

The Ludham Village Car Scheme and 'Looking After Ludham'.

Annual Report for 2020.

1. The Village Car Scheme. This scheme was established by the committee of Churches Together in Ludham in 2013 to take villagers without their own transport to medical appointments of all kinds and to the local hospitals. It has been fortunate to have the services as volunteers of an average of 30 drivers and a small group which collects and delivers prescriptions.

The scheme is not free, being subsidised through grants from the Parish Council, the two churches and other grants from a variety of sources. The volunteer drivers are paid a mileage fee at a statutory rate. It is administered by a small admin team with a co-ordinator who receives requests for transport, finds a volunteer driver and tasks them with the 'mission'. Over the years, the scheme has carried out around 400 such 'missions' annually. The subsidy and the small running costs of the scheme amount to between £800 and £1,000 each year.

During 2020, the scheme has had to face considerable difficulties. With the onset of the Covid epidemic and the first lockdown, it lost many of its drivers, who are mostly older retired villagers. An appeal for younger helpers brought in many new volunteers, available partly due to the Government's furlough scheme. Despite all the difficulties of social distancing, need for masks and sanitising, the scheme continued to operate all through the past year.

With the wonderful success of the Government's vaccination roll out, the situation has eased and the scheme is now operating on a reasonably normal basis. Since last March, it has carried out 550 'missions'; recently, these have included taking villagers to receive their jabs at one or other of the several local vaccination stations.

2. The Looking After Ludham Scheme. The Covid lockdown brought a new task - the need to provide food for villagers in isolation. With the ready co-operation of the Parish Council and the support of the local District Councillor, a call for helpers brought in a further large group of volunteers. This enabled the extension of the car scheme to undertake this new work.

Since the March lockdown, the scheme has received orders, purchased and delivered no less than 400 consignments of food. During the year, many surplus government - supplied food parcels were collected and re-allocated to where they were more needed. Funds were found to provide meals for some Ludham school children during the Spring half term. Thanks to further cash grants from two sources, funds were provided to help the village school to keep its foodbox well stocked and to provide a hot Christmas dinner for every villager living on their own. Twice during the past year, each resident of the Old Vicarage Care Home has been sent a flowering pot plant with a greeting card to say that they are not forgotten, together with a gift for the hard working staff, who have kept the home free of the Covid disease.

3. The Looking After Ludham Scheme now has only one or two clients and, in

view of the continuing success of the vaccination programme, it may be discontinued from the date of Step 3 of the Government Road Map in June this year. This will of course be dependent on the continued reduction in the infection rate.

4. Has it all been worth-while? One villager described the Ludham Schemes as 'a Godsend'. After successfully completing 950 'missions', the Churches Together in Ludham committee was more than happy with that!

K.J.G.

30 April 2021.