



# WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April at 19.30 in Welsh Newton Village Hall

### Present

Councillors: Craig Bligh (Chairman), Sue Parkinson (Vice Chair), Martin Barter, Keith Simmons.

### In attendance:

Andrée Mitchell (appointed as Clerk & RFO at this meeting), Terry Griffiths, Lengthsman (who joined the meeting at 8:45pm.)

**Public:** Three members of the public

The meeting opened at 7:30 pm

1. To consider a resolution to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, to consider a confidential employment matter.

**It was RESOLVED:** to pass the resolution. No members of the public were present for the following discussion item.

**1.1.** To consider the employment of a new Clerk/RFO (Responsible Finance Officer):

**1.1.1.** Members received a summary of the interview process from the Chairman and considered his recommendation to appoint Andrée Mitchell to the post of Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer. **It was noted** that HALC have supplied a NALC contract of employment, which commences with a six-month probationary period.

**It was RESOLVED:** to approve the recommendation and appoint Andrée Mitchell as Clerk/RFO on the terms of the 2024 NALC contract of employment and on the understanding that the Council will pay her CiLCA training fees, sharing the cost with other councils for which Andrée carries out the role of Clerk/RFO.

**1.1.1.1.** To consider start date: **It was RESOLVED:** that employment starts immediately, 18th April 2024.

**1.1.1.2.** To consider hours per week: **It was RESOLVED:** that the post is for 7 hours per week.

**1.1.1.3.** To consider salary scale point: **It was RESOLVED:** to appoint on Spinal Column Point (SCP) 25 within the LC2 Scale as set out in the National Agreement on Salaries and Conditions of Service of Local Clerks in England and Wales, to be increased up to a maximum of four points for success in obtaining The Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA).

Signed by the Chairman *Craig Bligh*

Dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024



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*The Chairman invited members of the public to the room.*

The Chairman advised that the council had appointed Andrée Mitchell as Clerk/RFO to the Council and invited her to join the councillors at the table to minute the remainder of the meeting.

2. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Debbie Clarke. **It was NOTED:** that there are two current vacancies.
3. **To receive any declarations of interest or written applications for dispensation on agenda items:** There were none.
4. **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024:**  
**It was RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes as a true and proper record of the meeting.  
The minutes were signed by the Chairman.
5. **Public Question Time:**
  - 5.1. Members were asked about the land on the way to Llanrothal where fields have been laid out for woodland. The Chairman explained that the forty acres there were bought by woodlands.co.uk to be subdivided into seven or eight blocks, encouraging the new owners to plant trees. They have also acquired Tump Wood and put in a two-lane road behind a wooden gate.  
**It was NOTED:** that Herefordshire Council had contacted the Clerk to say that they have been in contact with the landowner, works have ceased and an application for retrospective planning permission in respect of the unauthorised trackways will be submitted within the next 28 days (they are to facilitate future tree felling). A concern was raised that this might be considered a change of use from the original pastureland.  
Cllr Simmons checked DEFRA's MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) database and confirmed that Tump Wood is designated as ancient and semi-natural woodland.  
**It was RESOLVED:** to contact Herefordshire Council re the potential change of use issue.
  - 5.2. Members were asked to consider the Market Bridle Path (last update in 2022), which gives a summary of the situation regarding the DMMO (Definitive Map Modification Order) which was originally submitted in 2015 and to note that this is not the same as M451 updating the footpath to a bridleway.

Signed by the Chairman *Craig Bligh*

Dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024



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The member of the public who raised this will forward the details to the Clerk.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk would review the status to date and report to the next meeting.

## 6. Planning:

**6.1.** Members considered the following planning application for determination by Herefordshire Council:

**6.1.1.** Application P240766/FH - Upper Newton Farm, Welsh Newton, Monmouth, Herefordshire NP25 5RN, Proposed single storey garden room with an oak framed structure with slate covered roof.

**It was RESOLVED:** to SUPPORT this application.

## 7. Reports:

**7.1. Ward Councillors Report:** The Ward Councillor was not present but had submitted a report in March 2024 which was taken as read. The following items were raised as matters of particular interest:

**7.1.1.** Minerals/waste local plan has been created and adopted.

**7.1.2.** New local development plan consultation is ongoing and consultation is starting on the new local transport plan.

