



WELSH NEWTON LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Ordinary Meeting of the Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council held at Welsh Newton Village Hall on Thursday 13th November 2025

Minutes

Present: Cllrs Ed Walker (Chair), Martin Barter, Sue Parkinson and Lissy Tomlinson

In attendance: Andrée Mitchell (Clerk/RFO, PFO)

Public: 3 including Ward Cllr Swinglehurst and the lengthsman

The meeting opened at: 7:32pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Julie Francis and Keith Simmons.

2. To receive declarations of interest and written applications for dispensation from Councillors on agenda items

There were none.

3. To agree and sign the minutes of the Group Parish Council meeting held on 11th October 2025.

It was NOTED that the minutes would be brought to the next meeting.

4. Public Question Time

No questions were raised at the opening of the meeting. However, a member of the public did raise concerns later in the meeting about “slow down” signage and the balance of parish council activities across the parish (see item 7.1), also how to receive information from the council (see item 11).

5. Reports

5.1. To receive the Ward Councillor’s report

There was no written report; however, Ward Cllr Swinglehurst was present and REPORTED:

- **Budget Setting 2025/26:** The enhanced Lengthsman scheme (£120 per kilometre) is highly likely to be discontinued. Parishes should still get the core funding and should assume they will only receive the core grant (£60 per kilometre). If parishes want enhanced services, they may need to consider precept increases. This reduction is due to the current budgeting issues at Herefordshire Council where budget decisions are still to be finalised.

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th February 2026*



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- **Public Rights of Way and Drainage Grants:** The funding situation remains challenging and there is a discussion ongoing at Herefordshire Council re alternative funding approaches.
- **Planning Appeal Decision:** An interesting planning appeal decision in Llangrove was shared where the inspector ruled in favour of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), finding it carried more weight than other considerations. This demonstrates the continuing importance of NDPs despite recent changes to national planning policy. It is particularly relevant given the new NPPF and housing targets, as Herefordshire does not have the required housing land supply and speculative development applications are expected as a result.
- **Neighbourhood Development Plans:** Government will no longer fund new NDP processes. Government will only fund NDPs already at examination and referendum stage. Parishes will need to self-fund any NDP refresh or development work. If a refresh is needed and goes to referendum, the government will support the referendum, and the main costs are likely to be for external consultants if required

The ward councillor's verbal report was NOTED.

6. Planning

- 6.1. To Comment on Planning Applications for Determination by Herefordshire Council: There were none.
- 6.2. To consider recent updates to planning applications and decisions for the parish and/or on which the parish has commented

Tump Wood Forestry Track Application (P241312)

It was NOTED that the retrospective planning application that the parish had objected to earlier in the year had been "approved with conditions" further to work undertaken by the applicant to meet concerns raised by the parish council's objection and comments. The ward Cllr advised that the lack of objection from the statutory body (Natural England) and Herefordshire Council's ecologist had determined the outcome.

The ward Councillor REPORTED the following key points regarding the decision which were NOTED:

- **Regarding subdivision concerns:** Whether land subdivision in future would constitute a material change of use requiring planning permission would be assessed on individual merits. A material change of use to non-commercial or recreational use would "likely" require planning permission. The council should watch for any change of use and apply for planning permission if this occurs.

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- **Track restrictions:** The planning officer did not consider it necessary to restrict use of the track for forestry operations. External lighting has been conditioned to protect nocturnal species.
- **Woodland Management Plan:** The Forestry Commission will undertake a five-year review. A compliance condition is attached to ensure accordance with the approved woodland management plan.
- **Mitigation measures:** The planning officer did not consider it appropriate to require bird boxes and bat boxes. This is within the remit of the Forestry Commission

It was RESOLVED that if any change of use is observed in future, it should be reported to the Clerk who will raise it with planning enforcement.

It was NOTED that an application had been received regarding works to a dangerous tree with Ash Dieback covered by a TPO: **253195** – Shobdon, Welsh Newton Common, Monmouth, Herefordshire NP25 5RR. **Application Type:** Works to trees covered by TPO. **DESCRIPTION:** T1 is a mature Ash standing inside the woodland subject to TPO 052 and directly behind outbuildings of the property. The tree is showing signs of extensive Ash Dieback with approx 40% living canopy observed in early October. It is proposed to fell the tree to prevent possible damage to adjacent outbuildings.

It was NOTED that the next scheduled meeting would be in the new year and that the closing date for comments is 10th December 2025 and it was RESOLVED to submit the response in between meetings supporting removal where genuine risk given the expected extreme weather conditions.

Llanrothal Barn and Track Enforcement

Concerns were raised that planning conditions regarding track construction and drainage may not have been complied with. Additional unsuitable aggregate has been placed and covered; drainage specifications may not have been met.

A member of the public present at the meeting offered to provide photographs demonstrating the non-compliance to the clerk who would then write to Herefordshire Council enforcement referencing the appropriate specifications.

