

Ward member's report APRIL 2022

Elissa Swinglehurst – happily serving the parishes of Welsh Newton and Llanrothal, Llangarron, Sellack, Bridstow, Marstow and Peterstow.

My colleague Roger Phillips made a wonderful comment about the blue skies and the daffodils reflecting the Ukrainian flag, how true, it has been a very sunny spring and the daffodils have been brighter than ever. I always appreciate the fine showing in Llancloudy and this year has been no exception. Local people are offering practical help to Ukraine – we have items being sent over from here, families offering to take refugees in and fund raising events taking place. Well done to everyone who is doing something to help in this terrible time. My thoughts are with the Ukrainian people who are fighting so bravely and those who have had to flee their homes.

The last meeting I had in March was a Nutrient Management Board meeting. As usual we had a packed agenda and the whole meeting can be seen on YouTube if you have a few hours to spare. The highlights were as follows:

It is still proving to be very difficult to get clear numbers of poultry within the catchment and recent research has suggested an underestimate of around 750,000 on previous numbers. Therefore a total of 17,750,000 in Herefordshire and 16,750,000 in the Wye catchment or thereabouts. When you consider that in P equivalence 4 chickens is equal to 1 person that means that we have the p of 4.4m people (equivalent) in a county with an actual population of 192,000. (Equivalent calculation is from Sarah Belton of Nutrient Neutral Ltd).

There was no update from Avara about the work they said they would be undertaking to remove 100% of their manure from the catchment.

The additional resource that has gone to the EA will increase farm visits as will the increase in catchment sensitive farming advisors.

The technical advisory group is now coming under the chairmanship of Natural England and will be looking to refresh the plan to incorporate more actions that are deliverable.

On a positive note, after a lot of effort, Herefordshire Council are now starting to construct the first of a series of integrated wetlands (the one at Luston) with another planned for Titley to follow on. This will allow the housebuilders to start to build again in the Lugg catchment and it will save jobs and businesses which have been very severely impacted by the suspension of development in the area.

Powys have granted planning permission for a further 90,000 bird unit.

Council Tax and the cost of living crisis.

As part of the Government's initiative to help households with rising energy bills there is a one off £150 council tax rebate for certain households – more detail on council website

- <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council-tax-1/council-tax-discounts-exemptions/19>

As you may know I voted against taking the full rise in council tax as I have concerns about the 'perfect storm' of increasing household costs, inflation and tax rises that are impacting all of us. The council does have provision for those who are in receipt of benefits and who qualify for the council tax reduction scheme. Please look on the Herefordshire Council website for details.

Ukraine

The council is doing all that it can to prepare to receive refugees from Ukraine, the first families have started to arrive and there are many more wanting to come. If you would be willing and able to house a family or individual from Ukraine please contact the council

housingdevelopment@herefordshire.gov.uk

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

Herefordshire has been magnificent in its response with groups sending vans of much needed supplies, individuals offering to host, fundraising initiatives etc. Llangarron ward is doing its bit as well thanks to some fabulous people giving generously of their time and efforts. Well done to all concerned.

Monetary donations can be made via the DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee) or Herefordshire Community Foundation who are working with the Hereford Times with a Help for Refugees appeal. Donations will fund the transport of essential goods from Herefordshire to where they are needed, with residual funds supporting the resettlement of refugees in Herefordshire.

Balfour Beatty changes and performance

The council has decided to bring public rights of way and traffic regulation orders 'in house' rather than leave them within the BBLP contract. Staff are being transferred over and hopefully you won't see a gap in service as the changes take place. The contact details have consequently changed and are as follows: PROW@Herefordshire.gov.uk 01432 383550

TRO TM@Herefordshire.gov.uk

At their quarterly briefing BBLP reported 100% completion rate against the 21/22 maintenance annual plan with the exception of drainage work (80% complete at this time). The delay in drainage work is due to complications over access and ecology concerns.

The planned works are rated green across the board with the exception of gully cleansing due to the reallocation of resource from planned works to reactive works during the storm period.

There has been delay in the 21/22 construction plan especially in respect of barrier works which have been held up by a lack of ecologists. BBLP have now managed to recruit to an ecology post so hopefully things will be back on track.

Stormy weather....storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin led to 1000 emergency calls, 207 emergency jobs and 31 road closures.

