



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 9th January 2025 at 7.30pm

Minutes

Present: Councillors Sue Parkinson (Chair), Martin Barter, Keith Simmons, Julie Francis

In attendance: Andrée Mitchell (Clerk), Terry Griffiths (Lengthsman)

Public: 7

Cllr Parkinson (Vice chair) opened the meeting at: 7:31pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

There were none.

2. To receive declarations of interest and written dispensation requests

There were none.

3. To elect the Vice-Chairman of the Council should this be necessary

It was NOTED that HALC had advised that the Vice-Chairman post could not be a shared role. Cllr Barter expressed an interest in standing as Vice-Chairman for the Council, proposed by Cllr Simmons and seconded by Cllr Parkinson. It was RESOLVED: to elect Cllr Barter to the position of Vice-Chairman, by unanimous vote. Cllr Barter signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

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

It was NOTED that there are currently two vacancies available for co-option for Welsh Newton Parish. There was one applicant for one of the vacant posts who had recently moved into the parish having prior to that been resident in a neighbouring village within three miles of the parish border.

It was RESOLVED to co-opt Ed Walker onto the Parish Council, by unanimous vote and he was invited to join members where he signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

It was NOTED that the council had previously maintained a good gender balance; the intention to continue, but focus remains on finding willing volunteers.

5. To agree and sign the minutes of the Group Parish Council meeting held on 19th December 2024

The minutes were not yet available and would be brought to a future meeting.

Signed by the Chairman *Ed Walker*

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6. Public Question Time

Gritting and Winter Road Safety:

A local parent raised concerns about persistent danger on “the pitch” down to Welsh Newton (C1248) and request for safer gritting during icy periods.

It was RESOLVED that the clerk to write/liaise with Ed Bradford of Herefordshire Council and Balfour Beatty about regular gritting for this stretch, to include C1248 and the hill toward Llangrove, referencing recent accidents and local anxiety.

It was NOTED that there had been an historic policy whereby the Lengthsman used to do reactive gritting; and that the current arrangement through Balfour Beatty now is less responsive.

The Chair advised residents to continue reporting, but that the council will seek a “regular run” status for the trouble spots.

A member of the public joined the meeting for item 9 and it was RESOLVED to bring this forward.

7. Reports

7.1. To consider the Ward Councillor’s report

The Ward Councillor was not present, and her next report will be circulated and put up on the website when available.

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

There was no new report from PCSO.

The Clerk reported quarterly scam/fraud bulletins had been circulated/posted to website and general Neighbourhood Watch-type updates (national in scope, less useful locally).

Cllr Parkinson REPORTED that the PCSO is interested in future attendance and discussing “Smart Water” for local crime prevention and will confirm a date with him.

8. Planning

8.1. To Comment on Planning Applications for Determination by Herefordshire Council:

8.1.1. 242945 – Lower Buckholt Farm, The Gypsies, Manson, Monmouth, Herefordshire NP25 5RD – Planning Permission – Proposed demolition of existing dwelling and construction of a new self-build dwelling.

It was RESOLVED to SUPPORT this application with the comment that space is made within the building for roosting or nesting sites for species such as swallows, swifts, house martins, bats and owls in accordance with **NDP Policy WNL3 Protecting and Enhancing Local Wildlife and Habitats**, and as recommended in the Ecologist's report.

Also, that a sympathetic lighting plan be implemented to make sure that the exterior of the property is not lit up, and thus reduce light pollution in

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accordance with **NDP Policy WNL1 Protecting and Enhancing Local Landscape Character:**

Development proposals will be required to incorporate the following landscape design principles:

1. Proposals will be required to maintain the area's sense of tranquillity, through careful and sympathetic design of access and consideration of traffic impacts on local roads;
2. External lighting should be kept to an absolute minimum to preserve the tranquillity and darkness of the area at night. Security lighting should be appropriate, unobtrusive and energy efficient;

Proposals for new development will be required to:

- Demonstrate how the design has taken into account its potential impact on local habitats and species; and
- Ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to protect wildlife and enhance biodiversity and important habitats.

- 8.2. To consider an update on recent planning applications considered by the council. Clerk circulated current list of applications/decisions since April. There had been no significant changes.

Two members of the public left the meeting.

- 8.3. To consider latest planning advice received from Herefordshire Council. It was NOTED that Herefordshire Council had written to councils about the latest national policy changes:
- Council's NDP now over 5- years old, so "less weight" can be given in planning decisions.
 - Refreshing NDP: No urgency until Herefordshire's new plan emerges (likely multi-year process). Any update prematurely would lack the context necessary for compliance.
 - Development Numbers: Welsh Newton & Llanrothal had historically fulfilled required growth; system currently in flux until new policies adopted.

Members agreed to wait for the next updates from Herefordshire Council.

9. Welsh Newton Common

Graham Brookes, a resident of the common, had been invited by the Chair to attend the meeting to discuss the work he had been doing with residents following fallen trees, blocked roads and the loss of ultrafast fibre due to storm damage.

Issues that were raised included:

- Phone/electricity companies (Openreach, National Grid) have responsibilities for lines; Openreach is reluctant and telecom lines "non-critical."

