



March 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 belated St David's day - Dydd Gwyl Dewi Hapus

March itself is a transitional month, going from winter to spring and the long, wet winter is now behind us - hopefully! March, as other popular folklore say, masquerade as long-range weather forecast - it seems to be coming in like a lamb and hopefully it will not follow the old country saying of going out like a lion.

As usual I draw my report from many sources to enable a wider coverage of issues to be provided.

This is the time of year when the council confirms the Council tax bill following the February council setting. Your bill as the council is the tax collector, so to speak, will incorporate the Council charge, West Mercia Police, Fire service and Parish precepts. Last month the council set its budget with support across all the political groups and only one councillor abstained. The council tax includes the continuation of support to parish councils for lengthsman work and public rights of way, with no increase in car parking charges. Unfortunately it had to be levied at 4.99% as the government removed our rural services grant of £7.1m and we had to increase this year's tax by more than we had originally planned. Please see an HC report concerning this issue [Herefordshire Council highlights critical funding disparity in recent local government finance settlement – Herefordshire Council](#)

It is also became apparent that the increase in National Insurance is a larger issue than first thought with impacts on care contracts and for the Fire service an extra unfunded burden of £295,000 as a result of retained firefighters now required to pay NI.

Following the cessation by a bus company from providing their service in Herefordshire, it was good to see that the bus company Sargeants have picked up the bus contracts that Lugg Valley motors pulled out of. It highlights the problems we have in rural areas that when a contractor pulls out we have fewer options and alternatives than urban areas.

As ever if I can be of any help please don't hesitate to contact

Avian Flu has returned - RESTRICTIONS

On Sunday 16 February 2025 measures were enhanced in the county when mandatory housing,



which was already in place in other parts of the country, was extended to cover Herefordshire.

All bird keepers in Herefordshire must keep their birds housed to protect them from bird flu. This applies to pet birds, commercial flocks and just a few birds in a backyard flock.

Avian influenza circulates naturally in wild birds and when they migrate to the UK from mainland Europe over the winter they can spread the disease to poultry and other captive birds.

The Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) with mandatory biosecurity measures is in force across all of England meaning it is a legal requirement for all bird

keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures.

Last week there was a confirmed case at Fownhope between Hereford and Ross.

Devolution Update

The Council are continuing to develop our thinking around what Devolution will mean in Herefordshire, The Leader and Chief Executive, along with key directors, have been proactively engaging with central government to understand the potential impact on, and opportunities for, Herefordshire. We're awaiting further announcements to help shape and inform our planning.

Our neighbours Worcestershire and Gloucestershire county councils need to undergo a programme of Local Government Reorganisation before they will be in a position to participate further in discussion around what a potential strategic mayoral authority footprint involving Herefordshire may look like. We will use this time to participate in regional and national working groups and networks to ensure that Herefordshire remains ahead. We will continue to share information and developments with you as we receive them. We will update the Council web page and arrange for the update to be shared with Parish Councils.

We have been clear in our messaging to Central Government from the outset and our position remains that any devolution deal must be in line with our vision of 'Deliver the best for Herefordshire in everything we do.' Any devolution deal must also support and enable us to retain our identity and integrity as a council. We will not be held back by the extended timescales to which we were originally working as a result of Local Government Reorganisation and we will work with the government to get the investment decisions Herefordshire needs in order to deliver against our vision.

Summary

- Devolution presents no immediate urgency for Herefordshire.

- We await further announcements and will continue to proactively engage with Central Government and Devolution Networks.
- We will join further discussions around shaping a Strategic Mayoral Authority when the opportunity opens up to us.
- We will continue to build our relationships with neighbouring authorities.
- We will keep Parish Councils updated as things progress.

The Crown Court returns to Hereford

The new Crown Court in Hereford was opened last week and will see in the first week of March the first jury trials taking place in Herefordshire for several years since the closure of the Shirehall building courts.



The new Court has been created out of two of the old magistrates courts with the installation of a jury box and repositioning of the secure dock, with direct access to the cells, and using the existing bench platform with the second court turned into the jury room.

The Justice centre which is just off the Commercial road junction in Bath street was built and opened in 2001 with originally four magistrates courts but today only two courts remain for adult, family and

youth courts due to the apparent decline in crime and the removal of remand hearings from Herefordshire. Conversions of other spaces at the centre has created two further smaller courts for tribunals and district judges hearings.

Above: the new secure dock



While the lay out of the courts remain very traditional the use of modern technology has change the operational aspects of proceedings. TV Screens can be used to show evidence, CCTV, underage witnesses, and in non-trial cases defendants on remand can appear from their prison rather than be transported to court.

In the picture next to the dock you can see a folding screen which is used to prevent the defendant seeing a witness when giving their

evidence if deemed a requirement. Adult and Crown courts are open to the public but there is understandably limited space - Family and Youth courts are not open to the public.

