



January 2026 Ward Report – Old Gore Ward

Parishes of: Brampton Abbotts 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

Firstly I hope you have had a Happy New Year, a peaceful Christmas and survived the seasonal activities. It was certainly a delight to go through our villages to see the various Christmas lights and be cheered up; it is also a tribute again to the strong community atmosphere that exists in this part of the wonderful county of Herefordshire, which is something we should never take for granted.

Traditionally, Christmas is usually a season for giving but I'm afraid there were no gifts from the Government - m they just do not understand the countryside.

Herefordshire Council has been awarded Gold status by the Defence Employer recognition scheme for our outstanding support through policies, employment practices, community engagement, and proactive advocacy for the Armed Forces Covenant. The Council's Gold status is for a further five years, until December 2030, reflecting its ongoing dedication to serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and military families, mentoring and staff networks, flexible working for veterans and families of those in active service

Major programmes to support the Armed Forces community include support for reservists, adult cadets, proactive recruitment policies for service leavers, flexible working and paid leave for spouses of those in active services, and employing dedicated Armed Forces Covenant Officer, and a cross-organisation approach to ensure the Armed Forces community has good access to public services.

Professor Sir Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England visited last month with his aim was to understand health and wellbeing in rural areas and small towns – and how Herefordshire is working to support population health. He is pictured to the left at Ledbury Food Bank



Sir Chris' findings will help inform his forthcoming CMO's Annual Report, which this year will be themed around health in rural areas and small towns. England's CMOs have published an annual report for over 150 years and they are considered to be a cornerstone of public health assessment and policy advice to the government. Previous reports have focused on topics such as

health in cities, in an ageing society, coastal communities and the impacts of air pollution on health.

He met with strategic health and care leaders at the council's offices in Plough Lane and then visited Ledbury and meet with various community and voluntary groups to heard about rural issues.

Our Council chairman has received an OBE in the King's New Year Honour list. He informs that he is humbled and honoured and to thank all for the many kind messages received.

In this month's update I report on the County's Transport Plan, identify local highways for requested inclusion in 2026/27 capital programme, as well as usual update on Highways, recent events plus useful contacts lists.

Should you need to contact me please feel free.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "B" and "a" being particularly prominent.

Mobile – [07792 882054](tel:07792882054)

Email – barry.durkin@herefordshire.gov.uk

Council Finances

On the 19th December, the Government announced its “fairer funding settlement” for the next three years for local government in England. It assumes authorities will increase council tax including social care levy by 4.99% and following last year’s abolition of the Rural Service Grant – worth £7 million to us we are again anticipating a challenging settlement.

As I have highlighted during recent months, we are facing significant financial pressures. The growing demand for adult social care and support for special educational needs, combined with the previous loss of the £7 million Rural Delivery Grant, and rising costs of delivering services to such a large and dispersed rural community, has already hit our budgets. The government’s proposed “Fair Funding” review could further reduce support for counties like ours.

The combination of central government’s new ‘fairer funding approach, rising service demands, and the growing costs of delivering services across a large rural county, will make an impact on our budget for 2026/27 and beyond.

The government made some last-minute changes to the review earlier last Autumn which disproportionately benefit councils in London and metropolitan boroughs at the expense of all county and rural areas, with hundreds of millions of more funding to be diverted from rural to urban areas over the next three years; they are favouring urban and town deprivation over countryside. These last-minute changes, implemented against the available evidence, raises serious questions over whether ministers are unfairly cherry picking which councils benefit from extra funding. Demonstrated by a disappointing Local Government Three year Finance Settlement which has been announced. just before Christmas.

I shall expand on the detail in next month’s report as the written decision came to this local authority, as usual, our finance team have been working out the implications and measures to be taken over Christmas and into the new year. Also, February is the budget setting month and we will have understood the overall implications by then. All I know at present is that the Government has reduced our grant by multi tens of millions, which means we need to make some difficult decisions on budgets.

Local Transport Plan 2025-2041

A Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a statutory document required by Government for local authorities to set out their strategic priorities for an area on Transport issues. The cornerstone of this document, which has been signed off by Herefordshire Council 34 votes to 14 votes, is the delivery of a Western Bypass around Hereford.



With the Government now requiring 27,500 houses to be built in a similar period to the LTP in our County and dealing with the existing and increased congestion of our principal service city a bypass would seem most sensible.