BBLP will deliver 579,000 of efficiency savings in 22/23 with a total budget of 18.7m (4.5m of which is spent on network maintenance).

Unfortunately the planned purchase of a JCB pothole pro patcher has been held up due to delays with the council but hopefully it will arrive in time to be of use over the summer.

Did you know that Herefordshire council is the second lowest funded in the country (the lowest is the Isle of Wight)?

Most people are still reporting defects on the phone – you can report on line if that is more convenient.

If you spot a defect on the network, you've got two options for reporting it:

- You can [raise a report](#) on the council website, via the Travel and Transport page, then subsection [Roads](#).
- Or, you can call our Customer Services Team on **01432 261800**. **For emergencies, you should always report by telephone.**

- You can check the progress of a defect, or see if it's already been logged, via the [progress map](#) on council website.

Broadband

Reminder – if you qualify don't forget to apply!

Digital Household Grant

The Digital Household Grant is being made available to the 2,324 premises the south of the county descoped by Gigaclear and has a broadband connection of less than 30Mbps. A new [webpage](#) has now received 109 expressions of interest to the grant, which will cover the installation cost of a 4G LTE internet connection using external directional antennas.

A low earth orbit satellite solution will be explored for properties where a 4G signal is not available. The grant is in the final stages of procuring a provider. The evaluation of tender responses took place on Tuesday, 29 March.

Business Grant

Businesses can now register for a grant to part-fund the installation of fibre or alternative faster broadband connections via the postcode checker at <http://www.fastershire.com>. The Business grant will allocate up to £20k per eligible premise with a 20% contribution from the business.

Other news:

Council outlines priorities for coming year

The council's achievements from the past year and upcoming priority areas of work are outlined in a new Delivery Plan 2022/23.

Two years ago, the council set out its vision for Herefordshire in the County Plan 2020-24. How the council is progressing towards meeting these ambitions and its priorities for the coming year are outlined in a new Delivery Plan 2022/23.

Key achievements over the past year have included:

- Boosting the support available to residents within their own communities through the opening of 46 talk community hubs and a talk community kitchen providing healthy meals; Talk Community is a pioneering initiative that began under the last administration and continues to go from strength to strength.
- Supporting local businesses to grow and thrive with investment in new buildings such as the Shell Store business incubation centre which was a project from the previous administration, and helping hundreds of businesses access £46m of grant funding towards equipment, new premises and faster broadband.
- More than 1,000 independent retailers across the county benefitted from custom through the Shop Local prepaid card scheme funded through covid recovery monies from Government.
- Encouraging people to get more active in how they live, with free swimming lessons for around 10,000 children and adults; and how they travel, with dozens of new e-bikes for hire in the City and over 60,000 free bus journeys at weekends – all helping to improve overall health and wellbeing.

Priorities for the coming year outlined in the Delivery Plan focus on:

- Environment - reducing the amount of household waste generated in the county; investment in Hereford to improve public spaces and travel in the City, reducing the carbon footprint of the council and the county *
- Community – investing in services to improve the health and wellbeing of children, development of affordable housing and council-owned care facilities, supporting the opening of further talk community hubs
- Economy – supporting business opportunity and growth, implementing developments plans for the towns and City including the redevelopment of Hereford library and museum, helping to secure better accessibility to broadband throughout the county

[Full details can be found in the Delivery Plan 2022/23.](#)

Announcement: [Council outlines priorities for coming year](#)

- The council carbon footprint was calculated at nearly 50% reduction in 2019, it has now reduced still further and is on track to hit the target of net zero 2030.

And finally.....to our local heroes.

Did someone go above and beyond to help during the Covid crisis? Let's celebrate those brilliant people who do more than their share – who offer a helping hand to those who need it, who put themselves out for others.

[Reaching for the stars](#)

Matt Pearce, our director of public health, says:

“This is a brilliant initiative. We’d love to hear about our local stars. We’re talking about those unsung heroes who went out of their way to help vulnerable people in particular. Their selfless acts are what community spirit is all about. We should all want to celebrate the way they helped bring people together during the recent pandemic.

“We’ve set up a dedicated webform on our [play your part webpage](#) (click on the ‘submit your story’ link at the end of the page). Here, you can provide your details and a little about the star in your community. Just tell us who they are, what they did to help others and provide some contact details. We’ll get in touch to speak to you about how they played their part by helping others.”