Above: the Judge's bench at the new crown court

Many residents have and will be invited to serve on juries which is an important part of our ancient, open and fair legal process, it is very difficult to get out of severing as a juror – at best you can arrange an alternative date.

It is important to see the return of the Crown Court to Hereford to ensure that local justice at that level is re-established and the backlog of Crown Court cases can be addressed.

New Fire Station for Hereford



The contract for the new Hereford Fire station has been signed and the contractors, Speller Metcalfe Ltd, who recently built the new Redditch Fire Station will commence construction this month of the temporary fire station in Mortimer Road, Hereford. Once the temporary Fire Station is complete, in around June 2025, the current staff and vehicles will move across and demolition of the existing Fire Station in St Owen Street

will commence.

The build programme on the existing site has an overall duration of approximately 85 weeks, and we should see the new Fire Station completed in early 2027. This marks a circa £14m investment by the Fire Authority into Hereford City and will provide a new, modern, and efficient Fire Station for Herefordshire. The new building will also have accommodation for the district staff and have capacity to be used by all the Service and support recruitment, Prevention and Protection activities. As a lead member of the fire authority I have been involved over the last ten years to get a rebuild of our main county station and hopefully will see it completed before any regional Mayor takes over control of our local services.

In addition to this work commencing, the tender process is being reviewed for the new Fire station in Leominster on the Police Station site which will see a first-class training facility, not only for the North Herefordshire stations, but for the whole Service. This will complete our training strategy and give us our fifth hot fire training facility in the Service across Herefordshire and Worcestershire and complete the geographic spread of facilities so that every Fire Station is within around thirty minutes travel time to a bespoke firehouse and training facility.

Have Your Say on Fire and Rescue Services in Herefordshire & Worcestershire

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is reviewing its Community Risk



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFRS
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Management Plan for 2025-2030 and wants to hear from you!

This plan helps to identify fire and rescue risks in our communities and outlines how HWFRS will tackle them through prevention, protection, and response strategies. Your feedback

is essential in shaping these priorities for the next five years and to help make our communities safer. Take a few minutes to have your say before 7th April 2025 by completing the [online questionnaire](#).

Youth Employment Hub



A new hub offering education, employment and training information for young people aged 16-24 years was opened in Hereford last month. The Youth Employment Hub (YEH) aims to upskill, enable and empower young people, building their confidence and experience, supporting them through an important stage of development and aiming to give them future security.

The hub is situated at 57-59 Bluecoat school street in Hereford and is a partnership between the Council and the Department of Work and Pensions.

Government's huge increase in future housebuilding targets

Far reaching national planning reforms published in December 2024 prompted a halt to work on the current Herefordshire Local Plan whilst an extensive review of strategic planning was undertaken, along with an assessment of how best to progress with plan preparation. Despite the council providing extensive feedback on the consultation last September, none of these views were taken into consideration. Amongst the changes set out in the government's reforms was the introduction of new mandatory housing targets. The figure that Herefordshire must plan for is 27,260 new homes over a 20-year period, compared with the 16,100 previously provided for in the present Local Plan. a 70% increase. Please read article: [What the Government's huge increase in future housebuilding targets mean for plan-making in Herefordshire – Herefordshire Council](#)

Museum Service grant success

Museum Service is delighted to announce two new grant awards. These will support museum-led environment-themed activities that are part of wider national and international campaigns. [Grant successes for Herefordshire Museum Service](#)

Grants available to support local communities

Herefordshire Council is offering grants of £15,000 to £250,000 to voluntary and community organisations to create or improve multi-purpose spaces that will benefit local. Please read article: [Grants available to support local communities](#)

Consider adopting a child?

Adoption is a life fulfilling opportunity to provide a home for a child who needs the care, support, love and encouragement that can only be offered through a permanent home. Please visit the website: Please visit this site: [Have you ever thought about adopting a child?](#)

Take back your life this No Smoking Day (12th March)

It's never too late to quit smoking. Even if you've tried quitting before, give it another go this No



Smoking Day. Giving up smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health and on average, quitting could save you around £2,338 each year!

There's no need to go it alone - Herefordshire's Healthy Lifestyles Team offer personal stop smoking support tailored to meet your individual needs (the good news, is it's all free too). Read about support

to stop smoking on the [Talk Community Directory](#), or find your local [Healthy Lifestyle Drop in Session on the Talk Community Directory](#).

Support for unpaid carers on a low income

As part of the Household Support Fund, financial support is available to unpaid carers in



Herefordshire, who are struggling with the cost of living. If you, or someone you know, provides over 35 hours of unpaid care each week, you could be eligible for a one-off payment of £300. The Household Support Fund is funded by UK Government.

