

Serving the parishes of Llangarron, Bridstow, Peterstow, Marstow, Sellack and Welsh Newton and Llanrothal

### **A40 landslip**

I am attending weekly updates with National Highways to monitor the situation with the landslip on the A40 near Monmouth. It is going to require some time to stabilise the back and so there is likely to be an ongoing impact on the local road network. I have raised concerns about any diversion routes that put additional pressure on the rural lanes and the A466 through Buckholt.

At the moment there are a number of options under consideration for the best way for removal of debris, clearance and repair. Diversions will not include local roads but that does not mean that we will not see an increase in traffic as people use alternative routes.

[A40 Leys Bend Rockfall - National Highways](#)

### **Potholes a plenty**

The endless rain has not helped with the state of the roads and something needs to change!

During the election, it was made very clear to me that the state of our highway network was not good enough and I said I would do what I could to get more done about this problem. We are making good on that promise with the highest level of investment in our highways since 2019 and nearly £12 million more in the highways budget this year than in the last year of the coalition administration. The benefits of that investment will start to be seen from May as this additional budget is deployed on a variety of programmes.

Investment alone is not enough however and simply carrying on with the status quo would not have delivered the level of change or progress we all want to see. Therefore, I welcome the news that Herefordshire Council has issued a termination notice to Balfour Beatty which will see their current contract end in May 2026. I am sure that residents will welcome the news that we are seeking to improve the current arrangements. Please rest assured that my focus, and that of my colleagues, will be on ensuring that the new contract is designed in a way that puts Herefordshire Council back in a position of control and puts the needs of residents first.

The council's current public realm services contract with Balfour Beatty has been in place since 2013 and includes the delivery of highways, asset management, traffic management, parks, open spaces, street cleaning and street lighting. The contract was heavily outsourced with the council only retaining a small client and contract management function. This approach was initially successful for the Council, however, in recent years, it has become clear that this model of operating no longer meets the needs and aspirations of Herefordshire or its residents.

This decision has been taken by the Conservative administration because the current contract does not allow us to deliver on our plans for sustained long term improvement in our public realm services or the highway network. Unfortunately, under the existing contract the earliest we can bring the current arrangement to an end is May 2026, however, that does allow us a two-year period for the redesign, procurement and planned mobilisation of a new service which will begin on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026.

If you have any suggestions of improvements we could make to how public realm services are delivered going forward then please do let me know.

### **River Wye**

The long awaited DEFRA plan for the Wye finally emerged at the end of April – it is a curate's egg (good in parts) but there is a mismatch between what the plan actually says and what the press are reporting.

The headline of £35m to save the Wye is deeply misleading.

The plan has 9 action points.

Invest UP TO £35m in combustion technology (incineration) to deal with the excessive poultry litter. (according to the CLA this is money that is already available through a farm transition grant)

£1.25m to trial micro ADs (anaerobic digesters) – ADs do not reduce P, they are not useful for poultry litter and the trial is for slurry. No detail about how this reduces P.

The four schemes that are already underway (two for landscape recovery element of ELMS, two more local schemes) are part of the plan even though they are already happening and would be happening without the plan.

Payment for buffers – again this is something that farmers can do if they chose to in any case as part of SFI/ELMS. It is voluntary and not Wye specific. The plan makes the point that if all the Wyeside farmers took up this option then the govt would be paying £20m but there is no reason to suppose that all the Wyeside farmers will take up the option...

A River Champion has been appointed. Anthea McIntyre – who may well be familiar to you as she lives locally (Walford) and was the MEP. I wish her all the best with this important work. She will be responsible for forming a taskforce, writing a plan and ....

There is a general intention to support academic studies and research but no funding is attached to this element of the plan.

Proposal to consult on changes to the Environmental Permitting Regulations to make the poultry grower responsible for the litter to the point of disposal. This would require poultry farmers to have some way of knowing the P limits of the field that the manure is being spread on and whether or not the spreading is appropriate to crop and soil need. No idea how that is supposed to work.

Was it worth the wait?

### **Busman's Holiday**

I took a couple of days and went to London to attend the Conservative Environment Network ambassador day (I am an ambassador). It was really inspiring – held at a wildlife trust wetland in Kings Cross (yes, middle of Kings Cross) where moorhen were picking around the edges of a lovely green oasis and bluebells were growing in the dappled shade of hornbeam. Honestly – I remember this bit of London when it resembled a post-apocalyptic dystopian film set – now it is just wonderful and being enjoyed by the local people who were visiting the wetland.

Do you think something like that would be good in Hereford?

And, speaking of wetlands, the one that Herefordshire Council has built in Luston is up for no fewer than 5 awards! It has also released hundreds of houses from the moratorium by providing phosphate credits.

**Planning consultation**

The local plan is still being consulted upon. Please respond if you want to influence things – even if it just to say you think it is all fabulous!

[Latest consultations – Herefordshire Consultations](#) and while you are at it, take a look at the local transport plan consultation.

They both end in May

so don't delay.