

Ward Report – for March 2021
From your local County Councillor - Barry Durkin

Old Gore Ward
Brampton Abbots, Brockhampton with Much Fawley, How Caple, Kings Caple, Much Marcle, Upton Bishop and Woolhope.

Dear Parish Councillors and Residents, welcome to this edition of my ward report I hope you find it interesting and there is a 'useful information' section at the end.

Delivering the NHS Covid-19 vaccination

The latest figures showing 34.5 % of people in North Herefordshire have now received a vaccine.

A fourth Covid-19 Vaccination Centre is opening this week in Herefordshire and Worcestershire as the programme continues to make excellent progress.

In the latest phase of our rollout and in line with JCVI guidance, 65 to 69 year olds and adult carers have now been invited to receive their first vaccinations, with people aged 64 also set to be called forward later this week. GPs have also been offering jabs to their most clinically vulnerable patients.

Figures published last week by NHS England show that nearly 260,000 first vaccinations have now been administered across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. This means that more than 40% of our population (those aged over 16) have now had their first dose and have some protection against the virus, including nearly everyone aged over 70 and already over 80% of people aged between 65 and 69.



May I remind everyone to be vigilant about scams including those apparently involving vaccines – the NHS will never charge you for a vaccine and will only visit your home if you are totally house bound. If you are concerned about your health for other reasons please contact your GP.

New campaign encourages the nation to keep going and stay at home

The Government has, (on 25 February), launched a new national campaign encouraging people to keep going and stay at home. The new advertising reminds people everything they're doing is helping stop the spread of the virus.

The campaign, aired for the first time yesterday on ITV, will run across TV, radio, out-of-home advertising and on social media, reminding people that everything they've done – working from home, washing their hands, wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing and video calling – is helping stop the spread of coronavirus and new variants.

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Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-encourages-the-nation-to-keep-going-and-stay-at-home>

Herefordshire Full Council meeting update

Last month the council held two separate meetings to debate the Hereford City Transport package and the setting of the 2021/22 budget. I attended the full council's extraordinary meeting on 2nd February, which was called to determine if we go ahead with the bypass and the southern link road.

We were all advised by the officer that the outcome of this meeting should not be predetermined, that we should listen to the arguments and then make a judgment before we vote. However, after listening to members of the administration, it became clear that they had already made up their minds and in my opinion. Indeed one of the cabinet members announced on National TV that the road had been stopped days before the councillors made their decision in the Council Chamber in Hereford. Additionally, the administration have spent the last two years and four hundred and eighty three thousand pounds of your money conducting reviews trying to find a reason to cancel the bypass and the southern link road.

This administration seems to have the notion that all road building is evil. They have turned away over 200 million pounds of investment in Hereford's infrastructure and at the same time have wasted money on projects like buying a defunct shopping centre and getting us all onto electric buses and bicycles. Notwithstanding, their strategy does nothing to ease the congestion in Hereford along the A49, continues the 46,000 daily traffic flows over Greyfriars Bridge with the polluted air residents breathe as they walk or ride their bikes around town.

Therefore, the bypass and the Southern Link roads are now dead for this administration. In addition, some councillors are still espousing the need for an Eastern river crossing towards Tupsley. Interesting as heavy goods vehicles will need to try to get back on the A49 for their journey north after avoiding the city centre.

I supported the package including the green measures for the city, and the conservative amendment to continue the southern link road. The result has been well documented and been the subject of a Hereford Times investigation into how councillors voted, which has produced some interesting points with a Councillor Jenny Bartlett, Green Party member and in the administration is reported as saying "she had no problem with people knowing how she voted" but felt a story telling the public how Councillors voted was "populist, divisiveness" and a "disingenuous way of pretending to support democracy"!! Its openness, accountability and transparency that is at the heart of good government.

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Budget and council tax

I supported a Conservative amendment on the budget to increase the council tax to only 3.99% and to use the New Homes Bonus to support those in Herefordshire who may be struggling. The result will be an increase in council tax from Herefordshire Council of 4.99%.

