

**121<sup>ST</sup> LUDDINGTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2015**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Thank you all for coming and our redoubtable Parish Clerk, John Madge for reading out this Report.

May I first of all apologise for not being able to attend tonight? This week was the only one available for me to take off as leave, so it was an unfortunate clash.

This last year was to say the least an interesting one in the annals of the Parish.

On the planning front we considered 8 applications. These ranged from tree works, conversions and extensions, through to retention of buildings as holiday lets. The Council objected to 1 application and had no comment on 7 (after due consideration).

We also passed comment on the Drayton Manor Solar Farm application (having been notified as a neighbouring Parish Council).

Other matters that were considered and worked on over the year included the sharing and training in use of a speed gun to help control traffic speeds, lobbying for a faster internet connection, a review of the Parish Plan, the purchase of the Village Green, work on the lock area, the acquisition, installation of a defibrillator amongst others. The Council also considered and prepared for its integration with Old Stratford and Drayton Parish Council with effect from this coming year.

One welcome 'result' was the long sought installation of the bus shelter at Dodwell.

Arguably the three matters that dominated the minds of both the residents and Parish Council this last year were:

1. The Sandfields Farm proposal to make permanent the current temporary accommodation at Manor Farm and to that end Sandfields' Derek Wilkinson gave a presentation to the PC on 20<sup>th</sup> January ahead of the Farm's application for consent (*John – I would have asked your*

*confirmation at this point that the PC can only officially comment after the planning application has been submitted)*

2. Lightsource Solar Farm – this proposal both arose and abated very quickly. At the Parish Council meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 for which the subject was an agenda item, two members of the public attended. The present situation is that Lightsource's original scheme has been withdrawn, but that it is considered likely that they will re-apply (post General Election).
3. Veterinary Centre – the Parish Council has been concerned about the future of this site for some time and indeed has tried to engage with the owner, DEFRA, on the matter but without success (*John, could you describe that we wrote to them, had no reply, so that given the latest circumstances perhaps the District and or County Councillors could take this lack of engagement up with DEFRA on our behalf? This suggestion of course being put to the members of the PC for consideration*).  
In late January a potential developer, contacted the Parish Council with a view to having a pre-acquisition, pre-planning presentation regarding the possible development of the site to include 50/60 houses. As you will all know, that developer and their funder withdrew about 2 weeks ago, so we are now back to awaiting what proposals other prospective purchasers (and we believe that there are other bidders) may put forward.

Given the occurrences of the past year, we can expect the next to be equally 'interesting'! We of course welcome Old Stratford and Drayton to the newly enlarged Parish and sincerely wish and hope residents both participate in 'Parish Life' as well as the Parish Council. We will do all we can to help.

There is little doubt that the matters of the Solar Farm (which is likely to occupy between 25 and 250 acres of land) and the Veterinary Centre will arise again and what I would ask (and implore) residents of the Parish to do is **use** the many times fought to protect and long established democratic process that we have in order to voice their opinions. It is not perfect, but it is the best system that either we or for that matter any other country has. To set up unelected and non-constitutional groups that claim to speak for 'everyone' is in my view little more than 'mob rule', where the loudest and 'biggest' get their way – which is great until you do not like the mob; where do you go then for protection? Yes, the very democratic institutions that you set up to undermine. This is of course just a personal observation!

To conclude, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, Alison Hegarty, Gerald Jones and Dave Heyworth for all their hard work and efforts over the last year. To those thanks please add Councillor Raymond Thorpe who stood down after 2 ½ years. In addition, my special thanks go to County Councillor Horner and District Councillor Vaudry for their enduring support of the Parish Council, their invaluable advice and detailed and informative reports. Due to boundary changes, Councillor Vaudry will no longer serve the Parish and we wish him well for the future. It also cannot go unrecorded that one of my predecessors and a great supporter of Luddington, Tony Twyman passed away last year. Tony always wanted the best for the Parish and the village. He wanted to conserve and improve all that was and is good about this place. He was always very correct in how he approached matters, let us hope that we in the future can want and do the same.

All that remains is to thank John again for reading out this report and for his continuing professional and diligent work. We should not as a Council underestimate how lucky we are to have him with us (*John - you'd better underline that I **definitely** wrote this bit!*)

Thank you and have a good evening.