# Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council

Annual Meeting of the Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council held at Welsh Newton Village Hall, Welsh Newton, Herefordshire, HR2 8QL on Thursday 14 May 2026

# Minutes

**Present:** Cllrs Ed Walker (Chair), Sue Parkinson, Lissy Tomlinson and Julie Francis

**Absent:** None.

**In attendance:** Andrée Mitchell (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer)

**Members of the public: 2.**

The meeting opened at 7.35pm.

**1. Election of Chair of the Council for 2026/27**

Cllr Tomlinson proposed Cllr Walker for re-election as Chair of the Council for 2026/27; the proposal was seconded by Cllr Parkinson and Cllr J Francis. Cllr Walker confirmed he was willing to stand. It was RESOLVED unanimously that Cllr Ed Walker be elected Chair for 2026/27. Cllr Walker signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

**2. Election of Vice-Chair of the Council for 2026/27**

The Chair invited nominations for Vice-Chair. Cllr Tomlinson confirmed she was willing to continue as Vice-Chair. It was RESOLVED unanimously that Cllr Lissy Tomlinson be elected Vice-Chair for 2026/27.

**3. To receive apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**4. Declarations of interest and written applications for dispensation**

Cllr Tomlinson declared a standing Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any items relating to the Clerk's salary, expenses and contract, and confirmed she would withdraw from any such items during the meeting. There were no other declarations at this stage.

**5. To agree and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of 12 March 2026**

The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 12 March 2026 were presented for approval as a correct record. Cllr Parkinson had not been present at that meeting. The Chair confirmed he had read and signed the minutes. It was RESOLVED (three in favour, Cllr Parkinson not having been present at the meeting and therefore not voting) that the minutes of the 12 March 2026 meeting were a correct record.

**6. To receive the draft minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of 16 April 2026**

A preliminary draft of the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 16 April 2026 was circulated for information only and was not considered. It was NOTED that the minutes will be brought to a future meeting for approval.

Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____



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**7. Public Question Time**

**7.1 Designated period for public questions**

Two members of the public were present. No questions were raised.

**7.2 Ward Councillor's report**

The Ward Councillor, Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst (Llangarron Ward), was not present and had sent a written report, which was NOTED.

**8. To adopt the Co-option Policy v1.0**

The Co-option Policy v1.0 was presented. It sets out how the council fills vacancies by co-option, including who is eligible, how interests are declared and how the vote is taken. The policy applies to the Llanrothal co-option at item 9. It was RESOLVED unanimously to adopt the Co-option Policy v1.0.

**9. Llanrothal Parish — Co-option**

**9.1 Co-option to Llanrothal vacancies**

The Clerk reported that one application for co-option to fill the Llanrothal vacancies had been received, from Mr Steve Francis. The vacancy had been widely advertised on finger posts and all noticeboards across the group parish, and via the council's website.

> *Cllr J Francis declared an interest, the candidate being her husband, and left the meeting in accordance with section 6 of the Co-option Policy.*

This left three councillors present: a sufficient number to maintain quorum. Mr S Francis, at this point still a member of the public, was invited to address the meeting but indicated he had nothing to add, having already spoken to the Ward Councillor and the Chair. He answered a question from Cllr Parkinson about his skills and experience.

Having spoken, Mr S Francis was then asked to withdraw while the remaining councillors voted, in accordance with the Co-option Policy.

> *Member of the public (Mr S Francis) left the meeting.*

Councillors present agreed to proceed by a show of hands and it was RESOLVED unanimously (3 in favour) that Mr Steve Francis be co-opted as a Councillor for Llanrothal Parish.

> *Mr S Francis returned to the meeting.*

Mr S Francis signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. From this point he was a councillor and no longer a member of the public.

> *Cllr J Francis returned to the meeting.*

The Clerk noted that the second Llanrothal casual vacancy remains unfilled; it will be re-advertised in due course.

**9.2 Declarations of interest from newly co-opted councillors**

Cllr S Francis was invited to declare any interests in relation to remaining items on the agenda. He declared none.

Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____



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**10. Welsh Newton Parish — casual vacancy**

It was reported that Cllr Ben Wall had resigned with effect from 5 May 2026. The Clerk will give notice of the vacancy; co-option cannot proceed unless the period of 14 working days for electors to request a by-election passes without such a request being made.