- 6.3. To consider the most recent update on the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and possible NDP (Neighbourhood Development Plan) funding

Further to the earlier discussion (item 5.1) the following was NOTED:

- The council will need to budget for NDP refresh work.
- Costs need to be considered for the 2026/27 budget.
- Focus should be on site-specific policies that may need updating.
- Other policies may remain valid and not require revision.

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It was RESOLVED that Cllr Parkinson investigate the minimum scope of work needed to refresh the NDP; obtain cost estimates for consideration at the January budget meeting; and consult with the Principal Strategic Planning Officer at Herefordshire Council regarding the refresh.

7. Footpaths, Lengthsman, Local Drainage Fund Grants and Highways

7.1. To consider any work carried out by the lengthsman and to be carried out
The Lengthsman was present and REPORTED that:

- Routine maintenance work had been undertaken in Llanrothal parish and Welsh Newton parishes since his last attendance.
- New roses planted at the War Memorial (donated by Glyn Price Garden Centre, Ross-on-Wye) and that an experimental surface treatment being trialled to address grid the displacement issues.
- An incident was reported regarding road closure for emergency drainage work at Tremahaid on the bends and a Balfour Beatty Street Works officer had attended.

The lengthsman's update was NOTED and the Chairman thanked the lengthsman for his work and it was RESOLVED that the clerk discuss the road closure incident with the Locality Steward at their next meeting.

"Slow Down" Signs

A member of the public expressed disappointment that four signs purchased three years ago (two for Welsh Newton, two for Llanrothal) have not been installed. The disappointment and frustration at the delay was formally acknowledged and NOTED.

The lengthsman REPORTED that:

- Signs required mounting rails (now fitted)
- Posts now available
- Street Works notification required
- Underground survey needed before installation
- What3Words locations required

It was RESOLVED that a site visit be arranged with the Lengthsman to confirm all four locations; ///what3words location references be obtained by the clerk; the Lengthsman would complete underground surveys and notify Street Works and that installation would proceed once clearances obtained.

Balance of Parish Council Activities

A Llanrothal resident, who has regularly attended council meetings for the past five years, expressed his frustration about what he perceived as an imbalance in attention and resources, with Welsh Newton and Welsh Newton Common receiving greater focus compared to Llanrothal.

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Councillors discussed the concerns raised with the support of the ward councillor who had been a local parish councillor for the parish until the end of 2024, and it was NOTED that:

- Most current drainage projects are in Llanrothal parish
- Welsh Newton village has received minimal attention (only speed indicator devices)
- Welsh Newton Common has historically required more attention due to higher population and volume of issues
- The decision to not hold meetings at the church in Llanrothal is based on legal restrictions and accessibility which prevent use of Llanrothal church for meetings; Welsh Newton Village Hall is centrally located with proper facilities
- Recent discussions have covered significant Llanrothal matters (Tump Wood, enforcement issues, bridge repairs, drainage, maintenance of the church and grounds at Llanrothal)

The concerns raised by the resident were formally acknowledged and NOTED and will be considered in future project planning. The council clarified that significant work and expenditure is occurring in Llanrothal, though may not be visible to residents.

7.2. To consider an update on public rights of way

Llanrothal PRoW LO11 (Near Upper Cwm Farm/The Nunnery): The Clerk reported on progress regarding the blocked path which was NOTED:

- Herefordshire Council is considering a diversion up an alternative track so that the route is passable.
- The parish council's summer decision to pursue the 20-year rule for the original route remains in place.
- A Llanrothal resident is gathering historical usage evidence.

7.3. To consider any issues to be reported to Balfour Beatty

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk continue pursuing the Garn brook Bridge issue and arrange a site visit with Lee when he is in the area.

7.4. To receive an update on grant applications for Lengthsman, Drainage and PRoW and to consider and approve PRoW grant submissions

The Lengthsman was present and REPORTED that:

- 30 applications submitted across the parishes he works with: only 4 approved to date (mid-November)
- Applications opened to all 94 Herefordshire parishes (increased from 64)
- Budget: £545,000 available; £1.1 million requested
- Public Rights of Way grants also stopped pending budget clarity
- Time-sensitive: agricultural land access limited; materials waiting in yard

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- Work must be completed by 31st March or grants lost

The update and concerns raised were NOTED and it was RESOLVED that the council would await the formal purchase order before proceeding with works. Applications will be submitted as soon as they can be and time-sensitive nature acknowledged due to land access and weather constraints.

The Ward Councillor will raise the urgency of approvals with Herefordshire Council

7.5. To consider parish council asset database and mapping (including road/drainage assets)

The need to map parish drainage assets and create a database for both Herefordshire Council and parish records as discussed at the previous meeting was NOTED.

The Ward Councillor advised that this is a county-wide issue affecting multiple parishes and she will contact the relevant portfolio holder regarding systematic failure to update county drainage maps.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to work up to 2 days per month during the next couple of months (4 days total) on the collection of data and asset mapping and that this would be reviewed.