The map on the left outlines the proposed route in blue with the first stage in red. There is some opposition to building a bypass but no alternative suggestions on how you deal with increased traffic movements.

Compulsory purchasing orders are being obtained for the red route which as you will be aware were all originally secured but sold back by the previous administration along with the return to government of their funding for the red route.

The total cost of the bypass will be high and needs Government support. While no detailed estimate is ready for the whole highway interesting to note other local main schemes currently underway, such as the M5 junction 10 Cheltenham project to ease congestion is costing 363 million and the A417 missing link Birdlip project at Gloucester costing 460 million.

The LTP also supports more active travel, cycling and walking, more investment and coordination of Bus services, improving EV charging, community transport options and access to train services. Encouraging economic growth alongside environmental protection and climate resilience. The whole document can be read at

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/travel-and-transport/local-transport-plan/>

Electoral Boundary Review – Herefordshire Council wards

Herefordshire

Have your say on council changes

Help us draw up a new pattern of wards that:



- Means councillors represent roughly the same number of electors
- Accommodates 53 councillors
- Reflects local communities

Consultation closes: 2 February 2026

The Boundary Commission is carrying out a consultation on proposed new wards for Herefordshire Council elections in 2027. The Boundary commission's last review was 2014 for the 2015 elections. They plan to divide the county into 53 seats of as near equal size with a presumption of one councillor per seat.

Particularly in rural areas one member per seat is sensible and still gives a large geographical area to cover. Clearly the eventual proposals may differ from existing arrangement of Parishes making up the various seats. There will be no changes to Parish councils or their boundaries.

To see more or contribute to the consultation please go to www.lgbce.org.uk

Highways Service contract

In December, Cabinet confirmed we are appointing a provider to deliver the new Public Realm Services contract covering vital services like maintaining roads, green areas and public spaces; street cleansing; highway drainage; street lighting; and winter gritting.

The selected provider has been named (January) when a mandatory legal standstill period comes to an end, with the new contract set to begin this June. The contracts are not yet signed, and some final checks are still taking place, but we can confirm **M Group Highways Ltd** has been selected as the preferred bidder.

Herefordshire Council has preferred this new contract as the preferred provider to deliver public realm services across the county, to replace the current arrangement with Balfour Beatty.



The services include the maintenance of roads, roadsides, green areas and public spaces, street cleansing, highway drainage, street lighting and winter gritting.

This new chapter will see the council take back day-to-day control of public realm services with the contractor being paid pre-agreed rates for each item of work, focussing on high quality, value for money services. I particularly welcome the current Balfour Stewards transferring to the

council employment with tighter ordering and monitoring of the contract on the ground.

Until the new contract begins in June this year, services will continue as normal under our existing arrangements with Balfour Beatty Living Places. I am sure you will have seen that our teams moved swiftly into action to respond to the potential impact of Storm Goretta this week. Once contracts are signed, we will continue to keep you updated as we implement plans for a smooth mobilisation.

Highway Investment

Over the past 18 months we have seen increased investment in the condition of Herefordshire's highways through resurfacing and surface dressing work, with some 100 miles having been delivered during 2025/26 alone. Significant renewals have taken place on the network and we have also increased the amount of funding that we have spent on preventative maintenance. The latter is strongly encouraged by the Department for Transport, details of which we are required to report on to access additional government funding.

Maintaining the surface condition of an entire highway network is something that clearly never stops and there is always a location that requires some form of intervention, which will vary dependant on what stage it is at in its lifecycle. Like other highway authorities, it is



not possible to do everything overnight, but we plan to continue improving the condition of Herefordshire's highways in 2026/27, building on what we have achieved over the past 18 months.

As we move into a new calendar year, work begins to shape a programme of works for 2026/27, which will be guided by the technical condition data obtained from our SCANNER, Vaisala and other survey information (including defects raised through the Locality Steward inspection process). Whilst technical condition data underpins and forms a fundamental and objective part of the planning process, I am encouraged by a new process which is a request to let the Highways team know of any locations in the ward that are causing particular concern at this time and request a sense check as part of the programme development. I will be working with my Parish Councils.

Children Services

The received Ofsted letter details the results of Herefordshire's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) that took place from 10 to 21 November 2025.

