

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Ordinary Meeting of the Welsh Newton & Llanrothal Group Parish Council held at
Welsh Newton Village Hall, Welsh Newton, Herefordshire, HR2 8QL on Thursday
12th February 2026

Minutes

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

In attendance: Andrée Mitchell (Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer)

Public: 1 (applicant for item 7.1.1, who left following that item)

The meeting opened at: 7:33pm

1. To receive apologies for absence

There were none.

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

Cllr Tomlinson declared a standing Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any items relating to the Clerk's salary and expenses. There were no other declarations.

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

It was NOTED that the January 2026 meeting, scheduled for 8th January, was cancelled due to Storm Goretti. A prospective applicant for co-option to fill the long-standing Welsh Newton Parish vacancy had been expected to attend that meeting but was also unable to attend this rescheduled meeting due to a prior commitment. They have confirmed they will attend the March 2026 meeting.

4. To agree and sign the minutes of the Group Parish Council meetings held on 9th October 2025 and 13th November 2025

It was RESOLVED to approve the draft minutes of the meetings held on 9th October 2025 and 13th November 2025 and they were signed by the meeting Chair. Outstanding items arising from the minutes were addressed under the relevant agenda items.

5. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

6. Reports

6.1 To receive the Ward Councillor's report

No report had been received for this meeting.

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th March 2026*

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

7. Planning

7.1 To Comment on Planning Applications for Determination by Herefordshire Council

7.1.1 P253478/F – Erection of a shepherd’s hut for use as holiday let accommodation – Commongate Cottage, Welsh Newton, Herefordshire, HR2 8QS

The applicant was present. The application was noted as well-prepared with comprehensive supporting documentation including a Biodiversity Net Gain report. Councillors noted the positive environmental credentials of the proposal including native species planting, secure bicycle storage and use of existing recycling facilities. It was RESOLVED unanimously to SUPPORT the application on the grounds that it supports rural business development and will contribute to generating income and work in the parish.

The member of the public left at this point.

7.2 To consider recent updates to planning applications and decisions for the parish

7.2.1 P253216/F – Steepways, From St Wolstons Road to Nythfa Property, Welsh Newton, Herefordshire, NP25 5RT – alterations to approved entrance to allow perpendicular access

It was NOTED that comments had been submitted between meetings in accordance with the agreed delegated protocol. The application has been approved with conditions including a requirement for a landscaping scheme demonstrating replanting of the hedge on the opposite side of the entrance.

7.3 To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Cllr Parkinson REPORTED that Herefordshire Council has confirmed that the parish is expected to accommodate a further 11 houses, with Welsh Newton Common identified as the most sustainable location in the Local Development Framework. Discussion took place on the implications and available options.

It was NOTED that:

- most housing supply is expected to come from windfall development rather than allocated sites;
- identifying a site known to be unavailable can be used strategically to demonstrate housing land supply and defend against speculative applications;
- Cllr Simmons advised that it is preferable to engage with the process rather than disengage;

Cllr Parkinson REPORTED that she had contacted Toby Fountain at Herefordshire Nature Trust regarding inspection of local wildlife sites within the parish. It was NOTED that Herefordshire Nature Trust is willing to carry out inspections and assist with management plans and will make contact with landowners directly.

It was NOTED that Cllr Parkinson is awaiting a response from the Local Development Framework team regarding next steps for the NDP refresh. Cllr Parkinson will copy the Clerk into her correspondence with the Strategic Planning Officer.

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th March 2026*

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

8. Highways, Public Rights of Way and Drainage

8.1 To receive the lengthsman's report and to consider any highway matters

It was NOTED that:

- two slow down signs installed on U71218 at Lower Skenchill and Llanrothal (TGC3667);
- work at Llanrothal Bridge completed (ditching, pipe repair, hardcore on track to church);
- Garnsbrook: Balfour Beatty substantially completed remedial works (tree root blockage, gabion basket, new concrete, concrete grip installed);
- drain near phone box at Welsh Newton Common remains problematic – Clerk to follow up;
- overhanging trees on bus route being addressed (Herefordshire side in progress, Cllr Parkinson liaising with Monmouthshire CC);
- potholes at Tregate Farm: one of three treated, Clerk to follow up on remaining two.

8.2 To receive an update on Public Rights of Way matters

It was NOTED that:

- LO11 – former Chair has submitted documentary evidence package in support of 20-year rule claim; Clerk will review and update council;
- Herefordshire Council reorganised PRow function into four areas; parish PRow officer will be Cerri Belli; Clerk will arrange joint path walk;
- Cllr Tomlinson booked on strimmer/hedge cutter training and risk assessment training;
- Cllr Walker unable to attend footpath officers induction training due to half-term; hopes to attend future session.

