

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

Old Gore Ward – Herefordshire Council

Flooding and message from Chief Executive

Just when you thought we had seen enough rain this winter Storm Dennis arrives with more rain falling on already saturated ground. I have attached the Chief Executive recent statement to the Council's Cabinet which gives some impact on the whole county. Attached as appendix 1 at the end of this report

The Government has made various grants available and I am pleased our MPs ensured we received the Bellwin grant, which is the emergency funding Government gives to local authorities for one off events in connection with, their immediate actions to safeguard life and property or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience as a result of a disaster or emergency in their area. However there is a time limit placed on its spend and funding has to be spent by 15th March. Both our Herefordshire MPs have been lobbied via the LGA (Local Government Association) to extend this period. The truth is the recent storms have put more pressure on Balfour and their capacity. Even with additional funding from Bellwin and potential pothole money in this month's budget there will be a delay in repairs. There continues to be the concern on the quality of repairs. Clearly with whole sections of highways collapsed in some parts of the county the funding will be prioritised.

Waste disposal measures to help community recovery

Herefordshire Council has offered free collection from houses flooded and waved the usual trailer permits to deposit flood households debris to transfer sites. For more information see: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/945/waste_disposal_measures_to_help_community_recovery

Hardship payments

Over 250 hardship payments have been paid out this last week to residents and businesses affected. The Government's fund is administered by Herefordshire Council with up to £500 per resident and £2,500 per business.

If your home or business has been impacted by the recent flooding please go the website below and get the latest information.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/345/flooding/3>

The other impact has been on our highways. I would please encourage you all to report any **EMERGENCIES** Defects and Potholes by phone 01432 261800. Or for non-emergency defects, by logging on the Herefordshire Council website <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole>

Amendment to Council's capital budget achieved

At the recent Council meeting we debated the budget setting for 2020/21 and the financial plan. The Conservative Group proposed an amendment to the capital budget to reduce the capital allocated to the Hereford Transport Plan from £3.6m to £1.6m and provides the released £2m to be used to repair and maintain our U and C roads. Although A and B roads in Herefordshire are the fastest roads and carry the most vehicles, the C and U roads are the capillaries that feed these roads and, in the more remote places the arteries for local transport too. Since the one off spending of £20m in circa 2016 the overall lack of investment

Ward Report – for February 2020

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in the U and C road infrastructure and drainage and the results are visible for all to see. This additional £2m will not fix all of the issues, but is seen as a responsible step by this Council to address the concerns of the rural third of this county's population.

The Council will set a revenue budget of 157 million pounds which will require a 3.9% increase in Council tax (including 2% for social care). A new four year County Plan was adopted, which you can read the plan at

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/940/full_council_approves_budget_and_four-year_county_plan

Full document available on

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1500/corporate_plan_2016-20.pdf

Phosphates – Latest update.

Last month I reported about Phosphates in the river Lugg and Arrow catchment area.

“Following seeking QC advice Herefordshire Council has altered its stance on Householder applications i.e. extensions to existing dwellings and are now being determined as agreed by our counsel. New Dwellings are still held pending continuing work on the integrated wetlands solution. At the full council the 2 million pound New Homes Bonus grant from the government to Herefordshire Council which was unallocated in the revenue budget was put to tackle the phosphate issue. It will be used to purchase and build 11 reedbeds/ wetlands at existing sewage works. This is hoped to be sufficient progress to allow Natural England to lift their ban on new development.”

The local councillor continues to work with officers and agencies on this, lobby DEFRA and support the private members bill of Philip Dunne MP the sewage (inland water) bill which places a duty on water companies (Welsh Water in our case) to ensure no untreated sewage enters our rivers or main watercourses.

Hereford transport strategy review

This is the message from Cllr John Harrington, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport, as he launches the Hereford transport strategy review. “A rigorous review of the major road projects planned for Hereford, and consideration of alternative options, is essential to ensure the best use of public money in alleviating traffic problems in the City now and for the future.”

The Hereford transport strategy review will include an assessment of the proposed Hereford Bypass and Southern Link Road, alongside alternative options that could deliver improvements more quickly and at lower cost. This will include the possibility of a new river crossing, removal of traffic lights on key routes, an electric bus fleet for the urban bus network and improvements that provide safer routes for pupils to walk and cycle to school.

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/article/938/transport_strategy_review_for_hereford

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

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Climate Change



At the start of the Council Meeting last month we had an interruption of a silent protest on Climate change by extinction rebellion as the photograph shows. They walked in and stood in front of the Chairman but didn't speak and after a few minutes they then left

Twelve months ago the council passed a climate emergency motion. Last September the Council formally adopted the target to become carbon neutral by 2030/31 and to develop a new Council Carbon Management Plan by April 2020.