**11. Annual Governance**

**11.1 Working groups, appointments and delegations for 2026/27**

It was RESOLVED (4 in favour, Cllr S Francis abstaining) to confirm working groups, appointments and delegations for 2026/27, including the delegation of day-to-day decisions to the Clerk as Proper Officer.

**11.2 Councillor attendance record 2025/26**

The attendance record for 2025/26 was NOTED.

**11.3 Review and re-adoption of governance documents**

The following documents were brought to the council for re-adoption: Standing Orders (re-adopted at the March 2026 meeting with the paper ballot amendment); Financial Regulations (adopted November 2025); Risk Management Policy and Risk Register (reviewed March 2026); Reserves Policy (reviewed March 2026). The Clerk noted that minor tidying of one or two outstanding provisions of the Standing Orders will be brought to a future meeting. It was RESOLVED to re-adopt the Standing Orders, the Financial Regulations, the Risk Management Policy and Risk Register, and the Reserves Policy.

**11.4 Asset register, insurance arrangements and subscriptions**

***Asset register***

The Clerk reported that the updated asset register will be brought to the June 2026 meeting, to support the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26. The council noted that the St Mary's Church noticeboard had been damaged beyond repair in a storm, as previously reported, and will be removed from the register and disposed of. Kissing gates currently held at the contractor's premises were confirmed to be assets of Herefordshire Council, not of this council, and are not to be recorded on the council's asset register.

***Insurance***

The current insurance policy is with Clear Councils Insurance and is due for renewal. It was RESOLVED (5 in favour) to authorise the Clerk to seek comparison insurance quotations and to renew the council's insurance policy for 2026/27 on the best available terms.

***Subscriptions and memberships***

The council noted and confirmed the following current subscriptions and memberships:

- Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC): £513.44 plus VAT (invoice H6092).
- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): £47.00 — mandatory data protection registration, membership no. Z9746645, expiry January 2027. The Clerk is updating the registered address.

Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____



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- Open Spaces Society: £45.00.
- Parish Online: £378.00 (mapping tools and website).
- Welsh Newton Village Hall: £318.00 annual rental (meeting room).

**11.5 General Power of Competence**

It was NOTED that the council's eligibility under the General Power of Competence, adopted in 2023, continues until the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council following the next relevant ordinary election. No vote was required; this item is a note only.

**11.6 Outside body representation and appointments for 2026/27**

The council noted and confirmed the following external representation for 2026/27:

- Cllr Tomlinson: member of Welsh Newton Village Hall committee (in her personal capacity).

**11.7 Arrangements with other local authorities and organisations**

This item was not reached during the meeting.

**12. Policy Adoptions**

**12.1 Code of Conduct and Civility and Respect Pledge**

It was RESOLVED unanimously to adopt the Herefordshire Council Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct (with local amendments) as the council's Councillor Code of Conduct v1.0, superseding the generic LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 previously published on the council's website. The council agreed to sign the Civility and Respect Pledge of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC); all councillors present confirmed their personal commitment to the pledge, which is published on the council's website.

**12.2 Data protection and related policies**

The Clerk reported that updated versions of the six policies listed under this item had been prepared using the latest NALC model policies. It was RESOLVED to defer adoption to the June or July 2026 meeting in accordance with the forward plan. Existing policies remain in force in the interim.

**12.3 Employment policies**

It was RESOLVED to defer adoption of the employment policies to the June or July 2026 meeting. Existing policies remain in force in the interim.

**12.4 Complaints procedure**

It was RESOLVED to defer the review of the complaints procedure to a future meeting. The existing Complaints Policy (May 2023) remains in force.

**12.5 Press and media policy**

It was RESOLVED to defer the review of the Press and Media Policy to a future meeting. The existing Press and Media Policy (May 2023) remains in force.

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Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____

**13. Policy and Governance Forward Plan; AGAR timetable**

**13.1 Policy and Governance Status Table and Forward Plan**

The Clerk's Policy and Governance Status Table and Forward Plan for 2026/27 was noted. It was RESOLVED to accept the forward plan.

**13.2 AGAR timetable 2025/26**

It was NOTED that:

- The AGAR for the year ending 31 March 2026 is in preparation; the internal audit is being conducted by Theresa Goss and the external audit by PKF Littlejohn. The full timetable will be confirmed at the June 2026 meeting.
- The council is not exempt from external audit for 2025/26: gross income (£32,958.47) and gross expenditure (£27,168.10) both exceed the £25,000 threshold.