8.3 To receive an update on outstanding highway matters

Highway issues were covered under item 8.1. The Clerk is continuing to survey and report outstanding issues to Balfour Beatty and Herefordshire Council.

8.4 To consider drainage grant applications, works and contract matters

It was NOTED that drainage grant applications have been determined. Of six minor project applications, four were approved at £1,800 each totalling £7,200: Projects 007, 006, 009 and 010. Projects 005 and 008 were unsuccessful. A separate ditching grant of £2,236.90 was awarded. Total 2025/26 drainage grant allocation: £9,436.90. All work must be completed by end of financial year and claimed by 10th April 2026.

It was RESOLVED to ratify all works instructed between meetings, to authorise the Clerk to instruct Terry Griffiths Contracts to proceed with three priority ditching projects (Project 001 Tremahaid, Project 004 Manson Lane, Project 008 Quab to Croadwr), and to approve and sign the contract variation covering the full grant allocation of £9,436.90.

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th March 2026*

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

Regarding kissing gates: it was RESOLVED that Cllr Francis will ask on the community WhatsApp group for volunteers; the Clerk will obtain itemised quotations and liaise with Cerri Belli ahead of any installation.

9. Parish Assets

- 9.1 To consider the replacement of the Welsh Newton noticeboard

It was NOTED that the Welsh Newton noticeboard was destroyed during the December 2025 storms. Welsh Newton Village Hall is permitting interim use of its noticeboard. It was RESOLVED that the Clerk will research replacement options and bring proposals with costs to a future meeting.

10. Finance

- 10.1 To receive and approve the finance report and bank reconciliation

Bank balances as of 10th February 2026:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Community Account | £9,514.33 |
| Business Bank Instant Account | £17,087.42 |
| Total | £26,601.75 |

It was NOTED that: an HALC invoice (Inv. H3124) overpayment of £11.25 has been queried with HALC, response awaited; the ICO registration is held under an out-of-date address, which the Clerk will update.

The finance report and bank reconciliation were reviewed and approved.

- 10.2 To approve the following payments:

- 10.2.1 Terry Griffiths Contracts – Inv. TGC3667 – Installation of two slow down signs on metal posts as instructed on U71218 at Lower Skenchill and Llanrothal areas – January 2026 – £168.00 (incl. £28.00 VAT)
- 10.2.2 Terry Griffiths Contracts – Inv. TGC3668 – Local Drainage Grant project 006 on U71218 Llanrothal Parish – January 2026 – £2,160.00 (incl. £360.00 VAT)
- 10.2.3 Terry Griffiths Contracts – Inv. TGC3672 – Llanrothal Parish Routine Maintenance Day – January 2026 – £587.16 (incl. £97.86 VAT)
- 10.2.4 Parish Online – Inv. 00GA221-0006 – Parish Online – Mapping Software (annual subscription) – £48.00 (incl. £8.00 VAT)
- 10.2.5 Clerk’s salary according to agreed contract for February 2026
- 10.2.6 HMRC – PAYE for Clerk’s salary for February 2026
- 10.2.7 Clerk’s expenses for purchase of poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday 2025 – £19.99

Cllr Tomlinson abstained from the vote on items 10.2.5, 10.2.6 and 10.2.7 by reason of declared interest. All other payments were approved.

- 10.3 To note payments made between meetings:

- 10.3.1 Terry Griffiths Contracts – Inv. TGC3571 – Welsh Newton Parish Routine Maintenance Day – November 2025 – £587.16 (incl. £97.86 VAT)

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th March 2026*

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

- 10.3.2 Terry Griffiths Contracts – Inv. TGC3648 – Welsh Newton Parish Routine Maintenance Day – December 2025 – £587.16 (incl. £97.86 VAT)
- 10.3.3 Autela Payroll Services Ltd – Inv. 16488 – Payroll processing August 2025 to November 2025 – £84.00 (incl. £14.00 VAT)
- 10.3.4 Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) – Inv. H3124 – Domain name and hosting May 2025 to July 2025 – £78.75 (incl. £11.25 VAT)
- 10.3.5 Welsh Newton Village Hall – meeting hall hire for 2026 (excludes August and December 2026) – £300.00 (no VAT)
- 10.3.6 Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) – Annual registration fee – £47.00
- 10.3.7 Clerk’s salary according to agreed contract for December 2025
- 10.3.8 HMRC – PAYE for Clerk’s salary for December 2025
- 10.3.9 Clerk’s salary according to agreed contract for January 2026
- 10.3.10 HMRC – PAYE for Clerk’s salary for January 2026
- 10.3.11 Lloyds Bank – service charges for November 2025 – £4.25 (0% VAT)
- 10.3.12 Lloyds Bank – service charges for December 2025 – £4.25 (0% VAT)
- 10.3.13 Lloyds Bank – service charges for January 2026 – £4.25 (0% VAT)

All payments between meetings were NOTED.

