



Report of Elissa Swinglehurst

Serving the parishes of Llangarron, Sellack, Bridstow, Marstow, Peterstow, Welsh Newton and Llanrothal since 2015

Storm Claudia

Please let me know if you had any problems with flooding as a result of Storm Claudia. Monmouth was very badly hit by flooding from the River Monnow, Ewyas Harold was inundated from the Dulas Brook and there were areas of flooding throughout the county. My thoughts are with anyone whose home or business was affected. Herefordshire Council will be continuing to invest in flood resilience, natural flood management and drainage.

Subscriptions opened for the new garden waste service on Wednesday (22 October)

From March 2026, you can enjoy fortnightly collections in Herefordshire straight from your property, giving you more time to relax and enjoy your garden and less time transporting waste.



How it works:

- Convenient fortnightly collections from your home
- Runs 50 weeks a year (excluding Christmas & New Year weeks)
- Choice of a wheelie bin or reusable sacks
- Simple annual subscription – £60 per container/sack (+£10 one-off delivery fee)
- Fortnightly collections straight from your home
- Green waste turned into soil improver for use right here in Herefordshire

To find out more and to sign up visit the [garden waste page on our website](#)

Parish Summit.

There has been another parish summing during October and the 'Parish Charter' has been agreed. This is a service level agreement with parishes which, we hope, will help the council and parish councils to collaborate effectively to deliver for residents. Please let me know if the council is falling short of the undertakings in the charter and I will do my best to assist. Likewise, please let me know if the council is meeting those obligations.

Roads statement

“We know that the condition of our 2,000 mile highway network is important for our residents and businesses in Herefordshire. Over the course of 2024/25 and 2025/26 the Council has almost matched pound for pound the capital maintenance funding that it receives from central government to maintain our carriageways, footways, bridges, street lighting and drainage systems.

Total expenditure on our highway network through our partner contractors and local suppliers has risen from £26.760 million pounds in 2023/24 to £50.870 million pounds for 2025/26. Of this total, £25.2 million pounds will be invested in the resurfacing of those parts of our network that require the greatest attention and undertaking preventative treatments such as surface dressing to help keep other roads across the county in a condition fit for use over the years to come.

As of today, our investment is well underway with 30 miles of resurfacing, 58 miles of surface dressing works and associated drainage improvement works already providing smoother journeys for our road users. Just under £20 million pounds has now been spent or is in the process of being delivered on the ground, all of which can be seen at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/herefordshire-road-investment#map>, which provides a transparent map of our investment over the past 18 months.

We will not stop in our efforts to maintain Herefordshire’s roads and our team of dedicated highway engineers are currently working with our partner contractors to deliver the rest of our investment by the end of March 2026, as well as looking ahead to finalising our plans for April 2026 onwards, once we know our funding allocation from central government.”

Proposed cuts to PCSO service (Police Community Support Officers)

The council will write to the PCC to oppose the proposed reduction in PCSO hours. PCSOs play an important role in rural policing and in ensuring public safety.

The Shorn Lamb in the Wind

And, speaking of cuts...we are starting the tortuous business of setting the budget – to be honest it is never easy, there is never enough money to do everything we would want to. Ever since I was first elected in 2015 it has been the same – make savings, do more with less...but there has to come a point when the fat is trimmed, the muscle is wasting and you are sucking out the marrow. Local government nationally is struggling to provide basic statutory services and there is no prospect of things getting any easier. The funding review looks as if it is going to leave us with over £27m less to spend against rising demand and costs...every 1% increase in council tax nets about 1m in revenue so, even with an increase of 4.99% we will have to find savings of £22m...Each cabinet member will be fighting for their portfolio, I will be making the case for the sustainability team, the natural environment team, waste management, planning and culture but it’s hard to make the case for discretionary activities against the ‘bread and butter’ work of the council in social care. Let’s hope the Government

listens to our case and tempers the wind to the shorn lamb (I have to say that is not looking likely).

Rivers Conference

Herefordshire Council has just hosted the third rivers conference. There was a range of brilliant speakers highlighting some of the fantastic work that is being done in the catchment to improve the health of the rivers.

We heard about the Mowley Valley project on the Arrow where land is being gently managed to increase biodiversity and give the river space to come out and flood when it needs to. We learnt about the investment of a large company, S&A, in making sure their water use is as sustainable as possible; regenerative farmers spoke about their farms and how they are working to deliver for nature as well as for their business and we heard about the landscape recovery scheme Wyescapes, which is in development.

The afternoon session was an opportunity to hear about some of the innovative and 'blue sky' thinking that is developing. Mycoremediation – the role of Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi in releasing nutrients to plants (this would mean farmers need much lower inputs and soil health would improve) was presented by Marlow Renton and Phil Gorrington; Biochar and pyrolysis in waste recovery and soil conditioning/nutrient sequestration was presented by Dan Wrench of Shropshire Council; the potential for hemp as a substitute for maize in anaerobic digestion (low input, high output and better for soil) was presented by Jamie Bartley of Unyte etc etc. Honestly it was a packed day.

Herefordshire Council will be making the conference available on-line for anyone who is interested.

Ofsted

Ofsted have just completed their inspection of Children's Services and the feedback has been positive. They have recognised the significant progress we have made and the positive impact our teams have had on the lives of children and young people in the county. The final report will be published on the 12th of January.

County Council Network Conference.

I have attended the CCN conference – it began with a session on the 'fair' funding highlighting the budget challenges that many rural counties are facing. Key topics throughout the conference were SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) transport costs, SEND reform, housing needs and economic growth. Herefordshire Council recognises the need to challenge and reform the SEND transport costs and this is work that is underway.