One of the big underlying problems Herefordshire faces is it's overspend in vulnerable children services (estimate £5 million overspend). Additionally, many children with very complex needs require significant packages of support which extend all their adult lives and I am afraid is a subject that is not getting properly addressed.

Support for people facing financial hardship.

At council, councillors have agreed to increase the discounts for those eligible for council tax relief during the next financial year.

More than 11,000 council taxpayers in the county currently receive a reduction and more than 6,000 of these claims come from working age householders. There is an expectation that this will increase during the next financial year due to the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic and possibly the effects of the 4.99% council tax increase.

Council Tax funds around 29% of the council's budget. A 4.99% total increase to Council Tax has been agreed following unsuccessful amendments being proposed at council meeting. This is an equivalent rise of £1.51 a week for a Band D property. The increase is made from a 3% increase to the 'adult social care precept' and 1.99% increase to 'core Council Tax'. In total this will provide £3.2m towards the cost of council services.

Residents on a low income may be eligible for help to pay their bill through the Council Tax Reduction scheme. Some residents will continue to pay no Council Tax at all, such as young adults who have left care and, with effect from 2021, also all the council's Foster Carer families.

Flooding

At last week's council budget meeting the Conservative group proposed a further amendment that the council should set aside the money from the New Homes Bonus fund to set aside £341,000 for parish councils to bid for, to alleviate and prevent flooding in their areas on highway drainage as a grant scheme. I supported this further amendment motion; but this amendment was lost.

The New Homes Bonus is a government incentive that rewards councils for the number homes built in their area.

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Councillor Shaw said some of the funding could be used to help parishes in dealing with flooding. He said “This particular fund will not be panacea but ought to be a cost-effective way of enabling parishes help themselves to attend to seeing to roads and take away some of the spots where flooding is a pernicious, persistent and perennial problem every winter.”

Fly Tipping and Household Recycling Stations

Councils in England dealt with more than 976,000 fly-tipping cases in the year up to the start of the coronavirus pandemic, up two per cent on the 950,000 incidents in 2018/19, figures show. The number of court fines issued for fly-tipping increased by a third in the last year, from 2,056 to 2,671.

The incidences of fly tipping in Herefordshire has also increased. It is reported in the Hereford Times that fly-tipped waste is discovered in Herefordshire twice a day on average, figures reveal.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs data shows 685 fly-tipping incidents were reported to Herefordshire Council in 2019-20 – 193 more than the previous year.

The Local Government Association warned that the offence costs taxpayers almost £50 million a year to clear up. Dumped waste was found on Herefordshire's roads and pavements 104 times accounting for 15% of incidents while 42 discoveries were made on footpaths and bridleways (6%). Fly-tipped rubbish can include household waste, white goods and construction waste.

Across Herefordshire, small van loads of waste were dumped illegally on 129 occasions – 19% of all reports. There were also five incidents which required multiple loads to clear.

The administration does not rule out cutting the opening hours across the county's tips to help save £200,000 next year; looking to make savings in the way it operates the household waste sites by increasing some of its fees and changing the way they are run.

[BBC Online: Figures show pre-pandemic fly-tipping rise across England](#)

Report fly tippers

If you spot someone fly-tipping

- Make a note of any vehicle used, including model, colour and registration number. If it is safe to do so without being seen, take a photograph or video of the activity

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- Note the fly tippers' clothes, and distinguishing features. If you can hear the fly tippers, take note of anything which was said along with the speakers' accents
- Make a note of what they dumped, the location, weather conditions and how far away you were at the time

Please send us this information by using the [report flytipping form](#).

Environmental Land Management and farmers

2021 marks the start of a four-year transition period during which BPS payments will be phased out in the lead up to Environmental Land Management. The best way to keep payments coming in and ensure you're ready for E.L.M. is to apply for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and there is good news. The scheme is being simplified with new offers to apply for, and additional penalties have been removed (although reductions can still occur where things can't be put right). There will be advice and support to help you enhance the environment as part of a sustainable business.