The new Council Carbon Management Plan will be the council's third plan and will build on strong progress to date under the previous administrations.

The most recent annual performance report published in August 2019, showed a tremendous reduction of a 43% reduction by the end of

2018/19. This performance exceeded the 40% reduction target two years early and has resulted in environmental improvements and significant financial savings. The proposal is to approve the new Council's Carbon Management Plan for the period 2020/21 – 2025/26. This plan sets out the approach towards achieving an interim target of a 75% reduction in its own emissions (based on the 2008/09 baseline) by 2025/26. The reductions are based on current and planned carbon reduction projects.

Stay connected to your local community and services

A proposal is going to cabinet to approve the Talk Community strategic approach and its implementation, including the development and delivery of a comprehensive Talk Community programme.

Talk Community is an all age system wide partnership approach focused on maximizing independence and wellbeing for Herefordshire citizens. At the heart of Talk Community is an ambition and culture to manage demand in a different way by connecting three different elements. Talk Community therefore focuses on the strengths of **people** and **communities**; the **place and space** which those communities occupy; and the **economy** in which those communities work

The county's Talk Community Hubs are a great way to help you stay better connected with the services, groups and activities taking place in your local community, which can help you stay independent, happy and healthy for longer.

They can help...

- Bring people together, build friendships and strengthen communities

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

Old Gore Ward – Herefordshire Council

- People support one another through knowledge of local and countywide services, groups and activities
- People access information, advice and activities to support their wellbeing and independence, with assistance from a friendly volunteer

The ambition for Talk Community is to make independence and wellbeing inevitable for all Herefordshire's citizens. Talk Community will contribute substantially to the council's new County Plan and in particular its community ambition. It will drive significant change through contributing to the plans cross cutting themes of sustainability, connectivity and wellbeing. Talk Community will also harness the ambition and commitment of public sector partner organisations across the whole system.

Elderly Bartestree resident was deceived into buying unnecessary and expensive roof repair works

A company director and salesman from Dorset, who targeted an elderly Bartestree resident, have received fines for 'unfair trading'. The case was taken to Hereford Magistrates' Court by Herefordshire Council's Trading Standards Service on 20 January 2020.

Magistrates found The Green Group (Southern) Ltd guilty of four 'unfair trading' offences and ordered the company to pay a fine of £7000 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Director Sebastian Booth (32), of Old Bound Road, Poole, pleaded guilty to charges of deceiving the customer into believing a salesman was a surveyor and failing to give the correct cancellation rights. Mr. Booth received a fine of £3000 and was ordered to pay costs of £5300 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Salesman Douglas Allard (49), of Trinidad Crescent, Poole, pleaded guilty to selling a contract for unnecessary work and misleading the customer over the price. The court heard that Allard was now suffering severe disability and would probably never work again. As a result, Mr. Allard received a fine of £500 and was ordered to pay costs of £200 and a victim surcharge of £30.

Hereford Magistrates' Court heard that The Green Group (Southern) Ltd based in Poole, Dorset had targeted an 89-year-old man from Bartestree by using a purchased database and falsely making an appointment for a surveyor to carry out a "free energy saving inspection". In reality, the company sent a commission-only salesman to sell the gentleman a waterproof wall coating.

The victim told the salesman he couldn't afford the wall coating as he had to fix a roof leak. The salesman falsely claimed the lowest cost to fix the leak would be £3950 and work would start within three days. The legal minimum 14 day cooling off period had been breached and an independent chartered surveyor estimated the cost of repair works would be a maximum of £2200 + VAT. Fortunately the victim called Trading Standards shortly after being coerced into the contract; they were able to intervene to cancel the work and carry out a full investigation.

Another situation where your trading standards officers are looking after residents in Herefordshire. Please be aware of this and similar scams being perpetrated upon those that

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

Old Gore Ward – Herefordshire Council

fall for these types of contractors. Please spread the message to be aware and remain vigilant.

Regards

Barry

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Parishes Information

Brampton Abbotts

Last month the Planning Inspector allowed an appeal to build a 10 houses on the land south of Church Road, Brampton Abbotts.

I had the original application re-directed to the County planning committee and spoke against it with the councillors refusing the original application. The applicant appealed the decision to the planning inspectorate. The application and appeal was opposed by the Parish Council and neighbours. However, the inspector allowed it. Unfortunately, the parish NDP did not have sufficient weight to influence either decision.

General Information

Defect Reporting

As always please continue to make use and encourage the use of established reporting methods for any highways defect;

- Telephone our customer services on [01432 261 800](tel:01432261800).
- Online using the telephone app – for potholes, dog poo and Public Rights of Way (PROW)

Please note that Herefordshire Council strongly encourages Balfour Beatty to promote all service requests and queries should be logged via the HC website at <https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-pothole> or <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/maintenance/potholes>

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.

Did you know...?