It is a positive result from their inspection Herefordshire Council's Children's Services as we have been rated '**Good**' overall by Ofsted, with each specific service area receiving a 'Good' judgement and the 'Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families' judged as '**Outstanding**' in a report published today.

[Herefordshire Children's Services judged 'Good' by Ofsted – with Leadership rated 'Outstanding' - Herefordshire Council](#)

SEND

There is a significant increase in the number of children identifying as having special needs (SEND) across the country and as I have reported before in mid December the Government announced firstly, they were withdrawing the funding for a proposed local School for children with special Educational needs. The School would have supported 80 children aged between 2-16. While we expect the Government's white paper this month to retain most of those children in mainstream school, there will be a cohort where it is best for those children, and for the rest of a mainstream class, to receive more focused attention in a specialist centre. The government has replaced it with an offer of 3.8 million of high needs capital over a three year period only.

Potential Special School Site

Landowners, developers, parish councils, and other interested parties are invited to share information about land that could support the future redevelopment of a council funded specialist school in the Leominster area.

[Search for Potential Special School Site in Leominster - Herefordshire Council](#)

Adult Social Care

We are asking people with lived experience to help develop the range of type of community activities on offer in future for adults with care and support needs.

[Local people's input sought to help shape future community activities for adults with care and support needs - Herefordshire Council](#)

Winter NHS Pressures

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year online at 111.nhs.uk or by calling 111 for any urgent but not life-threatening medical needs. Trained advisers can direct people to the best possible care for their needs, including arranging an out-of-hours GP appointment or an appointment time to attend A&E

For real emergency situations Dial 999

Renters' Rights Act 2025

Private landlords and letting agents across Herefordshire are being urged to ensure they are ready to comply with all parts of the new Renters' Rights Act 2025 as it comes into force over the coming months. A free Landlords Forum event on Wednesday 14 January, hosted by Herefordshire Council in partnership with key sector body the National Resident Landlords Association (NRLA), will set out what the Renters' Rights Act means in practice for private landlords of all types and sizes.

The event, from 5.30pm - 8pm will cover what the Renters' Rights Act 2025 means ahead of major changes starting 1 May 2026 in a phased rollout, including:

[Helping Herefordshire landlords prepare for the 'biggest shake-up in private renting for 30 years'! - Herefordshire Council](#)



Our Local Community Police 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/>

**Kirsten Kysow 07773 034152
Report a crime Police 101 Ext 61216**

Local Emergency Numbers

Reporting Highway Issues –

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

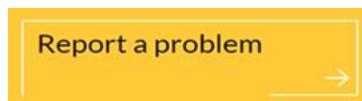
https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/190/report_problems_on_the_road

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.

For all Highway related defects report via:

24hr Phone – 01432 261 800

Website - Click Below



Dedicated Inboxes

Response within 10 working days

Members and Parish Inboxes:
for additional service information

Communities Inbox:
Social Value Support

Gullies

A basic map of known gullies for which Herefordshire Council at:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/flooding-2/flood-management/3#gulliesmap.>

Gullies are individually marked on the map with latitudes and longitudes being displayed along with a site code, which is used to identify the length of road where the asset is located.

Reporting gullies that need attention:

Report issues with the highway drainage network through the Council's online reporting system at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road>.

Issues reported are investigated by the relevant Locality Steward, who assesses the report against the Highway Maintenance Plan in order to determine the level of intervention required. Where necessary a job for a reactive cleanse is then raised and passed to a crew to attend.

Planned Roadworks

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 because of damage to your vehicle.

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

Report fly's 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](#).

Report Footpaths issues –

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](#).

- PROW - [PROW - PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk)
- PROW No – [01432 383 550](tel:01432383550)

Report Fly tipping.

It will be dealt with in a much quicker time frame by either calling the Contact Centre on 01432 261800 or by logging the fly tipping via the council website on the links below as your https://link.edgepilot.com/s/f452e836/Hy5YWk_SgEGkleekL2ROFQ?u=https://www.herefords hire.gov.uk/info/200226/report_a_problem/98/fly_tipping

Flooding: emergency contact details – please share with your networks

Report a flooded road or highway obstruction- Balfour Beatty Living Places: [01432 261800](tel:01432261800)
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.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](http://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)

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

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_regression_orders.pdf

Speed Indicator Devices - SIDs

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