



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council held at Welsh Newton Village Hall on Thursday 13th March 2025 at 7.30pm

Minutes

Present: Councillors Sue Parkinson (Chair), Martin Barter, Keith Simmons, Julie Francis, Ed Walker, Lissy Tomlinson

In attendance: Andrée Mitchell (Clerk/RFO, PFO), Ward Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst (arrived at 7:48pm), Terry Griffiths (lengthsman)

Public: 0

The Chair opened the meeting at: 7:30pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

Ward councillor Elissa Swinglehurst had advised that she would be arriving late due to another meeting.

2. To receive declarations of interest and written dispensation requests

Cllr Tomlinson declared a pecuniary interest in item 20 re an employment matter as the clerk is her spouse.

3. To consider the co-option of applicants to fill current vacancies and receive any declarations of interest

Cllrs Parkinson and Tomlinson will speak to a couple of Welsh Newton residents who may be interested in filling the councillor vacancy.

4. To agree and sign the minutes of the Group Parish Council meeting held on 19th December 2025, 9th January and 13th February 2025.

The minutes for 19th December 2024 were APPROVED and signed by the Chair.

The minutes for the 9th January 2025 and 13th February 2025 are to follow.

5. Public Question Time

No members of the public were present.

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Items 9 and 10 were brought forward as the lengthsman was present at the meeting.

6. Reports

6.1. The Ward Councillor's report was NOTED.

Ward Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst was present and REPORTED that:

- Final budget setting has been done, and that Herefordshire are one of the first councils to set a balanced budget.
- Herefordshire Council have won a challenge to minerals and waste plan and now has a planning policy that gives some control over development without relying only on statutory agencies.
- Welsh and UK Government funding announced to develop a plan for improving the Wye of £1M to take this forward.
- NRW have said the lower Wye is now compliant which implies an improvement further upstream.
- Ash trees being worked on presently along the A466

It was NOTED that there is Japanese Knotweed at Buckholt below the Callow – on the Welsh Water Site. Currently it is not being dealt with as it is on Private Land.

6.2. To consider a report from the police community support officer (PCSO) and local policing priorities

Several newsletters had been received, and Councillors are encouraged to subscribe to them and bring forward any items of interest to the meeting.

7. Planning

7.1. To Comment on Planning Applications for Determination by Herefordshire Council.
There were none.

7.2. To consider an update on recent planning applications considered by the council.
It was NOTED that the retrospective planning application (P242718/F) for the retention of 3 shipping containers for agricultural use (sheep) at the field Northwest of Great Hall had been approved with conditions.

8. Welsh Newton Common

8.1. To receive an update on trees on the common and consider a request for a funding contribution from the Parish Council towards a QTRA (Quantified Tree Risk Assessment) on Welsh Newton Common

The chair supported by Cllr Walker set out the background to the request and it was NOTED that:

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

- Storm Darragh caused significant damage to the recently installed fibre broadband lines to the Common, leaving many residents without service for about 10 days due to fallen trees.
- A resident-led consultation identified 24 high-risk trees on common land that could potentially damage the broadband cables. Photos and mapped locations have documented this.
- The Tree Officer at Herefordshire Council has advised conducting a quantified tree risk assessment (QTRA) to enable lifting of the TPO for the necessary pruning. The QTRA costs £700 plus VAT, and funding for 50% of this cost has been requested from the council. Ward Cllr Swinglehurst has also been approached for additional funding from Herefordshire Council but indicated it might not be available.

Members had a detailed discussion, and the following points were noted:

- Funding Concerns:
 - Some council members have reservations about funding the assessment due to budget limitations and the principle of using public money on unowned land.
 - There are concerns about potential liability if the assessment recommends work that cannot be funded.
 - The County Council may not have funds available.
- Tree Work: Much of the tree work could potentially be carried out by locals with common rights to collect wood, which could reduce costs.
- Liability: There is concern about whether funding the survey creates liability for the Parish Council.
- Community Engagement: Supporting the project could be seen as a positive step in community engagement, especially given the successful consultation carried out by those involved.
- Alternative Funding: Other funding sources and grants have been explored, but options are limited. The council prefers that Herefordshire Council contribute to part of the survey cost.

It was RESOLVED by the Chair's casting vote (further to a tied vote with 3 in favour and 3 against) that the parish council would fund half the cost of the QTRA subject to establishing that the doing so would NOT create any liability for the Parish Council regarding findings of the report and regarding future tree work or maintenance.

