

Herefordshire Councillor's report

Balfour Beatty update

Many of the defects reported during the recent parish tour have now been resolved and many thanks to Boris for checking up on them.

They include potholes on the C1053, the Tenbury Road and near St Michaels Gate, gullies cleansed around Brimfield and in Bryhampton Lane and the A456. There are still two drainage and ditching issues to follow up in Little Hereford and Lee tells us there will be an ecological study of the badger activity in School Lane Brimfield to see what if anything can be done. Part of the bank there is unstable and we don't want the lane blocked. Balfour Beatty have been catching up since the weather improved but please continue to report potholes and blocked drains or footpath problems on the Herefordshire Council website or phone 01432 261 800. Please don't wait for someone else to report a problem and please give an accurate location, road number, map reference or postcode or all three.

Salwey Arms junction on the A49

Nothing to report since May. Richard Timothy of Highways England phoned last week to say the recent studies on the junction should be completed by the end of June and he will inform us of the outcome. Meanwhile I have tried to make progress on the sign to deter HGVs from entering School Lane. Approval has to come from Herefordshire Council so another request needs to be made to Bruce Evans. I have explained the problem and HE will need to give their permission if the Council agree to a sign. Sorry it is so complicated !

Other local matters

1. It is good to see the SID operating near the entrance to Brimfield Church drive this month. I look forward to the second SID on the Tenbury Road. It should slow down some of the traffic.
2. The dog waste bin in Wyson Lane is being well used. I am pleased that the Parish Council is going ahead with a second bin. It seems the best way to mitigate this anti-social and dangerous problem.
3. Flooding in Little Hereford. I look forward to a meeting with Steve Hodges and the Environment Agency next week.

Covid Update

There will be disappointment but no surprise over the Government announcement on Monday to delay Stage 4 of the Roadmap. 116,000 Herefordshire adults have now had their first vaccination, 74% of those eligible. Many have now received their second jab and nationally 56 % have received both doses. It is essential to have both jabs and to take up the second appointment. Cases remain relatively low in Herefordshire with few hospital admissions and regular rapid testing is available to all. We should not be complacent but the vaccination roll-out should greatly reduce community transmission. Please keep to the current restrictions. We need to support our local shops, cafes and pubs as much as possible as they try to catch up on lost business.

State of Herefordshire's economy

The local economy remains fragile. Unemployment is relatively low but so are incomes.

1. Average working incomes
Herefordshire £ 25,055 West Midlands £ 28,809 National £ 30,759
2. Unemployment
4,700 in April. Down from peak of over 5,000 last summer but still 125% higher than March 2020.

3. Furlough

20,700 people were furloughed at the peak last year. This is now lower.

4. Seasonal workers. About 100 farms continue to recruit seasonal workers mainly from Eastern Europe. 4,500 are expected in the county this year, mostly living on the farms and vital for our fruit and other agricultural activities.

5. Good news. The refurbished Shell Store in Rotherwas has recently been opened by Robert Jenryck MP. It is a modern business centre aiming to create 123 jobs by 2023, with 25 business units. In the Second World War it was the largest ammunition store in the UK and suffered a bombing raid.

6. Hereford is also receiving £ 22m funding from Government for several projects including a new library (Towns Fund). I am concerned though that the decision by the majority of my fellow Councillors to cancel the proposed Bypass has sent all the wrong messages to businesses looking to invest in the city and county.

Boundary Commission

As Karen has reported some minor changes are proposed to our parliamentary boundaries. The idea is to have roughly equal numbers of electorate across all constituencies and to take account of population changes. In Herefordshire, Holmer ward moves to South Herefordshire and Stoney Street to North Herefordshire. There are much more substantial changes elsewhere and a consultation follows.

I hope everyone enjoys this brief period of summer weather and if they are able to, their staycations in the UK.

John 01584 711 227

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