugural Mid Devon Walking Festival plans are in place for a tea in the ARK on September 14th, the re-publishing of the Lapford Walks leaflet – currently being revised by the Walking Group, and the encouragement of getting out and about to enjoy walks around the village.

Lapford Revel Committee

The Revel committee meets at least once a month throughout the year to plan events for the annual Revel celebrations at the beginning of July.

The workload is huge – from deciding what the theme will be, this year it is Fantastical Lapford; to arranging insurance, booking bands, sorting out food, contacting and organising volunteers, managing the legal and financial side of things and arranging publicity.

In common with other organisations in the village this Committee is stretched to the limit due to a lack of regular members. It is extremely grateful for, and the Revel could not function, without the splendid group of people who come forward every year to put up tents, man the bar, serve food etc. but committee members are badly needed so that the organising work can be more evenly spread. There will be an opportunity to sign up at the Volunteering Event in the Victory Hall on Saturday June 8th.

Heart of Lapford Development (HOLD)

Lapford Project 2000 (LP2K)

Lapford Project 2000 continues to thrive as a well run and cohesive group.

Our current areas of work can be summarised as follows:

1. The Lapford Lookout. Our village magazine continues to be published every month and is very well received. We are now in our 28th year of publication and continue to welcome contributions on a wide variety of topics to maintain variety and interest. We also know our readers appreciate feedback from events we have publicised. Many volunteer hours go into producing and delivering the Lapford Lookout each month which is very much appreciated. Contributions from the Parish Council are always welcome.
2. The Village Archive. Work is now progressing apace. We have a dedicated group of volunteers who meet regularly in the Orchard Centre to carry out their work. Use of this space is essential for the future of the Village Archive.
3. We provide ideas, help, support and materials for the regular displays in The ARK.
4. LP2K also arranges Lapford's wonderful poppy displays for Remembrance each year.
5. We take the lead on providing and maintaining the village notice boards, now relocated to the Victory Hall. Whilst happy to do this, it should be noted that maintenance of this facility costs approximately £100 p.a.
6. We organise village improvements and events on an ad hoc basis, as and when a need or opportunity arises, for example Dr. Todd Gray's excellent presentation on Devon's Bench Ends.

Lapford Emergency Action Plan (LEAP)

The committee consists of five parish Councillors and has met almost monthly over the last twelve months.

Its remit includes emergency planning for the village. This includes the appointment of a Snow Warden and winter safety measures including the filling up of grit bins for the public to use on roads and pavements in icy conditions. More recently the Parish Council, through the Committee, has joined the Devon County Council voluntary Road Warden scheme to enable local people to tackle some of the road safety defects in and around the village.

A stock of Emergency equipment is held in the village, mainly at the Orchard Centre.

During the year the committee has:

- Met with the Neighbourhood Highways Officer & County & District Councillors to discuss local highways problems. It is actively seeking another meeting.
- Through the Snow Warden arranged for stocks of grit to be delivered for winter use and the grit bins to be topped up.
- Arranged for the purchase and location of four additional grit bins for the village.
- Pressured DCC Highways through the Parish Council, phone calls and emails to address the dire state of the main access road into the village, the lack of fencing by the river bridge and the danger of water running across the A377 amongst other matters.
- Arranged for all Parish Councillors to receive basic First Aid and Defibrillator training.
- Attended the Devon Community Resilience conference.
- Undertaken revision of the Parish Emergency plan.
- Placed public information notices in the Lapford Lookout.

An ongoing project is to install a second public defibrillator at the Spar shop to serve the lower part of the village.

Lapford Neighbourhood Plan

Rob Martin explained that meetings were being held by councillors to sort out how the workload was going to be managed and how the publicity for this would be done. A Lapford Housing Needs Survey has been undertaken by the District Council and the parish council has a copy of the draft report. The preparation of the Plan would enable individuals in the community to put forward their ideas for the future of Lapford and that the final document has real weight in planning terms with its policies being considered on the same level as the Mid Devon Local Plan policies.