**7.1.3.** A doubling in the budget for road investment (Balfour Beatty main road repairs) for the 2024/25 and the overall budget has been set.

**7.1.4.** The process to get the Western bypass in place for Hereford is being restarted.

**It was RESOLVED:** that that the Ward Councillor's March 2024 report be put onto the website.

## 8. To consider concerns about tree maintenance on the Common

The Clerk had been told by the previous Clerk that this item relates to the need to maintain trees and the wooded areas on the common. Also, that there had been previous attempts to set up a working group to support the maintenance of the common which had not progressed following insufficient support from residents of the common at that time.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will come back to the next meeting with an update on issues relating to previous plans to set a Common subgroup, any recent proposals, and recent issues and concerns in relation to the maintenance of the common.

## 9. Finance

### 9.1. To note the bank balances

The latest bank statements were unavailable, and the balances of the following accounts will be reported at the next meeting of the Parish Council.



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**It was RESOLVED:** to notify councillors of the updated balances and to arrange for the new clerk to have view only access to the bank accounts to enable bank reconciliation and future reporting.

**It was NOTED:** that the Chairman and the Vice chair will have full access to the bank accounts to set up, pay and approve payments and the other councillors will have approval access only.

## 9.2. To consider the following invoices for payment:

**It was RESOLVED:** to approve the following invoices for payment:

9.2.1 Terry Griffiths – Lengthsman grant tasks – £4,804.80 including VAT (covering four invoices/worksheets for March 2024 Lengthsman Support Grant work. Councillors reviewed the worksheets/locations of works.)

9.2.2 Autela Payroll Services – £47.81 including VAT.

**9.3. It was NOTED:** that the remittance advice for the first tranche of the 2024/25 precept of £6,950.00 has been received from Herefordshire Council.

**It was RESOLVED to:** consider items 10 and 11, following the arrival of the Lengthsman from another Parish Council meeting.

*The lengthsman arrived at 8:45pm and councillors considered items 10 and 11 following item 14 of the agenda.*

## 10. Lengthsman and Footpaths

### 10.1. To consider works for the Lengthsman:

**10.1.1.** The Chairman requested that the Lengthsman provide photographs of work carried out in future to go onto the website so that parishioners can see what work is being carried out and have a better understanding of the role of the lengthsman.

### 10.1.2. To note the Lengthsman, PRow and Drainage Funding available for 2024-25:

The lengthsman explained the new funding regime for the lengthsman grant from Herefordshire Council. The lengthsman also advised that the administration of the lengthsman scheme has been taken in house by Herefordshire Council. No decision has yet been made by Herefordshire Council as to how the drainage grant will operate.

**It was NOTED that:** the base funding grant for 2024/25 had been increased for £60/km to £120/km. Welsh Newton has 18.2km of U and C roads, also that there is a further grant of £60/km which would require match funding by the council of £60/km should it wish to take this up.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will consult with the former Clerk re the status of the lengthsman scheme expression of interest, contract, and proposed budget for works in 2024/25.



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**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will contact the Herefordshire Council to clarify that the liaison person for the council with the lengthsman is the Clerk.

## 11. Highways

### 11.1. To consider road issues for reporting to Balfour Beatty:

**11.1.1.** Cllr Simmons reported that the verges had collapsed near the Tregate Farm bungalow and that there was mud across the highway. He had logged this online on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. FS Case 607185838.

**11.1.2.** Cllr Parkinson reported that there are a number of potholes that require repair in the area between Yew Tree Cottage and Small Acre on the Common. Also, that the road is giving way enroute to St Wulstan's Farm.

**It was RESOLVED:** that Cllr Parkinson will report the potholes and road issues online.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will follow up with Balfour Beatty on the various outstanding highways reports.

**11.1.3.** Cllr Barter reported that the War Memorial needs more gravel following the recent poor weather and settling down of the gravel. The Lengthsman advised that he has allowed for ½ a bag for minor maintenance in this area and will carry this out at no additional cost to the council.