It was RESOLVED that the clerk would seek legal advice from the Open Spaces Society to which the council subscribes and would notify the applicant of the council's decision and conditions associated with it.

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

It was NOTED that the decision reflects a balance between a desire to support community engagement and address potential safety concerns, while also acknowledging budgetary constraints and concerns about taking on responsibility for unowned land and using public funds for what might be considered a BT Openreach responsibility, though not legally an obligation.

9. Footpaths

The lengthsman was present and it was NOTED that the PRoW grant funding which had been awarded would need to be spent by the end of June 2025 and that the PFO would be meeting with the lengthsman, the chair and the locality steward on 21st March.

The lengthsman is working on projects with “Walkers are Welcome” and “Walk the Wye” and the PFO will follow up on these with the PRoW team at Herefordshire Council and local PFO colleagues involved with the programme. The PFO will also make enquiries about options for the Monnow Valley which borders the parish and about PFO training to be provided by Herefordshire council, but which has been delayed.

It was NOTED that the footpath (LO4) in the parish along the Monnow upstream from Tregate Bridge is missing several way markers and that waymarks must now legally go on posts.

The PFO will look at the stile coming down to the road (C1248) from the church at Welsh Newton on footpath (WNN9) – could this be a self-closing or kissing gate with sufficient room for steps?

Cllr Parkinson advised that she had not received a response from Monmouthshire on the bridle path (WNN6) used by motorcyclists between Monmouth and Welsh Newton Common and will follow up.

10. Lengthsman

10.1. To consider work undertaken and work to be carried out by the lengthsman.

It was NOTED that there had been a routine maintenance day for Welsh Newton Parish during the past month.

There was a discussion regarding the flooding of the road (U71223) from the bottom of Newton Pitch to Great Hall. Issues have arisen due to silt runoff from the fields north of the road, leading to significant flooding and deep silt during autumn and winter. The lengthsman reported a complaint from the landowners of the fields south of the road about damage to hedges and silt runoff onto their land through the grips, which had been reinstated and widened after the flooding. Following discussions with the landowner, additional grips have been installed to spread the water over a larger area to become surface water rather than forming a stream. The Lengthsman also mentioned seeking a solution to the flooding and ice on the C1427 near the Nunnery during freezing weather.

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

- 10.2. To consider future grant funding, the lengthsman programme and procurement of lengthsman services for 2025/26

It was NOTED that the lengthsman continued to provide services to the council for 2024/25 based on the 2023/24 plan. The programme for the lengthsman represents a five-year commitment by Herefordshire Council, with two years remaining. The current grant allocation to the council for lengthsman, Public Rights of Way (PRoW) work, and Local Drainage Fund work is £19,276. Of this amount, £3,276 has been allocated to the completed lengthsman work. The remaining tasks are scheduled for completion in Quarter 1 of this financial year.

It was RESOLVED to go out to tender in accordance with the financial regulations for lengthsman and LDF work, as well as for PRoW work (to be separated) for the years 2025/26 and 2026/27. This decision will be guided by the development and agreement of a work programme covering that period.

- 11. Local Drainage Fund** – to receive an update on local drainage grant fund projects.

It was NOTED that there would be an update further to the site meeting with the new Locality Steward.

- 12. Highways** – To consider road issues for reporting to Balfour Beatty and the status of current road issue reports

It was RESOLVED that the issue of damaged and missing signage would be raised with the Locality Steward at the meeting on the 21st March. And that the key areas of concern in the parish will be visited.

The clerk REPORTED that she had been present at the meeting with Balfour Beatty and the landowner of the land to the south of the U71223 (see item 10.1) and would liaise with Herefordshire Council on this.

The lengthsman left the meeting at 19:34

Cllr Swinglehurst left at 8:47pm after giving her report (see item 6.1)

- 13. Policies and procedures**

- 13.1. To consider the Risk Management Policy and the Risk Schedule Review
Members reviewed the current risk policy and risk schedule, which was readopted at the Annual Meeting of the Parish council in May 2024. The policy and risk schedule require further work. It was RESOLVED to present an updated risk management policy and a more comprehensive risk register at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May 2025.

It was RESOLVED to include risks related to communication with parish residents/electors and the loss of key personnel.

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

13.2. To consider the Financial Controls and Risk Assessment policy
Members reviewed the policy update, which reflects changes in personnel, council address, the Cambridge and Counties 1-year fixed rate business bond, and the council's use of electronic banking.
it was RESOLVED to adopt amended version of the Financial Controls and Risk Assessment Policy.

