



January 2025 Ward Report – Old Gore Ward

Parishes of: Brampton Abbots with Sollers Hope and Yatton, Brockhampton with Much Fawley, Foy (East), Foy (West), How Caple, Kings Caple, Much Marcle, Upton Bishop and Woolhope

From your local County Councillor: Barry Durkin

Dear Residents

Happy New Year!

Hope you have all survived the festivities as we are now approaching half way through this decade.

I am pleased to report that Herefordshire Council's finance team has won the National Public Finance Award for excellence in Governance, Reporting and Assurance, and at a time of national problems with public sector auditing we were the first council in England to have our accounts signed off by external auditors. While it does not fill potholes or prevent flooding it provides assurance that the management of the finances of the council are among the best in the country.

The Government published its provisional settlement for local government and as suspected there are clear steers of money away from rural councils to urban ones. There is a promise that there will be more funding for social care but given the impacts of their own announcements of rises in employer national insurance and the lower of the threshold at which you start NI contributions every penny will be needed to meet those pressures in our care home and home care contacts.

Another announcement with potentially huge implications for us is the Governments reform of local government council structures. Effectively abolishing County Councils and District Councils and creating Unitary councils of a minimum of 500,000 population. While we are already a Unitary council we have a population of 190,000 and would be considered not viable by this government. Worcestershire population is 600K and Shropshire with Telford and the Wrekin 560,000, so it is difficult to see against a firm welsh border what could happen to us. It is early days but they are likely by withholding capital funding to force all councils into their agenda.

If I might be of assistances please contact me.

Barry

Corporate Parenting Plan

The refreshed corporate parenting strategy for 2025-27 was presented to Cabinet on Thursday. Children and young people who have care-experience can face additional challenges that others their age may not. The strategy has been informed by the direct involvement of care experienced children and young people and sets out the specific ways in which we will support them to achieve good and better outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

As corporate parents we all have an important role to play in ensuring the young people in our care are as prepared as possible for adult life. I am still looking for more people to put themselves forward to be a corporate parenting ambassador and offer a young person in care the type of advice and guidance they could otherwise find difficult to access. If you or someone you know could offer support please contact me and I will pass on your information to the team.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/21412/corporate-parenting-strategy>

Re-surfacing of Herefordshire Council Roads

Additional resurfacing works continue to be carried out across the county, with over 17km of new and improved road surface having been laid so far.

Throughout 2024/25, the council is investing £8 million into resurfacing on the county's highway network, with £5 million being committed to A and B roads and a further £3



million for C and unclassified roads. The next phase, taking place throughout November and December, will focus on C and U roads, before shifting back to A and B routes in the New Year.

Lengths of road have been identified for resurfacing works following detailed and comprehensive surface and structural condition surveys. These surveys help us to objectively prioritise where we need to invest across our highway network.

We are waiting to become informed of the final funding from Government in addition to our council investment in roads. Notwithstanding, we are continuing to invest in our roads.

[Additional resurfacing works continue to deliver improved roads – Herefordshire Council](#)

Climate Emergency



The Deputy Leader of the council Elissa Swingehurst arranged a special local schools Climate Summit at Plough Lane (picture opposite) with seven schools. Building on the recent Cop29 conference in Baku,

Students from seven local schools took on the role of negotiating teams during the United Nations climate change conference (COP29) at a youth climate summit organised and hosted by Herefordshire Council.

Azerbaijan they discussed issues on a global and local level leaving inspired and better informed about the issues.

[Local schools take over climate negotiations in mock COP29 conference](#)

Second River Conference

Following last year's extremely successful inaugural Rivers Conference, Herefordshire Council hosted the event for the second time at the Shell Store in Hereford on Thursday 21 November. The aim of the conference is to build a shared understanding of the challenges of protecting our rivers, and to showcase the local initiatives taking place to address them. She also hosted a successful 2nd rivers conference with a focus on arable farming and healthy Hsoils. It was attended by farmers, environmentalists and wider sectors including agronomy, food supply chain and academics. Cllr Swinglehurst has also meet with the new Minister at Environment Emma Hardy and the counterpart in wales Huw Irranca Davies to continue to press for urgent action to be taken to ensure the restoration of our local rivers remains a top priority.