The lengthsman advised that Balfour Beatty's policy on the salt/grit bins has changed and that they now only fill bins with HCC stickers. It was NOTED that many of these stickers have been lost. This particularly affects blue (parish) bins.

The policy change was NOTED with concern, and it was RESOLVED that a pragmatic approach would be for the lengthsman's team to top up critical bins (e.g. Welsh Newton pitch, Tregate slope, school bus routes) during routine work using available salt supplies.

The Ward Councillor advise that she may raise the sticker policy issue with Herefordshire Council.

8. Finance

8.1. To receive and consider the finance report for month ending 31st October 2025 and the bank reconciliation, including current balances & any transfer of funds.

The finance report and bank reconciliation was reviewed. It was NOTED that the bank balances as of the current date were:

Community Account:	£ 13,851.57
Business Bank Instant Account:	£ 17,062.87
Total:	£ 30,914.44

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The budget monitoring report showed expenditure on track, with overspends in Lengthsman and Footpath categories (due to small initial budgets without grant assumptions) and some underspends in other areas. Insurance costs were higher than budgeted.

The finance reports were approved and signed.

- 8.2. The following payments were approved:
- 8.2.1. Terry Griffiths Contracts – Inv. TGC3526 – Llanrothal Parish Routine Maintenance Day – £587.16 (incl. £97.86 VAT)
 - 8.2.2. Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) – Inv. H3077 – HALC Inhouse Parish Council Training (16th October 2025) – £330.00 (Incl. £55.00 VAT)
 - 8.2.3. Clerk's salary according to agreed contract for November 2025
 - 8.2.4. HMRC – PAYE for clerk's salary for November 2025

The following was not submitted for approval and will be brought to a future meeting:

- 8.2.5. Clerk's expenses including purchase of poppy wreath
- 8.3. The following payments made between meetings were NOTED:
- 8.3.1. Welsh Newton Village Hall – Hall Hire for Council training on 16th October 2025 – £18.00 (no VAT)
 - 8.3.2. Lloyds Bank – Service Charges for October 2025 – £4.25 (0% VAT)
- 8.4. The following monies received were NOTED:
- 8.4.1. Lloyds Bank – interest on reserve account – October 2025 – £8.24
 - 8.4.2. Lloyds Bank – interest on reserve account – November 2025 – £8.97
- 8.5. To consider the current scheme of delegated authority for payments made by the Clerk/RFO and agree any necessary updates to the Financial Regulations.

The Clerk had reviewed the Financial Regulations to reflect the levels currently in use by comparable councils and the council's current business needs further to advice from the Herefordshire Association of Local councils (HALC).

The updated scheme of delegated authority was APPROVED, and it was RESOLVED that the Financial Regulations be updated accordingly including delegation limits:

- Clerk: Up to £750 (excluding VAT) within agreed budget
- Clerk and Chair: Up to £3,000 (excluding VAT) within agreed budget
- Council: Over £3,000
- Emergency payments (serious risk to services/public safety): Up to £2,000 (Clerk)

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- 8.6. To receive an update on the budget process for 2025/26
The Clerk reported that Council Tax Base figures are expected within a week and it was RESOLVED that a Finance Working Group (comprising the Cllr Walker and Cllr Simmons) will meet to work on draft budget preparation for the January 2026 meeting.
- 8.7. To receive an update on procurement
It was RESOLVED that the Clerk follow up with HALC re the lengthsman procurement and contracts.

9. To consider the adoption of the Herefordshire Parish Charter

The council considered adoption of the Herefordshire Parish Charter, which sets out the working relationship between parish councils and Herefordshire Council.

10. To consider correspondence between meetings

The Clerk summarised significant correspondence including:

- Parish Council Summit recording now available (with previously missing content restored)
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams "ride along" scheme and weekly police clinic at Coffee Lab, Monmouth
- Diocese response regarding Llanrothal churchyard (CCT responsible for church and paths; churchyard remains with incumbent; not closed for burials; parish councils may make maintenance agreements)
- Update from Leader of Council (budget constraints; CEO leaving at Easter)
- Boundary Commission electoral review
- New trees to replace ash dieback losses - locations to be confirmed; possibly Llanrothal churchyard or village hall area

All correspondence was NOTED.

11. To consider items for communication via website, social media, newsletter and face-to-face

A resident noted that he had not been in receipt of parish council communication for 18-months. While it was not clear why this would be the case over that period the website had recently been transferred to a new provider and notification lists would need rebuilding with proper consent from users.

A member of the public left at 9:10pm

It was NOTED that the website should include registration information and that the council stall at the Christmas Fayre (13th December from 4pm) will provide an opportunity to collect email addresses from residents who wish to be kept informed.

12. To consider items for the next meeting

- Draft budget for 2026/27
- Set the precept for 2026/27
- Feedback from Christmas Fayre table
- Parish Council vacancy (Welsh Newton parish seat)

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13. Date of next meeting – Thursday 8th January 2026 at Welsh Newton Village Hall.

The meeting closed at: 9:45 pm

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