WVAONB
JAC_Agri_environment

Extra Cash to Fix Potholes

Government has announced £500 million for local authorities to fix 10 million potholes across England – helping councils ensure that our roads are kept up to standard and that potholes that blight road users are being dealt with promptly.

Herefordshire will receive a further £6.3 million from this funding, and our residents will know that potholes are not only nuisance, but they can be a danger to drivers and cyclists, as well as causing damage to thousands of vehicles every year.

With the average pothole costing £50 to fill in, the funding will ensure the equivalent of 10 million potholes can be filled and fixed. This funding will ensure that councils can ensure that local roads are both safer and easier to drive and cycle on, as well as reducing the risk of damage to vehicles for road users.

Reminder to vote and apply for a Postal Vote

On Thursday 6 May residents in Herefordshire will go to the polls to have their say on who represents them at the Police and Crime Commissioners elections, plus various local by-elections and Neighbourhood Planning Referendums.

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While the elections are not until May, we're already making plans to help you stay safe while casting your vote. There are a number of ways to have your say in the elections in May - you can vote in a polling station, by post, or by appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf, which is known as a proxy vote.

In light of the continuing uncertainty caused by the pandemic, there has never been a better time to apply for a Postal Vote, even for the next local and indeed general elections. To apply in time for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections please click here.

BetterOff

This is a service for people who live in Herefordshire. BetterOff will show you the benefits you are entitled to and will help you to apply for them online. BetterOff also provides information on how to find and apply for jobs.

https://herefordshire.betteroff.org.uk/?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=Orlo#/home

Fuel Poverty

Whether a household is in fuel poverty is determined by the interplay of three key factors:

1. the energy efficiency of the property
2. the household income
3. fuel/energy prices

National analysis of fuel poverty data indicates that households in fuel poverty are more likely to occupy large, older houses, and be owner-occupiers and families.

In 2016, there were an estimated 81,800 households in Herefordshire, 13.5% of which were in fuel poverty (11,000); a higher proportion than in England as a whole (11.1%). The majority of households affected by fuel poverty live in rural areas.

In 2019, a report by BRE on behalf of Herefordshire council found that higher concentrations of private sector households in fuel poverty are found in the more rural parts of Herefordshire. There are noticeably lower concentrations around urban areas, particularly around the outskirts of Hereford. The highest concentrations of fuel poverty (Low Income High Costs definition) in private housing stock are found in the wards of Birch, **Old Gore** and Golden Valley South.

<https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/community/fuel-poverty/>

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Census 2021

The census, run by the Office for National Statistics, is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. The 2021 census takes place in March and among new questions is one asking people whether they have served in the Armed Forces; for the first time, people will be able to say if they are a veteran of the Armed Forces.

As chairman of the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership this knowledge will give us a better understanding of the numbers, locations and age ranges of the nation's veterans and will enable the Government, NHS and service charities to target resources and expertise where they are needed most.

It is important to emphasise that the census is totally anonymous once it reaches the census office as it will then be anonymised, thus taking away any concerns about the census being confidential – it will be.

<https://combatstress.org.uk/about-us/news/armed-forces-veterans-be-counted-census-2021#:~:text=The%202021%20census%20takes%20place%20in%20March%20and%2C,the%20people%20and%20households%20in%20England%20and%20Wales.>

PLEASE CONTINUE SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL BUSINESS

Many of our local business are supporting our community with supplying delivery of groceries, take away food and other items.

They are too many too list here in case I miss someone but they will be on your local websites. Please support them. If this crisis teaches us anything it is the importance of local community and a local economy.

As ever if you think I can be of help please do not hesitate to contact me.

Barry

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Useful Information

Information from Parishes

General Information

Covid19

The Latest local Covid data and information www.herefordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-3

National Covid guidance is available on the Government website www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Talk Community

Email: Talkcommunitycovidresponse@herefordshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01432 260027

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.

Report fly tippers

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- Make a note of any vehicle used, including model, colour and registration number. If it is safe to do so without being seen, take a photograph or video of the activity

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- Make a note of what they dumped, the location, weather conditions and how far away you were at the time

Please send us this information by using the [report flytipping form](#).

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 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;

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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.