[Rivers Conference highlights local initiatives and challenges in environmentally sustainable farming – Herefordshire Council](#)

Celebrating Herefordshire Largest Employment Site - Skylon Park



Representatives of business, former Chairs and the Skylon Park project team at an event to showcase the transformation of the 110 acre site on the south east boundary of the city into one of the region`s most dynamic business locations.

Following the success of getting the access road built from the A49 into Rotherwas I

chaired the first Board which began the project to turn the 110 acre site which was 80% owned by Herefordshire Council into a business park.

Pictured are the Council conservative leader Jonathan Lester with the three Chairs that succeeded the current chairman of the council, Charles Ingelby, Bill Jackson, Andrew Manning Cox and our Chief officer Mark Pearce.

In the background the former munitions factory building (in 1915 the largest single span building in Europe) now transformed into the Shell Store – Herefordshire first business incubation and network centre.

Investment included building internal roads, removing contamination, installing utilities to make the various plots development ready and give businesses confidence to buy and build. Following the building of the Access road the site gained enterprise zone status from the then government in 2012 releasing support and funding. Skylon Park is today home to over 100 businesses with 1,500 jobs and ambitions to create another 1,100 more; seen development of 650,000 square feet of commercial space with more planned.

Leominster Improvements

The enhancements to the main roads in the heart of the town include attractive road surfacing, improved paving, wider pavements and raised tables at the major junctions making it safer and easier for pedestrians.

The heritage appearance has been maintained through the use of natural stone and the reuse of materials where possible.

The improvements to the public spaces complement the renovation work on a number of shopfronts and buildings in the town including the restoration of facades to reflect the original detail and character of key historic buildings.

The improvements were made possible thanks to the Leominster High Street Heritage Action Zone project – a multi-million pound regeneration initiative funded by Historic England and Herefordshire Council in partnership with Leominster Town Council. This major investment in the market town has transformed buildings, restored local historic character and created more attractive and engaging public spaces, helping to make the town a more vibrant place to live, work and visit.

[High Street Heritage Action Zone – Herefordshire Council](#)

Community Protection

Our Council's Community Protection Team continue to crackdown on fly-tipping in the county. Their role is so essential in keeping our communities safe as well as protecting the environment for all residents. This work serves a vital role in deterring for those intent on illegally disposing of waste. The number of fly tipping enquiries passed to the council since

January 2024, stands at 234 plus an additional 109 littering enquiries and complaints leading to 4 convictions through the courts.

Littering Prosecution

A Herefordshire man has been prosecuted for littering following a dramatic altercation in Ross-on-Wye, thanks to footage from a Civil Enforcement Officer's bodycam.

[Body-worn cameras helping to tackle inappropriate behaviour](#)

Trading Standards enforcement activity saw 23,860 illegal cigarettes and 18kg of illegal hand rolling tobacco seized. Over 100 advisory visits to vape retailers in Herefordshire were undertaken, resulting in 776 illegal vapes seized. The team completed two separate under-age test purchasing operations; this led to 1 criminal prosecution being taken and concluded.

Council Awards

The Environmental Health and Crematorium teams are to be congratulated on being finalists at the prestigious *Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)* Performance Networks Awards 2024, recognising excellence in public services. You can find out more in the article below.