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- Not all trees on the common are under TPO; TPOs only cover those standing in 1972, per council confirmation.
- Any tree work needs insurance, TPO or planning consent if relevant, and likely must be done professionally for insurance/liability.
- Community recognized the need to organize, pressure service providers, and follow legal process.

A community meeting has been scheduled for 1st February at 10am in village hall for full public consultation (posters, leaflet drop, postal/email responses).

It was NOTED that:

- While this is a community-led initiative; the council have been asked if it could hold/operate a ring-fenced bank account for funds if work was agreed; potential parish council contribution from reserves might be requested (not changes to precept).
- Before any commitments, council needs to hear community view and see a clear description and rough costing of required work (tree surgeon/walkabout risk assessment is initial step).

It was RESOLVED that the council will await the outcome of Feb 1 community meeting before determining financial or management actions as a council with respect to pruning of trees on the common, and that Cllr Parkinson will be attending the meeting on 1st February.

10. Footpaths

It was NOTED that several footpath stiles have been reported dangerous/damaged (specific locations to be mapped, photographed, sent to footpath officer). The stiles onto the Pitch are of particular concern.

It was NOTED that the council had been allocated PRoW grant funding and hopes to cover stile repairs among other issues.

It was NOTED that the upcoming DMMO/PROW legal deadline has been suspended nationally and there is no longer a "lost ways" deadline.

11. Lengthsman – to receive an update on local drainage grant fund applications and consider work undertaken and work to be carried out by the lengthsman

The Lengthsman REPORTED that:

- He is now on schedule with routine maintenance plan and working on all the roads. Work is mostly reactive due to adverse weather (flood clearing, jetting, maintenance in Newton Lodge/Great Hall area). Specific attention to three previously blocked drains; 150m of drainpipe cleared.

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- Drainage asset mapping ongoing; links/maps to be clarified with Herefordshire. Drainage project grant deadlines are due to be extended due to the bad weather/transfer of grant management to Herefordshire Council from Balfour Beatty.
- Shrubs are now in at the War Memorial.

12. Highways

- 12.1. To consider road issues for reporting to Balfour Beatty and the status of current road issue reports

It was NOTED that the new locality steward had just started at Balfour Beatty and is currently on training.

There has been mud on the road at Tregate Bridge due to the flooding which has been cleared but this is an ongoing process as it is elsewhere in the parish.

The Welsh Newton road sign is still missing and will be chased up by the clerk.

- 12.2. To consider the bad-weather action plan including the status re Balfour Beatty plans for harsh weather

It was NOTED that the grit bins are for gritting local roads and not taking away grit for personal/home use. More grit has been ordered and emergency gritting and snow ploughing possible when required.

The bin on the corner of the Welsh Newton Common Road is missing and should be replaced. It may be possible to do this with a little used bin. Refills and logistics are still done through Herefordshire Council/Balfour Beatty, but cost/efficiency issues persist.

It was NOTED that the lengthsman had not been able to locate a water supply (needed for fire) on the common and that this should be checked with Welsh Water, Cllr Walker advised that he would look into this.

13. Finance

- 13.1. To receive and consider the finance report, the bank reconciliation, including current balances and any transfer of funds.

The up-to-date transaction statements and report were shared with councillors, and it was NOTED that the bank balances as of the current date in the Lloyds Account were:

Treasurer's Account:	£8,031.22
Business bank instant account:	£7,000.53
Total:	£15,031.75

In addition, it was NOTED that the money deposited in the Cambridge & Counties fixed term bond is **£10,501.34**.

- 13.2. To consider the current bank mandate

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It was RESOLVED to add Cllr Walker as a bank account signatory and that Cllr Francis would not become a signatory after all due to limits on the number of signatories for the Community Account with Lloyds which the council was being automatically transferred to.

13.3. It was RESOLVED to make the following payments:

13.3.1. Clerk's January salary as per agreed contract

13.3.2. HMRC – PAYE for clerk's January salary

13.4. To note payments made between meetings: There were none.

13.5. To consider the budget for 2025/26

It was NOTED that the Precept to be set at February meeting.

The format of the budget in past years, presentation of data and budget calculations, and financial reporting and budget monitoring was discussed Council, and it was agreed to adapt the budget monitor and reporting to provide more visible budget/cashflow monitoring including prior-year comparators and early sight of any anticipated spending needs.

14. To consider correspondence between meetings

Baton of Hope Suicide Prevention: National campaign (passing through Herefordshire 2nd October 2025) – council to consider participating.

Herefordshire Nature Recovery Map: Details to be forwarded to councillors. Cllr Parkinson plans to attend.

15. Communications

A discussion was held regarding improving parish council/community engagement especially before the annual parish meeting and to encourage attendance. It was recognised that time is short as the meeting needs to take place before the end of May.

16. To consider items for the next meeting

Setting the budget for 2024/25; setting the precept; training for members and possibly resilience planning.

17. **Date of next meeting** – Thursday 13th February 2025 at Welsh Newton Village Hall.

The meeting closed at: 9:38 pm

Signed by the Chairman *Ed Walker*

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