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

For any PROW (Public Rights of Way) maps or problems, you can report these via the following link on the Herefordshire Council's website:

<https://myaccount.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-a-public-right-of-way-problem>

To report defects (potholes, fly tipping, blocked gullies, etc.) online:

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

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 on 01432 261800, 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.

If you wish to email into the business, the best email address for Parishes have their own inbox herefordshireparishes@bblivingplaces.com and both of these email inboxes are monitored by teams in the office

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

Old Gore Ward – Herefordshire Council

to ensure cover at all times. If you have an emergency to report please use 01432 261800 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

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

Toolkits:

Community commissioning

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18820/community_commissioning_model_toolkit.pdf

Litter picking https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14134/community_litter_pick_toolkit.pdf

Traffic Regulation Orders

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2891/application_toolkit_for_traffic_regulation_orders.pdf

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

Another useful site:

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., [@HfdsStreets](https://twitter.com/HfdsStreets) and if you need help to set that up please let me know.

If you wish to make a claim as a result of damage to your vehicle

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

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

General Data Protection Regulations Statement

The General Data Protection Act places obligations and responsibilities on any company, organisation and individual who hold and process personnel information, and it comes into force on the 25th May 2018; superseding the Data Protection Act 1998. As a County Councillor I hold a list of emails of local people that I have built up over the years which I retain and use on my council computer and email. I can give you all the reassurance that I do not and will not share those email addresses with any third party.

In seeking legal compliance as a data controller I am requesting that if anyone is unhappy with my holding their email contact that you please advise me so that I am able to remove you from the list.

Otherwise I will retain your email contact and continue to send you monthly updates, emails as required and occasional key information.

Ward Report – for February 2020

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Appendix 1

Statement from Alistair Neill to Cabinet regarding recent flooding

Thank you for this timely opportunity to update Cabinet on the recent flooding in the County.

Communities across Herefordshire were heavily impacted by Storm Dennis, with a month's worth of rain falling in two days over the weekend of Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 February 2020. The sheer volume of water caused generalised flooding in many areas severely affecting properties and roads, and the rivers Wye and Lugg both rose to their highest ever recorded peaks bursting their banks. What this means is that these levels were the highest in over 200 years. At one point around 700 tonnes of water per second were flowing under the Old Bridge in Hereford. With widespread disruption experienced by residents and businesses, a major incident was declared on Sunday 16 February 2020 at 11.20am.

Major incident response

A Tactical Control Group (TCG) was convened working out of Plough Lane, chaired by Sue Thomas, Superintendent Herefordshire, West Mercia Police. This brought together a number of key agencies including Herefordshire Council, Public Health, the Environment Agency, West Mercia Police, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, West Midlands Ambulance Service, our health partners and utility services. Through the TCG, services were coordinated to protect and provide assistance to Herefordshire residents and businesses, focusing our early efforts on the most vulnerable members of the community.

Travel and transport across the county was extremely difficult with around 80 major and minor roads impassable at peak flood. Road and bridge closures were put in place where they were flooded or where their condition had become unsafe. Whilst a priority was to keep Herefordshire moving, the top priority has been to keep people safe.

Some areas experienced power cuts, however these were generally short term.

More than 300 residential properties experienced devastating flooding. Recovery and rest centres were opened in Ross, Leominster and Holmer Leisure Centres and at Point4 for people whose homes were flooded, providing shelter and refreshment.

In Whitchurch, 24 residents were evacuated from a privately-run care home and moved safely to alternative accommodation. The eldest of the residents was 97. In Hampton Bishop a care home became inaccessible to normal vehicles, so staff were transported to and from the home by military and fire and rescue services, and the basement was continuously pumped so that residents could remain in their home.

In total, 204 people were rescued across the county by fire and rescue services from either properties or vehicles.

Due to its proximity to both the rivers Wye and Lugg, much of Hampton Bishop remained inaccessible by road for many days. The delivery of essential food and medicine supplies was arranged, with council staff visiting the local ASDA supermarket, who kindly provided the food free of charge, on behalf of stranded residents.

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

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During this time information was provided to residents across the county through a dedicated page on the Council website and via the Council's social media channels - which were viewed more than 6.5million times in the last 11 days - with the latest situation updates and general advice on what to do if affected by the flooding. Information was also shared through local newspaper, radio and community social media sites, and interviews on regional TV. With national and international media interest, the online news reach (that is number of people who have read about the flooding) is 1.18billion to date.

In addition, video messages were sent to residents in Whitchurch and Hampton Bishop providing information specific to those communities. These were circulated through Whatsapp, the local parish council and local residents through electronic messaging.