Proposed Devolution

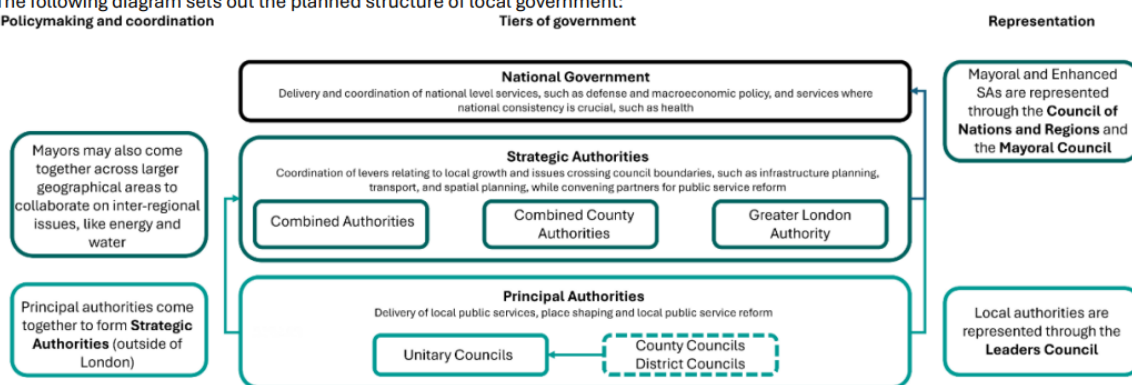
The council this morning had a briefing relating to devolution of authorities, as it relates to Herefordshire. The Government is currently, in England, proposing for devolution for each council authorities based on numbers of populations (500,000) and those current being tiered and that are not operating effectively, into unitary authorities. These authorities would have a Mayor, who may also have oversight of the police, fire services, and health authorities. However, we are in very early stages and information provision from Government is yet to be fully provided

The Government will also fundamentally reform the local audit system.

- The Government will pursue an ambition to realign public authority boundaries, so that over time, public services are delivered over the same areas as Strategic Authority boundaries.
- The Government's long-term aim is for public service boundaries – including those of police, probation, fire and health services – and those of Strategic Authorities, to align.

Planned Structure for Local Government

The following diagram sets out the planned structure of local government:



What happens next

- The White Paper will be brought forward into Parliament and enacted (date TBC.)
- The government has set out its **priority programme for devolution (DPP)** – this is seeking interest from areas who are willing to progress devolution at an accelerated pace. **DPP has two tracks.**
- **First track:** expressions of interest for Devolution Priority Programme are due by 10 January – this is for those areas who want to postpone elections and who will have Mayoral Elections in 2026.
- Government will be asking other councils for interim plans for reorganisation by March, and for full proposals by May 2025.
- Whilst this activity is running these areas will be completing Local Government reorganisation (LGR) proposals.
- **Second track** – this is for those areas who want to go through LGR to unlock devolution within a new geography.

Herefordshire next steps

- We will continue to share information and learning as we receive it to develop our thinking and strategy.
- We will establish a cross-party Devolution Deal Working Group to develop and fine tune the Herefordshire strategy and work programme.
- We will continue to engage with public sector partners, educational institutions, community and voluntary sector organisations and local businesses to broaden and deepen our thinking.

- We will continue our engagement with Government Officials and with council network colleagues to observe, learn and challenge all with the intention of arriving at the best outcome for Herefordshire.
- We will engage with our neighbouring Local Authorities to develop options for an Strategic Mayoral Authority (SMA) which is in the best interest of the people of Herefordshire.

Police and Crime Commissioner – Local Communities Plan

Building on the investment and progress that has already been made, PCC John Champion has now finalised and published his West Mercia Safer Communities Plan. This plan sets out his commitments for policing, over the next four years, with a continued focus on what matters most to you, as residents of the West Mercia area.

The four priorities are:

- Cutting crime – targeting the concerns, and crime types, that matter most to communities, including anti-social behaviour
- Policing with the community – more visible and accessible policing resulting in improved public confidence and satisfaction
- Supporting victims and witnesses – ensuring victims feel supported throughout the criminal justice journey and are regularly updated, and criminals are brought to justice
- Maximising resources and value for money – identifying efficiencies and smarter ways of working without compromising on delivering a quality service

Police and Crime Commissioner John Champion said: “The setting of my police and crime



plan, which ultimately establishes the local priorities for West Mercia Police, is an important milestone in my commissionership”. “My new plan is a chance to re-focus our efforts to ensure communities are safe and feel safe. My plan will enhance partnership working across the

three counties in order to deliver those improvements for our communities. I am committed to making good the investment that has been made so far, and the progress we have achieved around cutting crime. This plan will build on this progress. “I continue to be relentless in my drive to cut crime and bring offenders to justice, with communities feeling the benefits.”

