



Birch Ward, Cllr update September 2026

I hope you have all had a good summer.

After such a hot summer and the drought, it might be a good opportunity for parish councils to look to how they can support the River Wye. [The Charter for the River Wye - Wye Catchment Partnership](#). Please let me know if your parish is willing to sign up to the charter on behalf of residents in the parish.

### **Progress on Children's Services**

The service is achieving well in terms of budget and permanency of the workforce. The council is expecting a response from DfE on the SEND deficit ([Government commits to paying 90% of councils' SEND deficits](#)) Restorative Practice – working with families on a strength based system – is now well embedded in the directorate.

Herefordshire Council is set to invest more than £9 million of Department for Education (DfE) capital grant funding to support additional local school places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The proposed programme will help increase local SEND capacity across the county, supporting more children and young people to access suitable education closer to home where this is appropriate to their needs.

The funding will support a flexible capital programme. This may include the development of specialist support bases within mainstream schools, the expansion of existing specialist provision, and the acquisition, adaptation or refurbishment of suitable buildings or land where this provides a deliverable and cost-effective route to creating additional SEND capacity.

### **The council has launched a public consultation on plans to create a new 40-place special school at the Ryefield Centre in Ross on Wye.**

This would be for children aged 4 to 11 with Moderate and Additional Learning Difficulties (MALD) and other complex special educational needs.

The proposal forms part of the council's wider work to increase specialist education provision across Herefordshire in response to growing demand for places.

The proposed school would help more children with additional needs access suitable, high-quality specialist education within Herefordshire and closer to their families and communities.

The Ryefield Centre has been identified as a potential location for the new school as an existing council-owned site that could be adapted to provide high-quality specialist education.

The consultation is open to anyone with an interest in the proposal, including children and families, schools and education providers, local residents, community organisations, health and care partners and neighbouring local authorities.

### **The consultation will run until 12 noon on Friday 2 October 2026.**

Completing the online survey: [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/proposal-to-establish-a-new-special-school](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/proposal-to-establish-a-new-special-school)

### **BUS SERVICE CHANGES**

Herefordshire Council is reminding passengers about several bus service changes taking effect from the end of August and beginning of September, including new journeys in the morning and evening to help people get out and about.

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This joins several timetable changes to improve reliability and introduce new operators to existing services.

The improvements from 30 August include:

- Additional evening journeys and enhanced Sunday services on service 23 between Newport and Hereford
- More journeys serving Hereford Railway Station on service 66 between Monmouth and Hereford

Minor timetable changes on several other routes to improve punctuality and reliability for bus services

- Retimed journeys on Service 32/33 between Gloucester and Ross On Wye

[66 - Monmouth - Wormelow - Hereford – Newport Bus – Bus Times](#)

[33 - Gloucester - Mitchledean - Ross on Wye - Hereford – Stagecoach West – Bus Times](#)

### **Grant for community connection and wellbeing**

Local people and groups across Herefordshire can get up to £250 towards a new or existing project that could make communities stronger and improve mental health and wellbeing.

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Through our joint suicide prevention programme with Worcestershire, we are offering grants for activity that is led by residents, whether individuals, community groups, or small charities and will benefit their local areas and the people living there.

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Microgrants Scheme is now open for 2026. The application process is easy via the [Micro Grants for Neighbourhood and Community Groups - Application Form](#) or for an informal chat, contact [hwbadmin@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:hwbadmin@worcestershire.gov.uk)

### **A new plan setting out how Herefordshire can protect and restore its natural environment.**

The Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will provide a framework for coordinated action to help nature recover across the county – identifying where improvements to habitats could deliver the greatest benefits for wildlife, the environment and local communities.

The strategy includes a Local Habitat Map, showing important existing areas for biodiversity as well as locations where action could create or improve habitats for nature.

It also sets out 37 priorities and 100 measures and supporting actions, covering some of the habitats and species most important to Herefordshire – from rivers, wetlands, woodlands and traditional orchards to hedgerows, grasslands, farmland and nature-rich urban areas.

### **Herefordshire residents are being asked not to take fridges or freezers to household recycling centres**

The temporary change is due to a national shortage of places able to recycle old fridges and freezers, which is affecting councils and waste companies across the country.

The Council is working with its waste contractor to find out how long the disruption is likely to last and will provide an update as soon as it is able to accept these appliances again.

What can I do with my old fridge or freezer?

If you need to get rid of an appliance while the temporary suspension is in place, you can:

- Give it away or sell it: If your appliance is still in good working order, consider giving it away or selling it so it can be reused. Find out more about reusing unwanted items on the Council's website, including links to services such as Freecycle and Freecycle. Find out more here: [Reuse it - Herefordshire Council](#)
- Can it be repaired?
- A retailer take-back scheme: If you're buying a replacement fridge or freezer, ask the retailer whether they can take your old appliance away.
- Store it safely: If possible, safely store your fridge or freezer at home until household recycling centres are able to accept them again.
- This is a national issue so other licensed waste carriers may be experiencing the same problem. Please check where they will be taking your item to if you use one.

- Do not use any unlicensed operators as they may illegally dump waste, and residents can be held responsible if their waste is found illegally disposed of.

### **LITTER AND LAYBYS**

After much lobbying by myself and others Herefordshire Council is launching a new hard-hitting campaign to tackle littering in laybys across the county, including the irresponsible disposal of bottles, food waste, packaging and other rubbish.

The Love Our Laybys campaign aims to challenge those who leave litter behind and remind visitors and residents that keeping Herefordshire's countryside clean is everyone's responsibility.

The campaign follows ongoing issues with litter being left in laybys across the county. The Council's Streetscene team and community volunteers regularly carry out clean-ups and have found a wide range of waste, including discarded bottles containing urine, alongside food packaging, drinks containers, takeaway waste and other roadside litter.

Cleansing teams have also reported finding other unpleasant and hazardous waste left behind in laybys, creating additional challenges for those responsible for keeping these areas clean and safe.

Finally, I am currently escalating various road safety issues with the Highways team particularly as we head into autumn and winter. If you have concerns around safety for all road users, INCLUDING pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, then please do let me know.

All the best,  
Toni