On Tuesday 18 February 2020, under emergency provisions, the decision was taken to allocate £1million of council reserves to support local residents and businesses impacted by flooding. Since this decision, the Government (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) has announced community and business flood recovery grants, which the council will assist people to access, with £500 available to residents and £2500 for businesses. Payment of grants started on Monday 24 February 2020 to the 322 residents and 64 businesses who have applied to date. In addition council tax and business rate relief is available for three months for flooded properties. At the this time we await word from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as to whether local farmers affected can access its Farming Recovery Fund.

Recovery

With the impact of further rainfall and possible raised river levels, the formal position of emergency response was maintained until Tuesday 25 February 2020 when we formally moved to a 'recovery' position. However recovery for many communities started sooner than this.

The council provides recovery support and signposting to assist affected communities during recovery so that they can work towards restoring local services and facilities and returning to normal.

Additional resources have been deployed across the county to expedite road cleaning and inspection and assessment of the condition of roads and bridges. Surveys using specialist equipment are being carried out. Of the 71 roads inspected so far 51 require extensive work to remedy the damage caused which is expected to cost upwards of £1.6million. Whilst work to repair damage has commenced, several roads and bridges will require longer term attention and investment to fully address flood damage and secure their resilience. As such I expect the final repair bill to multiply.

We are extremely mindful of the experiences of people who live and work in the communities affected by current road and bridge closures, however it will take weeks before many are safe to reopen. As of 27th February, there remain 28 road closures in place, with restricted access particularly problematic around Fownhope/ Holme Lacy and Walford/ Leintwardine. We ask people to continue to adhere to road these closures and bear with us while this work takes place. We will be looking for Government funding under the Bellwin scheme for the repair of roads and other infrastructure. Clearly travel through the county will continue to be impacted and additional bus services have been established in those areas that are impacted by prolonged road closure. School transport services have also been supplemented.

Ward Report – for February 2020

From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

Old Gore Ward – Herefordshire Council

Communities across the county are facing the unenviable task of cleaning-up their homes and businesses. Herefordshire Council are providing a free service to collect flood-damaged household items from outside residents' houses, and commercial vehicles won't need permits at household recycling centres in Herefordshire until Sunday 1 March, for the disposal of flood damaged items. Lost wheelie bins are being replaced.

Helping with the clean-up effort, Herefordshire Council staff joined with others from local response services to deliver cleaning supplies and assistance to a number of communities affected by flooding. The Talk Community Big Herefordshire clean-up has involved hundreds of staff who volunteered to visit residents and businesses in prioritised areas to distribute information about flood recovery, provide help with completing grant forms and deliver cleaning essentials to designated community hubs. These door-to-door visits by our staff have been very gratefully received by residents and businesses. Among the other volunteers were retired firefighters who had driven from Kent, east London and north Yorkshire to support our efforts by clearing out flooded properties. In total more than 400 volunteers have now visited 42 different sites. Those volunteers were not only from the council, but also from:

- Police
- Fire and Rescue
- Herefordshire Council
- British Red Cross
- Tunnels to Towers provided support to lift and move heavy furniture and equipment out of homes ready for waste collection.

With many local play areas affected by the flooding, the council funded sessions in local leisure centres offering a safe place for children to play during the half term. And as pupils returned to school, the Council's school transport service put alternative services in place for those communities still impacted by flooding and road closures.

Information has been sent to local businesses and representative groups about how to access short-term desk or office space to aid with business continuity, and recovery grants. Our farming and agricultural businesses will be impacted beyond a single season.

Over the coming weeks we will be working with residents and businesses to access flood resilience grants, once details on this have been received from Government.

Future considerations

Although the recent high river levels and extent of flooding across the county was unprecedented, climate changes mean that it is sensible to assume that they will become a more regular occurrence. If unprecedented is the new normal, we need to think and plan differently. It must be a priority for us to work to build community resilience to flooding across the county and work with partner agencies to consider and plan flood defence and prevention measures.

We will be looking to Central Government to provide special funding to support this and repairs to our road network, bridges and other infrastructure to a standard that will be able to better withstand extreme weather conditions, and are writing to government departments and MPs in this regard.

Ward Report – for February 2020 **From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin**

Old Gore Ward – Herefordshire Council

In the longer-term, the council will need to give careful consideration to planning issues, where we build and how we manage our environment appropriately, and again we will be looking to Government to support this through policy and action.

I am mindful that whilst Herefordshire is well into recovery mode, our west Mercia neighbours in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin in particular remain in emergency response, with once again, unprecedented flooding. We continue to liaise across west Mercia through the Strategic Control Group, where Herefordshire Council will chair the region's communications as all areas move into recovery.

I would like to round-off by recognising and thanking people from across the county during this time of extraordinary disruption. The impact of this flooding has been substantial and significant, and we do not underestimate how upsetting and disruptive it has been for many. It may take several months before the county can return to 'business as normal'. However, residents have responded with resilience and a wonderful sense of community.