**14. Clerk's terms of employment, salary and contract for 2026/27**

***It was RESOLVED to exclude the press and public for this item under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s.1(2), the item concerning the terms of employment of an individual.***

*Member of the public left the meeting.*

Cllr Tomlinson, having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, left the meeting. This left four councillors present.

It was RESOLVED unanimously:

- (a) The council notes and confirms the Clerk's current terms of employment, salary at spinal column point (SCP) 25 (unchanged from the previous year), and contract dated 18 April 2024 (original appointment date).
- (b) The date for completion of the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) under the Clerk's contract is extended to May 2027.
- (c) The Clerk will present a schedule of personally-funded CiLCA module and examination costs for the council to consider reimbursement.
- (d) The Chair and Cllr J Francis will carry out the Clerk's appraisal in June or July 2026, ideally before the summer holiday period.

*Cllr Tomlinson returned to the meeting.*

The meeting reverted to public session.

**15. Lengthsman Services 2026/27**

**15.1 Procurement outcome and next steps**

The Clerk presented a written and verbal report. The procurement exercise for lengthsman services 2026/27 was conducted in accordance with the council's resolution of 16 April 2026 and closed on 8 May 2026 at 5.00pm.

Six expressions of interest had been received during the original advertisement period. On re-advertisement no compliant applications were received.

Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____



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In accordance with the council's April resolution, the incumbent contractor, Terry Griffiths Contracts, was invited to bid, although no expression of interest had been received from the contractor. No bid was submitted. An email received from Terry Griffiths Contracts after the closing date confirmed the understanding that the existing arrangement had concluded.

The Clerk reported that she had spoken with Leigh Whitehouse, Herefordshire Council (HC) Group Manager for the Lengthsman and Public Rights of Way (PRoW) programme, ahead of the meeting. Mr Whitehouse confirmed that the HC Lengthsman Agreement can be signed without a contracted lengthsman in place. The Clerk noted that the council is not obliged to claim the full grant if the spend cannot be achieved.

It was NOTED that the procurement of lengthsman services for 2026/27, conducted in accordance with the council's resolution of 16 April 2026, closed at 5.00pm on 8 May 2026 with no applications received; that the previous arrangement with Terry Griffiths Contracts has ended; and that all invoices have been paid and there is no authorised outstanding work.

It was RESOLVED:

- (a) to adopt a multi-contractor, piecemeal commissioning model for the delivery of lengthsman services in 2026/27, funded from the available budget of £5,838, and to authorise the Clerk to develop a commissioning framework for council approval. The council noted its intention to proceed to full competitive tender during 2026/27;
- (b) to authorise the Clerk to submit drainage grant applications to Herefordshire Council before 17 May 2026, based on estimated costs from previous years' works and including maintenance of earlier schemes, pending appointment of a contractor;
- (c) that the Clerk seek competitive quotations for installing the nine PRoW gates, inviting Terry Griffiths Contracts and others to quote, with the successful contractor to collect the gates from their current location; and that the Clerk notify the HC PRoW team of the position;
- (d) that the Clerk write to Terry Griffiths Contracts confirming the council's position on the ended arrangement, requesting the return of council-owned road signs and asking what became of the rocks.

The council recorded its sincere gratitude to Terry Griffiths for his long service as Parish Lengthsman and Parish Footpaths Officer, and wished him well.

**15.2 HC Lengthsman Agreement**

It was RESOLVED to participate in the Herefordshire Council Lengthsman Scheme for 2026/27 and to authorise the Chair and Clerk to sign and submit the HC Lengthsman Agreement by 15 May 2026.

**16. Planning**

**16.1 Planning Applications P261106/FH and P261107/L — Old Orchard Barn, Llanrothal**

The two applications (one for full planning permission, one for listed building consent, both covering the same proposed development) were discussed. The consultation deadline is 29 May 2026.

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It was RESOLVED to object to application P261106/FH (Full Householder) and to application P261107/L (Listed Building Consent), on grounds including impact on the setting of Tregate Castle (a Scheduled Ancient Monument), the absence of ecological, flood-risk and archaeological assessments, the proposed access and the intended use of the building.

**16.2 Firwood Cottage, Manson Lane, Llanrothal — potential unauthorised subdivision**

Cllr J Francis gave an update. HC Planning Enforcement has confirmed that enforcement action is in progress. The council will continue to monitor the matter.