Volunteers from outside of the parish council were absolutely essential to the success of the Neighbourhood Plan and there will be publicity to encourage all to take part.

4. Financial Report 2023/24

The Clerk summarised the financial position as it stood at 31st March 2024.

The final accounts for the parish council are attached to these minutes, below is a brief explanation of the main points for the year.

The receipts in the 2023/24 financial year amounted to £28,532, of which £25,000 was precept. Included in this was VAT of £2,174 refunded by HMRC with the remainder being grants and donations of various sorts.

The payments made during the year showed a reduction from that of the previous year. The total amount paid out was £27,742, which was £790 less than the receipts, which resulted in the overall Reserves reducing from £30,205 to £30,995 some details of which are given below.

Reserves

The effect of this on the reserves was that the Earmarked Reserves were reduced by £4,229, and the General Reserve increased by £6,904, from £20,919 to £25,937. This level of General Reserve is within the guidance given of maintaining up to 100% of the precept level.

There continue to be a number of uncertainties in the coming year(s) including the level of inflation, for which having a healthy General Reserve balance is prudent, particularly as it is due embark upon the Lapford Neighbourhood Plan.

5. 'Have Your Say'

Alex Gater explained that the Mill had been flooded a number of times, not from the river, but by water running down the highway and not going into drains. The damage was many thousands of pounds both last year and again this year. He had notified DCC and had been told that the drains had been cleared when it was apparent that they had not, with the result that his property had been flooded a number of times. He had entered into a civil case against DCC for the cost of the avoidable damage which would not have happened with proper highway drainage maintenance.

Meeting ended 7.50pm

Lapford Parish Council

Financial report for Lapford Annual Parish Electors' Meeting

Saturday 10th May 2025

The summary below details the Receipts and Payments made by Lapford Parish Council in the year from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

Lapford Parish Council Receipts & Payments 2024/2025		
Receipts		£
	Precept	26,000
	Grants & Donations	10,424
	Other Income	481
	VAT Reclaimed	1,122
Total Receipts		38,027
Payments		
	Administration	2,856
	Clerk & Councillors	8,447
	Subscriptions	437
	Car Park	0
	Orchard Centre	2,746
	Defibrillators	1,757
	Community Website	236
	Village Maintenance	2,482
	Bus Shelter	4,429
	Public Rights of Way	1,277
	Emergency Planning	0
	Grants & Donations	4,354
	Neighbourhood Plan	3,184
	Loan Repayments	4,499
	VAT Spent	2,932
Total Payments		39,636
Total Net Payments		1,609

Reserves	£	
Public Rights of Way	523	24/25 P3 Grant Unspent
Village Events	471	Reserved to fund initial VE Day Expenditure
Emergency Committee	2,166	Covid Grant reserved for future emergencies
Neighbourhood Plan	2,755	Half of DCT Grant
Toddlers Play Equipment	6,851	LPC use of reserves to add to Section 106
Electricity Reserve	824	EDF Billing error in 2024/25
General Reserve	15,795	To support new issues in 2025/26 onwards
Total Balance in Hand	29,385	The amount in the bank account

The **Receipts** for the year of £38,027 (£28,532 in 23/24) included £26,000 of precept and £10,424 of grants, (of which £5,510 was for the DCT Neighbourhood Plan work, £2,214 towards the bus shelter and £1,800 for P3 PROW Grant) and £1,122 in reclaimed VAT.

Payments during the year increased over last year from £27,442 to £39,636 with the main additional items being the bus shelter (£4,429), new defibrillator (£1,511), replacement signpost fingers (£1,048), DCT Consultant Work (£2,755), Additional VAT (£2,074)

The overall level of **Reserves** fell between the years by £1,609, but more of this total has been reserved for the outstanding commitments at the end of the year, those being the final payment for the DCT work (£2,755) and the amount found from reserves towards the Toddler Play equipment (£6,851). The result is that the **General Reserve** left to provide a back-stop to the precept has reduced from £25,937 to £15,795, which is still at a sufficient level, the guidance for which is between 50 and 100% of the precept.

Rob Martin

9 May 2025