[Police and Crime Plan - West Mercia Police Crime Commissioner](#)

National Planning Policy Framework – NPPF changes

The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in response to the [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the Planning system](#)

[consultation](#) on 12 December 2024 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

This revised framework replaces the previous Nation Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012, revised in July 2018, updated in February 2012, revised in July 2021, updated in September 2023 and revised in December 2023. The effect has been that the Housing Land Supply in Herefordshire is now below the required government level. An additional effect is that each NDP is potentially to be affected with regard to validity in planning terms.

[Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#)

The [National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK](#) is also available.

Tree Health – Ash Die Back

Works are under way to fell and replace diseased Ash trees in Herefordshire, in accordance with the council's Ash Dieback Action Plan.

[Works to address tree health begin](#)

Register to join an online focus group

We're inviting you to have your say on pharmacy services in Herefordshire

Register your interest in having your say on policing in your community – a key priority within PCC John Campion's new police and crime plan – by signing up to an online focus group in January.

Hosted by the PCC, it will be your opportunity to voice your views on police visibility in your community, your experiences of contact with the force, the accessibility of police stations and much more.

Taking place on Tuesday 14 January at 11am and Thursday 23 January at 6.30pm, feedback at the sessions will be used to shape a formal meeting with the Chief Constable in February.

You will have received my email following the government's publication of its English Devolution White Paper [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#). The headline measures include a reorganisation of local government which would see the end of two-tier district councils, and the establishment of regional strategic authorities and elected mayors. We expect further updates this week and in the New Year, and are arranging an all-member briefing to discuss what this means for Herefordshire during week commencing 6 January.

[Shape the future of Herefordshire's Pharmacy Services](#)

Our Local Community Support Officers



Sign up to police alerts, you can choose which areas you want to hear about and what activity is taking place in that area. You'll also hear about positive police action, good news stories and be able to play an active part in helping us with our public appeals.

<https://link.edgepilot.com/s/bb21d405/UARq0VNajkqv1vLf0zKSJQ?u=http://www.neighbourhoodmatters.co.uk/>

Our Local Community Support Officers

Kirsten Kysow 07773 034152 and Simon Hall 0796302401

Report a crime Police 101 Ext 61216

Barry

Mobile – [07792 882054](tel:07792882054) (not text delivery)

Email – barry.durkin@herefordshire.gov.uk

Local Emergency Numbers

PLEASE report potholes and concerns



Report problems on the road –

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road

Check on progress of a defect

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/pothole-road-defect-progress-map

Report a serious pothole, flooded road or highway obstruction -
Balfour Beatty Living Places: [01432 261800](tel:01432261800)

Footpaths issues –

PROW - PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk

Tel. - [01432 383550](tel:01432383550)

Flooding: emergency contact details – please share with your networks

Report a flooded road or highway obstruction- Balfour Beatty Living Places: [01432 2618000](tel:014322618000)
By letting us know where and what happened, especially if it hasn't been reported, we and our partners can use the information which may help reduce the future impacts of flooding.

Environment Agency: 0800 80 70 60 (24-hours) or visit www.gov.uk/report-an-environmental-incident

Flood alerts: Floodline 0345 988 1188. Sign up online at www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings to get Flood Warnings from the Environment Agency by phone, email or text message. If you live by a river or stream, keep a watch on current and expected water levels.

Has your property been affected by flooding? – Please share with your networks

Welsh Water: [0800 052 0130](tel:08000520130) (Water emergencies) or [0800 085 3968](tel:08000853968) (Sewer emergencies) or visit www.contact.dwrcymru.com/

Severn Trent water: [0800 783 4444](tel:08007834444) www.stwater.co.uk/in-my-area/check-my-area/

Household incidents contact details – please share with your networks

Power cut: Call 105 or visit www.powercut105.com

BT phone line issues: www.downdetector.co.uk/status/bt-british-telecom

Gas leak: 0800 111 999 or visit www.wwutilities.co.uk/services/smell-gas

Welsh Water: [0800 052 0130](tel:08000520130) (Water emergencies) or [0800 085 3968](tel:08000853968) (Sewer emergencies) or visit www.contact.dwrcymru.com/

The Citizens Advice Bureau Online at advice@citizensadviceherefordshire.org.uk for initial contact by email. Please also give a contact phone number in case we need to contact you for more information.