**16.3 Neighbourhood Development Plan review**

No update available at this meeting. No action required.

**16.4 Other planning matters**

The Clerk noted that responses to outstanding planning consultations had been submitted following the April meeting. Monitoring of outstanding applications and enforcement matters will continue and updates will be provided at future meetings as appropriate.

**17. Welsh Newton Parish (including Welsh Newton Common)**

**17.1 s.38 Commons Act 2006 — Steepways site access across CL54**

The Clerk reported that contact with the Planning Inspectorate is continuing; no substantive update was available. Works on the Common access road were noted and will be monitored.

**17.2 Openreach streetworks on U71222 — March 2026 incident**

The formal written complaint to Herefordshire Council Streetworks has not yet been submitted. As authorised at the April 2026 meeting, the Clerk will submit the complaint, with photographic evidence, before the June 2026 meeting.

**17.3 National Grid electricity pole — Welsh Newton Common**

The matter continues to progress satisfactorily, with National Grid following the s.38 Commons Act 2006 consent process as required. An update will be provided at the June 2026 meeting.

**17.4 Defibrillators — status and pad replacement**

The Clerk reported that the pads on the Welsh Newton Common defibrillator required replacement and sought approval to purchase them within the budget for pads. It was noted that the Llanrothal pads may also be due shortly.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to replace defibrillator pads as required, within budget, without further approval.

**17.5 Other Welsh Newton parish matters**

Nothing further to report at this meeting.

**18. Llanrothal Parish**

**18.1 Tump Wood enforcement matter (E/2026/427837/ENS)**

The Clerk reported that a further report of works at Tump Wood had been received from a local resident, with photographic evidence. The Clerk contacted HC Planning Enforcement,



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who attended the site and confirmed that the works observed were the completion of tracks within the existing planning permission; the permitted development had not been extended. The installation of additional red topping/surfacing was noted. The enforcement case has been closed. The council will continue to monitor the site.

**18.2 Enforcement matter — land near Lower Cwm Farm**

No further update from HC Planning Enforcement since the April meeting. The Clerk has taken additional photographs of material (rubble) continuing to be deposited. HC Planning Enforcement has previously confirmed this is not a planning enforcement matter; the Clerk will write to HC regarding whether the matter falls within Environmental Enforcement's remit. The council noted the position.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk will write to Herefordshire Council on this matter.

**18.3 Other Llanrothal parish matters**

The Firwood Cottage matter is covered under item 16.2. Nothing further to report.

**19. Footpaths, Drainage and Highways**

**19.1 Drainage grant applications 2026/27**

Covered under item 15.1(b). Drainage priorities identified include Tremahaid, the Tregate Farm area and the Llanrothal area, including the pitch to Llanrothal, which requires annual attention.

**19.2 Public Rights of Way update; Parish Footpath Officer appointment**

Kissing gate installation is covered under item 15.1(c).

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Tomlinson be appointed as Parish Footpath Officer for 2026/27.

**19.3 Cross-parish highway matters**

The Broad Oak road: repair works have been carried out but the worst section remains unaddressed.

Pothole damage: a councillor reported tyre damage caused by potholes in the parish; residents are encouraged to report potholes via Herefordshire Council's online system.

**20. Finance**

**20.1 Finance report — bank reconciliation, balances and year-end 2025/26**

The Clerk presented the finance report including bank reconciliation, current balances, budget monitoring and year-end position for 2025/26.

Year-end position 2025/26:

- Gross income: £32,958.47 (precept £14,456.50; HC grants and donations £18,426.00; reserve account interest £75.97). Excludes inter-account transfers per Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) guidance.
- Gross expenditure: £27,168.10 (total cash book payments inc. VAT, less £10,000 inter-account transfer).

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Bank balances as at 14 May 2026:

- Current account: £25,210.44
- Reserve account: £7,102.01
- Total: £32,312.45

It was NOTED that:

- £12,581.47 was received from Herefordshire Council on 21 April 2026, comprising the first instalment of the 2026/27 precept (£7,589.67; annual precept £15,179.33) and the 2025/26 lengthsman (£2,754.90) and drainage ditching (£2,236.90) grant claims.
- The council is not exempt from external audit for 2025/26 (see item 13.2).
- The full year-end budget monitoring and AGAR will be brought to the June 2026 meeting once the internal audit is complete.