**11.1.4.** The lengthsman advised that he will be meeting with Herefordshire Council's Highways Manager to get clarity on the grant funding and transfer of management in house.

### 11.2. To consider "no Motorbike" signage

**11.2.1.** Cllr Parkinson has been in touch with the Public Rights of Way Officer in Monmouthshire about the safety issues around the use of motorcycles on the pathway between Newton Court and the Common. On the Herefordshire side it is a Bridleway and on the Monmouthshire side it is a Restricted Byway which has similar characteristics to a Bridleway in that horse riders, bicycles and pedestrians may use it, but not motorised vehicles. Cllr Parkinson explained that groups of motorcyclists use the path to travel up to the Common from Monmouth and then take the road via Great Oaks, to ride the track to Llangrove. This happens regularly at weekends and there have been multiple complaints from residents.

**11.2.2.** There was further discussion about the ownership of the land, signage and the green road map managed by the Trail Riders Fellowship.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will obtain some costings for some appropriate 'no motorbike' signage further to some additional information which has already been provided to the council. Also, to seek advice of the Trail Riders Fellowship which maintains a green road map on how to remove the path from the Green Road Map.



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## 12. To consider noticeboards throughout the parishes:

The Chairman has discussed the possible location of the Llanrothal notice board at the Tregate Bridge with James Howell (the Locality Steward), who has said he would come back to the Chairman re the legality of placing it there which is considered a more useful location for residents of the parish.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will contact the Locality Steward to chase up on the Tregate Bridge location.

The remaining noticeboards in Welsh Newton and Welsh Newton Common are in a poor state of repair.

**It was resolved:** that the Clerk will request a quote from a local carpenter to evaluate the state of repair of the noticeboards in general and whether they are worth repairing or replacing. Also, to check the price of a standard noticeboard.

## 13. To consider consulting on the Participatory Budgeting scheme planned:

It was agreed that it would be helpful to have an application form and some guidance of the kind of projects that would be considered.

**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk would contact HALC re further information and proformas for the participatory budgeting scheme.

## 14. Correspondence

### 14.1. Planning Enforcement response to query re track in ancient woodland

This had been discussed during public question time (5.1) so no further discussion.

### 14.2. Update of the Local Plan Consultation Information

Cllr Parkinson had attended a Zoom meeting re the new Herefordshire Local Plan. About 30% of the total housing requirement is expected to be developed in rural villages which have key facilities, e.g. school, village hall, an A road going through it, no landscape designations, no flood risk, mains sewerage, etc. Nowhere in the Welsh Newton and Llanrothal parishes are earmarked for development from 2025, and the area will be categorised as open countryside with rural exception housing based on: need, affordable, self-built, custom-built or community led.

As far as planning is concerned the Local Development Plan is planned to be in place by summer 2025 and thereafter will begin to increase in "weight" as it goes through a series of adoptions and examination. The group parish's Neighbourhood Development Plan will no longer be valid and will need to be reviewed in the light of the new LDP, and Herefordshire Council have offered to provide support for this process, which is likely to include funding. Due to the pending change in development categories, there is a risk of a last-minute rush in applications. The current LDP consultation started 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and runs to 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

The Chairman raised the fact that a development of holiday cabins had been permitted without consultation with the Parish Council. This omission is being investigated and will be included on the next meeting agenda. Members discussed the concern that this might set a precedent for such future development in the parish.



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**It was RESOLVED:** that the Clerk will follow up with the former Clerk and Herefordshire Council to raise a concern re the lack of consultation.

**It was NOTED** that there is at least a £5M rural community green spaces grants through DEFRA and this could be considered on the next agenda.

*Terry Griffiths, Lengthsman (joined the meeting at 8:45pm.)*

*Items 10 and 11 were discussed at this point.*

**15. To consider items for the next meeting (no discussion)**

- 15.1.** DEFRA Green spaces grant.
- 15.2.** Notice boards refurbishment/replacement.

**16. Date of the Next Meeting:** Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May at Welsh Newton Village Hall  
Annual parish meetings to start at 7pm on the same date.

The meeting closed at 9.29 pm.