Council tax reduction or exemption

You can get money off your Council Tax bill, or even pay nothing, in certain circumstances. A discount or exemption depends on your current situation and circumstances, but does not take account of income or savings. If you are on a low income, you may also be able to get help to pay your bill through Council Tax Reduction. We will need to assess your financial and other circumstances to see what help you qualify for.

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200146/council_tax/39/council_tax_reduction

Ukraine relief - Local teams continues to organise supplies - details can be found on

<https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/ukraine>

<https://www.facebook.com/drivingsupplioustoukraine/>

Community needs contact details – please share with your networks

Talk Community

Email: Talkcommunitycovidresponse@herefordshire.gov.uk

Telephone: [01432 260027](tel:01432260027)

Potholes, Defects, and dog poo reporting, blocked gullies, etc. online

If you have a general service request, i.e. if you want to report a pothole etc., please use the link above, or call us, rather than emailing your steward. Using the link or the phone number ensures that the enquiry is dealt with promptly and efficiently. Locality Stewards do not have the resource to be able to deal with service requests via email although of course they are happy to provide general guidance and support to you through email. As always please continue to make use and encourage the use of established reporting methods for any highways defect; online, or using the telephone app – for potholes, dog poo - Telephone customer services on [01432 261 800](tel:01432261800).

Please note that Herefordshire Council strongly encourages Balfour Beatty to promote all service requests and queries should be logged via the HC website at Herefordshire Council website - also download the pothole App to help report potholes as you see them.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/maintenance/potholes>

[https://link.edgepilot.com/s/e3b2b34e/ttjzBlvIfEewR-](https://link.edgepilot.com/s/e3b2b34e/ttjzBlvIfEewR-39NN73dA?u=https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole)

[39NN73dA?u=https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole](https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole)

<https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole> - or

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/190/report_problems_on_the_road

Please use the website or call the customer services call handling team. This will help ensure that everything is logged in to the operating system known as CONFIRM where it can be responded to in a timely way.

Report fly tippers

If you spot someone fly-tipping

- ⊙ Make a note of any vehicle used, including model, colour and registration number. If it is safe to do so without being seen, take a photograph or video of the activity
- ⊙ Note the fly tippers' clothes, and distinguishing features. If you can hear the fly tippers, take note of anything which was said along with the speakers' accents
- ⊙ Make a note of what they dumped, the location, weather conditions and how far away you were at the time;
- ⊙ You may report fly tipping on an app on the website and available for download.

Please send us this information by using the [report fly tipping form](#).

Footpaths and Public Rights of Way

For any PROW (Public Rights of Way) maps or problems, you can report these via the following link on the Herefordshire Council's website: [Report a public right of way problem | Herefordshire](#)

The highways maintenance plan – which sets out the council's system of road inspection, maintenance and repairs, including timescales:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5210/highway_maintenance_plan_october_2016.pdf

Litter picking

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14134/community_litter_pick_toolkit.pdf

For information on current and future planned roadworks by utility companies

www.roadworks.org

Please do follow BBLP on Twitter for up to date information about road closures, ongoing work etc., and [@HfdsStreets](#) and if you need help to set that up please let me know.

If you wish to make a claim as a result of damage to your vehicle

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/206/highway_claimspleaseuse

Did you know...?

Parishes Councils have their own inbox for emails which are monitored by teams in the office to ensure cover at all times. If you have an emergency to report please use [01432 261800](#) as this is answered 24/7.

To identify road numbers, or to see if publicly maintained or to view Public Rights of Way:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200136/travel_and_transport/716/highways_and_public_rights_of_way_map

You can follow our Twitter feed [@HfdsStreets](#) for [24/7](#) updates for all things highways; or, log on to <https://roadworks.org> to see any live traffic incidents as well as current and planned road closures, diversions, traffic restrictions and roadworks

Toolkits:

Community commissioning

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18820/community_commissioning_model_toolkit.pdf

Traffic Regulation Orders

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2891/application_toolkit_for_traffic_regulation_orders.pdf

Speed Indicator Devices - SIDs

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1859/speed_indicator_device_toolkit.pdf