Read more about the eligibility criteria, and how to apply on the [Herefordshire](#)

[Council website](#).

Age UK Wyvern Community Information Sessions – New dates added!

This March Age UK Wyvern, in partnership with Talk Community are out and about across the



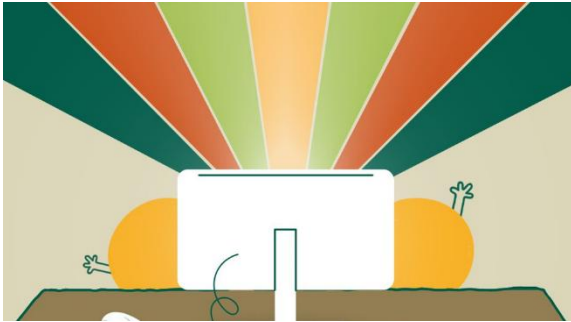
county, delivering free information sessions. The sessions are designed to offer information and signposting, to improve and sustain financial wellbeing, with information and advice on energy efficiency and keeping warm.

Pensioners are invited to attend a local session for a friendly chat and to pick up an information

pack filled with helpful resources. Coming up next week, there are sessions in Holme Lacy (10th March), Tupsley (12th March) and Pembridge (15th March). Visit the [Talk Community Directory](#) to find out more about the where and when.

Talk Community has a new Web Address – Update your Bookmarks!

We have some exciting news! Talk Community has a new online home – our website has changed



from .org to .co.uk. Everything you love about Talk Community remains the same – from local events and wellbeing support to useful resources for individuals, businesses, and community groups. The only difference? A fresh new web address!

Please update your bookmarks and help us spread the word. We're still here to connect, support, and

inspire communities across Herefordshire. You can now find us at: www.talkcommunity.co.uk

Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme

Herefordshire Council has launched a Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme to help voluntary and community groups to transform and improve existing and unused buildings for community benefit. Grants between 15k and 250K are available to fund renovations, new facilities and essential improvements.

Community enforcement

The council inspection and enforcement teams remain active throughout the council, including working with other agencies – police, fire service to keep the county safe. Indeed, I am quite soon to go out again with one of our trading standards team looking to inspect vape shops which have illegal vapes and/or selling to under age young people. I last attended three locations, at both ends of the county, last autumn and found their professionalism and dedication to safeguarding our young people admirable. Recently, a multi group of public agencies carried out an operation at four locations and arrested nine people found illegally living and working in the county. Those arrested are now being processed by immigration as further investigations continue into illegal workers linked to organised crime gangs in our county.

Highways

I am sad to tell you that Neil James our Locality Steward is now on long term sick leave as his knee operation is not healing as was hoped. Currently, Lee Fishwick, who is the LS Team Leader is taking up the reins until Neil returns. He has already been active in Upton Bishop with a highways flooding issue.

It is hoped that Lee will be making contact with parish clerks and parish councillors and will be keen to establish relationships with the parish lengthsman. He confirmed to me the importance of reporting potholes and highway concerns particularly on our unclassified roads as they are only inspected once a year.

The emerging capital programme for 2025/26 will be the continuation of the additional funding of £10M to deal with the A, B, and U & C roads as in previous years. We have had a considerable amount of resurfacing, and surface dressing completed and more to come. Whilst the current council does invest much more money in highways than the previous administration it still has to cover over 2,000 miles c. (3300 km) of highways. Last year we resurfaced or surface dressed circa 11 miles (17 km) of our highways due to the administration's additional investment – more to come.

Balfour have written to all parish councils to ask if they are happy for two verge cutting during the summer – approx. end of May and end of August. Depending on how much growth we get in the season the verges on our minor highways can get very restricted and concerns of highway safety. For safety reasons certain areas of verges will not be populated with some species of wild flowers. I would encourage that where there is a desire to add more metres of wild flowers on verges are desired that your parish council is approached so that they may enter into discussion with our highways contractors have asked if there are certain lengths away from junctions, corners and entrances that residents would like to leave but they do need to be locally overseen.

Herefordshire young farmers learning hedge laying skills

Last month Herefordshire YFC held their annual hedging competition where twenty members under



26 years old demonstrated their skills in competitions to lay hedges as their forefathers have done for generations.

The young farmers have held the competition for nearly 80 years providing the skills necessary to enhance our landscape, ecology and provide stockproof fences to the fields. Hedging is very hard work and has to be done during the winter and it is a shame with all the increased public interest in the environment that this work of our young

people is not better appreciated and valued.

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.edgепilot.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



If I can be of any assistance please contact me

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: Flood line 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.wvutilities.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/drivingsuppliestoukraine/>

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-39NN73dA?u=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_claims please use

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](tel:01432261800) 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