

Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst

Ward Member for Llangarron, representing in all their glory, the parishes of Llangarron, Marstow, Sellack, Bridstow, Peterstow, Welsh Newton and Llanrothal.

March 2023

In the last few days the spring has, as they say, sprung. The avenue of sunshine that is Llancloudy Hill is in full bloom, the lambs are appearing in the fields, the birds are busy nesting and all of a sudden we are in that wonderful period of reawakening. The clods and floods of the past few months will soon be a memory but the work to deal with the causes and consequences of flooding goes on.

Llancloudy

I have raised the condition of the drainage at the bottom of Llancloudy hill a number of times and with the support of the parish council and local residents I can say that progress has been made! Two teams came out and spent most of a day clearing the local drainage network which was very badly compromised by silt that had come from nearby fields. The principle culvert under the road is also partially blocked with timber debris that has clearly washed in over a long time. The clearing of the culvert will need specialist closed area qualified people to actually climb up inside the pipe to dislodge and remove the debris but once that is done we should have a properly functioning bit of road drainage again.

Now that all the drains are exposed it would be good to keep soil off them so they continue to work properly.

The grips have been remade all the way up the hill as well.

Llangrove

There has been a great deal of local press coverage and social media comment about the condition of the road between Llangrove and Whitchurch. Here is my understanding of events:

Sometime around 2022 the Parish Council and I met with the then Cabinet Member, John Harrington and took him on a tour of the parish. Two of the main areas of discussion were the condition of the Llangrove BOATS and the condition of the Llangrove Whitchurch road. He was sympathetic but nothing came of it. The reason that nothing came of it was that there simply wasn't the money in the budget to do the work. In 2023 we had a change of administration and the new Conservative minority led administration decided to increase spending on roads. However, when a new administration comes in it inherits the budget from the outgoing administration (budgets being set in Jan and elections happening in May) so the ambition to fund more road works could only really be seen in the 2024/25 budget and in this year's budget. With the budget now in place the current Cabinet Member, Cllr Barry Durkin, has been able to do a great deal more. He had already come out last year to look at the problems and, like John Harrington, was sympathetic but he also started to formulate a plan for the BOATs with the head of service. The council has a lower level of statutory duty to byways but Cllr Durkin could see that in Llangrove, due to the way in which housing has developed along these old stoned tracks, a different approach might be trialled. It was only once the 24/25 spend was confirmed, along with the commitment for 25/26 that the works were able to

come forward. It is not sensible to tarmac when the weather is bad so it had to wait until, really, the first opportunity to get the black stuff down. Not all of the BOATs got the same treatment because we can only tarmac where there is a suitable surface to work with, where it has not been possible then the tracks have had the stone surface repaired and improved.

Much of what applies to the BOATs also applies to the road – in terms of Cllr Durkin’s visit, the budget availability and the need to have decent weather but has been additionally complicated by the drainage on the road between Hill Top and Tump Farm. The team did try to survey but unfortunately chose a day when the bridge at Llangarron was flooded so the parish council asked them to leave the road open as one of the few passable routes. The works are planned for Easter and will comprise a resurfacing of the road from Hill Top to Tump Farm with investigation of drainage. I have asked for a resurfacing of the rest of the road and am hopeful that this is what will take place.

Bridstow/Wilton

The TRO to reduce traffic on the Wilton Road is starting to go through the process so look out for consultation. The proposal will be a 30mph restriction on Wilton Road and on side roads. We are also developing a parking scheme to prevent dangerous parking (especially around Fisherman’s Reach) and a TRO to stop HGVs using the cut through to Wilton Lane. Hopefully all of these things will come together and make life easier and safer for local residents.

Ofsted

We have had another monitoring visit and steady progress is being made in the children’s services directorate. There are, of course, tremendous challenges in the increasing numbers of children who are needing support but we are improving the service and managing demand. There was also a review of the SEND provision (Special Educational Needs and Disability) which was also positive in many areas.

The River Wye

The second meeting with Minister Emma Hardy and Huw Irranca Davies was very worthwhile as they announced a 1m investment into the catchment to support the delivery of a Catchment Management Plan and to undertake ‘living laboratory’ work to trial and test actions that will help to restore the river. A very positive meeting with really strong commitment from everyone present.

The Nutrient Management Board is currently recruiting for someone to be the voice of the river on the board. This is a way of giving a vote to the river and ensuring that there is a place for nature in our thinking. It is an interesting process and I have been absolutely inspired by the calibre of all of the applicants. We will have made our final choice by next week and will have taken a small but symbolically important step towards giving rights to nature.

Full Council

At the full council meeting on the 7th March I voted in favour of a Lib Dem notice of motion calling for the reopening the Ross on Wye MIU (minor injuries unit). Although this is, of course, entirely the business of the NHS trust I nevertheless feel that residents who live in the Ross area deserve to have some kind of service to deal with minor injuries without having to go to Hereford A&E. It is not likely that there will be any change to the current policy but it doesn’t hurt to ask (this is not the first time we have made the request).

The second notice of motion was a fairly straightforward one asking the executive to write to treasury expressing concern about the manner in which the agricultural property tax relief changes had been implemented. Unfortunately, due to a last minute amendment brought by the Lib Dems the entire motion had to be withdrawn and we were unable to have the debate.