10.4 To NOTE monies received:

- 10.4.1 Lloyds Bank – interest on reserve account – December 2025 – £8.13
- 10.4.2 Lloyds Bank – interest on reserve account – January 2026 – £8.70

10.5 Draft Budget 2026/27

10.5.1 To consider the draft budget for 2026/27

The Clerk presented the draft budget for 2026/27 including a four-year projection to 2028/29 (Appendix A). The tax base has increased from 163.4 to 170.5 Band D equivalent properties for 2026/27. The budget was presented on a receipts and payments basis with one-off items clearly identified to aid interpretation of the reserve position.

The 2026/27 budget includes a number of one-off items reflecting catch-up from previous years: VAT recovery of £8,888.54 (covering 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26, to be claimed following clerk VAT training); lengthsman grant catch-up of £3,276.00; and drainage grant reimbursement of £9,437.00. These items inflate the 2026/27 income and expenditure figures and do not recur.

Project expenditure budgeted for 2026/27 includes: NDP phase 1 consultancy £3,500; replacement noticeboard £2,000; kissing gates (9 units at £300 each) £2,700; and drainage works balance £5,837. Grant funding will be sought for gates and NDP where available.

Projected closing reserves at 31 March 2026 are £20,070.03. The council’s reserve policy minimum (50% of net revenue expenditure) is £16,534.80, giving a buffer of £3,535.24. Reserves remain above the policy minimum in all four projected years, reaching £25,407.23 at end of 2026/27 before reducing in subsequent years as one-off items clear. The lowest projected closing balance

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Dated *12th March 2026*

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

across the four-year period is £14,727.32 (2028/29), which remains £4,304.05 above the policy minimum on conservative assumptions.

Discussion noted that maintaining a 5% annual precept increase is necessary to keep reserves above the policy minimum given the expected reduction in lengthsman grant funding beyond 2026/27, and that healthy reserves strengthen the council's position when applying for future grants. It was RESOLVED unanimously to approve the budget for 2026/27.

10.5.2 To consider setting the precept for 2026/27

It was RESOLVED unanimously to set the precept for 2026/27 at £15,179.33, a 5% increase on 2025/26. Due to the increase in the tax base from 163.4 to 170.5 Band D equivalent properties, the impact on individual households is proportionally smaller: the Band D charge increases from £88.47 to £89.03, an annual increase of 56 pence (approximately 5 pence per month). The four-year projection assumes a continuing 5% annual precept increase, giving projected Band D charges of £93.48 in 2027/28 and £98.15 in 2028/29. The Clerk will submit the precept requirement to Herefordshire Council.

10.6 To consider putting contracts out for tender for approval at the April 2026 meeting

It was NOTED that the new lengthsman contract scope is expected from Herefordshire Council by end of February 2026. It was RESOLVED that the Clerk will prepare tender documentation for consideration and approval at the April 2026 meeting.

11. To consider correspondence between meetings and to receive an update on other items from the Clerk

Cllr Parkinson REPORTED that six bare-root trees (oak and beech) had been received from the Woodland Trust. Sites identified include Llanrothal church, Welsh Newton church, Welsh Newton Village Hall entrance, and two sites at Welsh Newton Common. One further site is needed. Cllr Parkinson will liaise with Cllr Walker and make contact with St Mary's Parochial Church Council regarding a further planting site. Trees should be planted promptly as they are bare-root.

Cllrs Barter and Simmons tendered their resignations from the council at this point. The Chair thanked both councillors warmly on behalf of the council for their service and local knowledge. Cllr Barter passed the keys for the Llanrothal (Nunnery) noticeboard to the Clerk. Cllr Simmons will return the Lloyds Bank card and card reader at the earliest opportunity.

It was NOTED that: the Clerk will attend VAT training in February 2026 and will submit the VAT126 reclaim following that training; bank signatory arrangements will need to be reviewed following Cllr Simmons' resignation, and the Clerk will follow up mandate and online banking administrator arrangements with Lloyds Bank.

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

Cllr Tomlinson proposed a news bulletin on the council website, a leaflet drop to introduce the website and collect email addresses, and a community news event. It was agreed to discuss community engagement plans in more detail at the March 2026 meeting. The Clerk confirmed that co-option vacancies would be advertised by the required legal notice process.

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th March 2026*

WELSH NEWTON & LLANROTHAL GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

13. To consider items for the next meeting – No discussion

Co-option of new councillor(s) to fill vacancies; community police officer attendance; community engagement plans; year-end financial matters.

14. Date of next meeting – Thursday 12th March 2026 at Welsh Newton Village Hall.

The meeting closed at: 9:43pm

Signed by the Chair *Ed Walker*

Dated *12th March 2026*