13.3. To consider the Reserves Policy and reserves
Members considered the current reserves policy, and it was NOTED that:

- The finance report has a section for reserves which needs to be updated.
- The current advice for a small local parish council such as Welsh Newton and Llanrothal Group is that reserves of 100% of the net operating expenses (which excludes the precept and grants)
- The council holds sufficient funds to meet this in its instant access savings account and the Cambridge and Counties 1-year fixed interest business bond.

It was RESOLVED to readopt the current reserves policy and level of reserves and that Cllr Francis, and the clerk would review model reserves policies available including through NALC and SLCC and that this would be brought to a meeting early in the new financial year.

13.4. To consider adopting the updated NALC Financial Regulations 2024 adapted for the Parish Council
The clerk presented the draft policy for consideration by members, and it was NOTED that an update to the model financial regs 2024 had just been received affecting procurement and reflecting new legislation and that these amendments were incorporated into the new financial regulations.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the draft Financial Regulations policy incorporating the new procurement update and to review the regulations in the event of new legislation or circumstances and otherwise to review annually.

14. Finance

14.1. To receive and consider the finance report and the bank reconciliation, including current balances & any transfer of funds:
The Finance Report was reviewed and NOTED.

It was NOTED that the bank balances as of the current date in the Lloyds Account were:

Treasurer's Account:	£ 5,195.66
Business Bank Instant Account:	£ 7,018.00
Cambridge and Counties Bond:	£ 10,501.37
Total:	£ 22,715.03

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

14.2. To consider grant awards, expenditure and claims on Lengthsman, ProW and Local Drainage Fund.

No further update.

14.3. It was RESOLVED to make the following payments:

14.3.1. Terry Griffiths Contracts – Welsh Newton Parish – Routine Maintenance Day 21/02/2025 – £559.20 (incl. £93.20 VAT)

14.3.2. Terry Griffiths Contracts – Welsh Newton Parish – Routine Maintenance Day 20/02/2024 (unpaid invoice from previous financial year) – £528.00 (incl. £88.00 VAT)

14.3.3. Herefordshire Association of Local Councils – Annual subscription fee (including NALC) 2025/26 – £560.45 (incl. £93.41 VAT)

14.3.4. Herefordshire Association of Local Councils – Clerk Training – CiLCA Finance Module – £300.00 (incl. £50.00 VAT). Note that a net payment of £30 is to be made for this payment as a duplicate invoice payment being made in October 2024 and HALC have credited it against this invoice.

14.3.5. Clerk's salary according to agreed contract for March 2025

14.3.6. HMRC – PAYE for clerk's salary for March 2025

14.4. It was NOTED that no payments made between meetings

14.5. It was NOTED that the following income had been received:

14.5.1. Lloyds Bank – Interest on Instant Access Account –10/02/2024 – £6.14

14.6. The following contractual/regular payments were approved to be made between meetings should that be necessary:

14.6.1. Terry Griffiths Contracts – as per schedule for lengthsman and grant programmes

14.6.2. Autela Payroll Services Limited – Payroll December 2024 to March 2025

14.6.3. Clerk's mileage and expenses

14.7. To consider an update on audit and internal control

It was NOTED that the clerk is in contact with the appointed internal auditor and preparing the documentation and files requested according to the checklist. Also, that the policies considered under item 13 at this meeting were an important part of the audit and internal control process.

15. To consider training for councillors

To be considered at the next meeting.

16. To consider correspondence between meetings – not already covered under agenda items.

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

There was none.

17. Communications – to consider the website, newsletter, and social media, including any updates.

Cllr Tomlinson reported to members on her research into ISP provision moving forward to provide a modern, accessible and flexible website to the council and its residents. This had involved research into pricing, technology, availability and recommendations from clerks (through SLCC), and other users and reviews.

Further to consideration of the various options presented, it was RESOLVED that the Clerk confirm costs with Parish Online (a not-for-profit provider) and go ahead with the transfer of the website from the current provider.

18. To consider the date of the Annual Parish Meeting

It was NOTED that the Annual Parish Meeting would need to take place before the end of May and agreed further to agreeing the format and attendees.

It was RESOLVED that the Chair would contact local groups including the church and the village hall committee about being involved in the Annual Parish Meeting before finalising the date.

19. To consider items for the next meeting

Village Welcome Gates; Training for councillors.

20. 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 confirm the appointment of the Clerk.

21. Date of next meeting – Thursday 10th April 2025 at Welsh Newton Village Hall.

The meeting closed at: 9:40pm

Signed by the Chairman *Sue Parkinson*

Dated *10th April 2025*