**20.2 Transfer of surplus funds to reserve account**

It was RESOLVED to transfer £20,000 from the current account to the reserve account to maximise interest income in the short term. The Clerk will report on options for a slightly longer-term savings arrangement, taking into account the expected cash flow position, at a future meeting.

The council noted a shortage of bank payment approvers following recent councillor resignations.

**20.3 Payments to be made**

Cllr Tomlinson, having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, left the meeting for the payments relating to the Clerk.

The following payments were approved:

- Clerk's salary for May 2026 — APPROVED.
- HMRC — PAYE and employer NI for May 2026 — APPROVED.
- Payroll: the Chair and Clerk to sign the authorisation to the payroll provider for back pay arising from the 2025/26 national pay award (resolved 11 September 2025).

*Cllr Tomlinson returned to the meeting.*

- Council insurance renewal: approved in principle subject to the quotation process (see item 11.4).
- Defibrillator pads (Welsh Newton Common): approved under the standing authorisation (see item 17.4).

**20.4 Payments made between meetings**

The following payments made between meetings were noted:

- Lloyds Bank — service charges: £4.25 (20 April 2026, 0% VAT).
- Terry Griffiths Contracts — invoice TGC3776, WN Local Drainage Grant 008: £960.00 (incl. VAT) — 23 April 2026.

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- Terry Griffiths Contracts — invoice TGC3773, WN Routine Maintenance: £587.16 (incl. VAT) — 23 April 2026.
- Terry Griffiths Contracts — invoice TGC3777, WN Local Drainage Grant 007: £2,160.00 (incl. VAT) — 23 April 2026.
- Autela Payroll Services Ltd — invoice 16974 (payroll processing Dec 2025–Mar 2026 and HMRC end-of-year submission): £102.00 (incl. VAT) — 23 April 2026.
- The Open Spaces Society — annual membership renewal 2026/27, membership no. 78989: £45.00 — 23 April 2026.
- Clerk's salary — April 2026 — 24 April 2026. Paid between meetings as a regular contractual payment in accordance with Financial Regulations, as a quorate vote could not be achieved at the April meeting.
- HMRC — PAYE and employer NI for April 2026 — 24 April 2026. Paid between meetings as above.

The council confirmed that all outstanding invoices from Terry Griffiths Contracts have been paid and no further authorised work is outstanding.

**20.5 Monies received**

The following monies received were noted:

- Herefordshire Council — drainage minor projects grant 2025/26: £7,200.00 (received 16 April 2026).
- Herefordshire Council — precept first instalment 2026/27: £7,589.67 (received 21 April 2026).
- Herefordshire Council — lengthsman grant claim 2025/26 (invoice 2025-26 003): £2,754.90 (received 21 April 2026).
- Herefordshire Council — drainage ditching grant claim 2025/26 (invoice 2025-26 002): £2,236.90 (received 21 April 2026).
- Lloyds Bank — interest on reserve account, April 2026: £4.93.
- Lloyds Bank — interest on reserve account, May 2026 (credited 11 May 2026): £3.11.

**20.6 Ward Member community grant**

The Clerk drew the council's attention to the Herefordshire Council Ward Member community grant scheme (£1,000 per Ward Member; grants of £50 to £1,000 for community projects).

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk circulate the application link to the council's community networks for wider distribution. The scheme will also be promoted through the forthcoming community newsletter and the Annual Parish Meeting.

**21. Schedule of meetings 2026/27**

It was RESOLVED to hold 11 meetings in 2026/27, an increase from 10, by reinstating a December meeting; meetings will be held on the second Thursday of each month, with no meeting in August. The Clerk will circulate the full schedule.

Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____



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**22. Annual Parish Meetings**

It was CONFIRMED that the combined Annual Parish Meetings for Welsh Newton and Llanrothal parishes will be held on Thursday 21 May 2026 at 7.30pm at Welsh Newton Village Hall (venue confirmed). Format: combined meeting for both parishes, as in the previous year, with short presentations from the village hall and church invited.

**23. Correspondence between meetings**

All substantive correspondence had been covered under the relevant agenda items. The council noted receipt of:

- Herefordshire Council environment/public realm project correspondence (circulated; noted).
- Herefordshire Council finance report (circulated; noted).

**24. Items for the next meeting**

Items for the June 2026 meeting were noted.

**25. Date of next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting will be the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council, Thursday 11 June 2026 at Welsh Newton Village Hall, 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.56pm.

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Signed by the Chair _____ Dated _____