The leader of the council has written to the treasury in any case and invited other parties to co-sign if they wish. It was a shame that we didn't get to have the debate but sometimes politics does seem to get in the way of sense. I know how passionately local farmers feel about this issue and, frankly, I was pretty mortified that we didn't get to hear those voices because of some political point scoring.

Flooding.

As part of our £2 million investment over the next two years in improving local flood resilience, a FloodPod visited a selection of our market towns last Friday and Saturday, providing information to residents about how to protect their property from flooding. Well-known flooding advisor Mary Long-Dhonau OBE, 'Flood Mary', was also there providing information. The FloodPod proved very popular, with dozens of people visiting over the two days.



We contacted all Parish Councils this week with details of a community flood equipment pilot scheme and how to submit expressions of interest. The scheme is designed to supplement the Community Flood Signage Scheme by providing further flood resilience equipment to help minimise the disruption from flooding, as part of a proactive approach to supporting communities. Expressions of interest need to be returned by Wednesday 23 April please.

Great Spring Clean

We're fortunate to have local communities who care about the county they live in, and who give their time to ensure it remains an attractive place to be. The Great Herefordshire Spring Clean is an excellent example of what can be done if we all do our bit as part of a collective effort. Over the past two weeks hundreds of residents have got involved in clearing litter in their local area – and they are all to be thanked and congratulated for their efforts.



(This is me having done a quick pick down the A40 at Ross on Wye with the team from KFC)

From Monday (7 April) old batteries and small electrical items such as kettles and hairdryers, will be collected each week as part of the normal bin collection. This is a great enhancement to the service we provide for local residents. To find out how to present the items ready for collection, please see the website for full details [here](#).

Public Rights of Way update

As you may be aware, we have recently spent time reviewing how we support Parish Footpath Officers (PFOs) in undertaking valuable work on our Public Rights of Way network.

We are pleased to announce that we have now created a series of Parish Footpath Officer sessions that are available for booking, as per the below dates set out in the table.

The sessions are aimed at Parish Footpath Officers and Clerks, and we would like to encourage as many of you to attend as possible. The sessions are designed to provide an insight into the role of the Parish Footpath Officer and will also be an opportunity to meet up and have a cup of tea and a chat.

At the sessions we wish to share a copy of a new guide that we have put together for Parish Footpath Officers that covers how they can help on the network, as well as the support that we will offer as Herefordshire Council. As part of the session, we will be handing out starter kits including basic hand tools and some items of personal protective equipment.

It would be great if as many Parish Footpath Officers and Clerks could book onto the sessions as possible (it may be beneficial if Clerks take the lead to avoid duplication) and we would appreciate your assistance in spreading the word. Further sessions and dates will be arranged as necessary, so please don't worry if you cannot make any of the dates currently listed below:

The below dates are open to all Clerks and PFOs to book:

- 29/04/2025 2.00pm - 4.00pm Parish Footpath Officer Induction Via Microsoft Teams Click [here](#) to book a place
- 30/04/2025 2.00pm - 4.00pm Parish Footpath Officer Induction Midlands Centre for Cyber Security, Hersey Road, Hereford, HR2 6FP 30/04/2025 2.00pm - 4.00pm Click [here](#) to book a place

Separately, we have arranged First Aid training as per below:

- 16/06/2025 9.30am - 4.30pm Parish Footpath Officer First Aid Legion Way, Hereford, HR1 1LN Click [here](#) to book a place
- 17/06/2025 9.30am - 4.30pm Parish Footpath Officer First Aid Legion Way, Hereford, HR1 1LN Click [here](#) to book a place

We hope to see as many Parish Footpath Officers and Clerks as possible, but please let me know if you have any questions or require assistance.

Here for Herefordshire Holidays - Bookings open



The Here for Herefordshire Holidays programme will offer fully funded activities to eligible families this Easter. The programme is open to children and young people (school aged 5 to 16) who receive benefits-related free school meals.

Eligible children and young people can enjoy up to 4 free activity sessions throughout the programme, which will run between 22 – 27 April. There will be a free, healthy meal on offer at each session.

The Here for Herefordshire Holidays programme, which is funded by the Department for Education, aims to get young people involved with new, fun activities, keeping them active and connected with others.

Eligible families can book their places on the [Talk Community Directory](#). For more information on the programme contact HAF@herefordshire.gov.uk

[Bookings are now open](#)

News

Council continues free school meals support for Herefordshire children this Easter

Thousands of Herefordshire children and young people in nurseries, schools and colleges will continue to receive free school meals support during the Easter school holidays. Over 4,700 primary and secondary school pupils who are entitled to benefits related free school meals will receive a free food voucher up to the value of £30 or equivalent directly through their schools, to cover the cost of a lunchtime meal during the holidays.

**FREE
SCHOOL
MEALS**




Children who are eligible for the early year's pupil premium and are not in a school setting, will receive a voucher posted direct from the council. For more information about the Herefordshire Easter holidays food voucher scheme, visit www.herefordshire.gov.uk/holidaysfsm

News releases

[Contractor announced for Transport Hub](#)

[Introducing Baby Pips and Little Pips](#)

[Exciting free activities on offer for eligible children this Easter](#)

[New Warm Homes funding to help county residents](#)

Visit the [newsroom](#) for all the latest council news and information
