

# CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

It has been another busy and productive year for Mepal Parish Council, and I am pleased to reflect on the progress we have made together for the benefit of our village. As ever, our focus remains on maintaining and improving the spaces and facilities that matter most to residents, while continuing to plan responsibly for the future.

## **Pride of Place Grant and the new Glade at the bottom of the Recreation Field**

The projects that resulted from the decision to apply for Pride of Place grants continue to make a visible difference for the village. The continued development of the Glade remains our focus, and over the past year we have worked to enhance it further so that it can be enjoyed by all ages. The installation of additional benches will provide more opportunities for residents to sit, meet and appreciate the surroundings. These improvements are about more than appearance; they are about creating welcoming, well-cared-for spaces that bring people together.

The areas around the snowdrops and tulips are being carefully managed (they started poking their heads out in February), and this adds colour and character to what used to be a barren area in Mepal. Thanks go to the volunteers who help keep these looking their best throughout the season, and Fiona in particular for her drive and enthusiasm. Their efforts are very much appreciated and make a real difference to how our village is perceived by both residents and visitors. The number of bird, bat and hedgehog boxes have all been increased with the remaining grant money and we have a mini project to install information signs around the field for a nature trail that is nearing completion.

## **Play Park Improvements**

The Play Park has seen significant enhancement this year, building on previous improvements and responding to feedback from families and young people. The addition of a basketball hoop and ping pong table next to the play area has broadened the appeal of the space, encouraging more active use by older children and teenagers as well as younger ones. We have also installed a new swing set, further strengthening the play offer for younger families.

We are grateful for the support received from Mick George Ltd, whose contribution through their grant award has helped make these improvements possible. Investment in our recreational spaces is an investment in the wellbeing of our community, and it is encouraging to see the park being used regularly and positively.

In addition, a new bench for the park is scheduled to be installed shortly. This will provide additional seating for parents, grandparents and carers, and will complement the other enhancements made over the past year. We are confident this will further improve the comfort and accessibility of the space.

## **Village Infrastructure Improvements**

Small changes can often have a meaningful impact. This year we have supported the installation of a new litter bin on Witcham Road to address concerns about waste in that area. Keeping our village clean and tidy remains a shared responsibility, and we hope this addition will encourage responsible disposal and help maintain the pleasant environment we all value.

On the Village Green, tree works have been undertaken to maintain the health of the trees and ensure there are no safety concerns and to maintain the Green as a welcoming, usable space. Sensible management of these natural assets is essential if we are to preserve them for future generations. The Village Green continues to host events and informal gatherings, and we are pleased to see it being used as a central hub for village life.

## **Pavilion and Community Use**

The Council remains committed to exploring opportunities to increase the use of the Pavilion, located on the Recreation Field. We continue to promote it as a venue available for hire, whether for community groups, private events or recreational activities. Increasing its use not only brings people together but also helps ensure the sustainability of the facility through hire income.

We welcome ideas from residents about how the pavilion can best serve the community. The aim is to ensure it remains a valuable and well-used asset for Mepal.

## **Addressing Speeding – LHI Application**

Concerns about speeding remain a consistent topic of discussion, and the Council continues to take this matter seriously, however one or two voices and opinions are not sufficient and is why we have asked residents to fill in a survey to judge the actual interest level. This year we have submitted a Local Highways Improvement (LHI) application for two additional MVAS (Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs). These signs are proven to raise driver awareness and encourage compliance with speed limits.

If successful, the additional MVAS units will allow us to rotate signs across more locations within the village, helping to address areas of particular concern. While enforcement sits outside the direct control of the Parish Council, we remain committed to using the tools available to us to promote safer driving conditions for all road users. To take action we need data and we also need community support.

## **New Councillors**

We are pleased to welcome our three new Councillors to the Parish Council this year. Their willingness to step forward and contribute their time and energy to village matters is greatly appreciated. A healthy council relies on a range of perspectives and skills, and we look forward to working together in the year ahead. We still have vacancies for two councillors that we are keen to fill. Having a full council means a lighter workload for all councillors and also results in a wider view on any issues. This is a healthier position for any Parish Council.

I would like to thank all existing Councillors for their continued commitment, as well as our Clerk for her professionalism and support and our Maintenance Manager for his efforts to keep Mepal in good shape. The effective running of the Council depends on teamwork and dedication behind the scenes.

## **Looking Ahead**

As we move into the coming year, our priorities remain clear: maintaining and improving village facilities, supporting community activities, addressing residents' concerns, and managing public funds responsibly. Progress may sometimes be incremental, but each improvement – whether a bench, a bin, a play feature or a safety initiative – contributes to the overall quality of life in Mepal.

Finally, I would like to thank residents for their ongoing engagement, feedback and support. A Parish Council works best when it listens and when it reflects the needs and aspirations of its community. Together, we will continue to ensure that Mepal remains a village we are proud to call home.



Lorna Williams  
Chairman of Mepal Parish Council  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2026