



BIRCH WARD NEWS October 2026 **Cllr Toni Fagan**

Crisis and Resilience Fund Summit

Organisations, community groups and partners are invited to attend the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) Summit on Tuesday 13 October, from 9am to 1pm at the Shell Store, Hereford. The event will bring together people working across sectors to share learning, strengthen partnerships and explore how we can better support individuals and communities facing hardship.

The summit will provide an opportunity to hear about the impact of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, discuss local challenges and opportunities, and help shape future approaches to building stronger, more resilient communities. It is a valuable chance to connect with others, exchange ideas and contribute to the ongoing development of support across the county.

To book a place, visit the [Eventbrite registration page](#), or to find out more about the Crisis and Resilience Fund, visit the [Talk Community Directory](#).

Parish Summit

Please use link below to book your place on the upcoming Parish Summit event, held at Plough Lane offices on Tuesday 13th October 2026.

As before, only 2 in person spaces per parish are available.

[Attend a Parish Summit - MyHerefordshire - Book](#)

*Please note that we are offering a virtual option, if you select this you will receive the invite via email nearer the time, and will only be for the body of the summit presentation, 6:00pm – 8:00pm.

**All those choosing to attend online are agreeing to your email address being made visible to all other online participants.

Switch off of the analogue telephone system (plain old telephone system POTS).

From the end of January 2027 the existing POTS will cease.

BT and other providers have been digitising users lines for a number of years by converting their existing analogue lines to digital ones using a Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) box into which the existing telephone is connected – enabling the phone continues to work when the POTS is switched off.

However if the home loses power (i.e. in a storm) then the VoIP box will stop working.

BT and the other telephone providers have been installing battery backup packs for those over 75, or deemed vulnerable – enabling the VoIP telephone continues to work when there is a power failure. The battery packs are smart and should last a considerable time.

The adult social care tech team have ensured that all of our residents with pendants and other technical devices which depend on telephone connectivity have been converted.

Superfast broadband - We have achieved approximately 98% of homes with the option of having 30Mb/s at their residence. For 75% of the population this increases to 100Mb/s. For those hard to reach residents, the final 2% Project Gigabit, operated by Building Digital UK (BDUK) will provide a landline solution by 2031. We are currently unaware of the detailed BDUK plan for Herefordshire. Herefordshire currently offering those residents who do not have fast broadband a Starlink service which can provide up to 500Mb/s. Herefordshire Council will cover the cost of the installation - the resident pays the running costs which are approximately £40 per month.

Common Ground Award Funding Now Open

Community organisations across England are invited to apply for funding through the latest round of the Common Ground Award. The programme aims to support projects that bring people

together, strengthen community relationships, and create welcoming spaces where residents can connect and feel a sense of belonging.

The fund will provide up to £2.5 million nationally, with grants of £20,000 to £50,000 available for individual organisations. In some exceptional cases, grants of up to £100,000 may be awarded.

Consortiums of organisations can apply for between £100,000 and £250,000. Funding can be used for capital costs such as improving community buildings, renovating facilities, creating shared spaces, or purchasing equipment that helps people come together.

Applications are open now and close on 12 October 2026. Eligible applicants include voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations based and operating in England.

Find out more and apply via the [Common Ground Award application page](#).

Boost Volunteering with the Herefordshire Volunteering Academy

The Herefordshire Volunteering Academy is supporting organisations across the county to attract, develop and retain volunteers through a range of free resources and training opportunities.

If your organisation has volunteering roles available, now is a great time to register them with the Academy. Promoting opportunities through the Herefordshire Volunteering Academy can help connect you with people looking to make a difference in their communities and support your organisation's activities.

As well as advertising volunteering opportunities, organisations can access a range of free volunteering training and development resources designed to help create positive volunteering experiences and strengthen volunteer programmes.

Find out more, access training and register your volunteering opportunities via the [Talk Community Directory](#).

People's Emergency Briefing [National Emergency Briefing](#)

- Join us in Llanwarne on Thursday, 8 October at 7pm for a community screening of this powerful, short film which breaks down the latest scientific evidence regarding climate and ecological risks we face into clear, accessible facts.

We are hosting this event not just to share this vital information, but to bring our community together, move from concern to constructive action and resilience - and build the local momentum needed to press our leaders for a nationwide response. Come along to share your thoughts, and discover how we can collaborate for a resilient future

[Bookings](#)

Skills Conference 2026

Businesses and employers across Herefordshire are being invited to take part in a major conference exploring how the county can build the workforce it will need for the future.

The Herefordshire Skills Conference 2026, hosted by the Herefordshire Growth Hub, will take place on Monday 5 October at Plough Lane, Hereford, bringing together businesses, employers, education and skills partners to explore the challenges and opportunities shaping the future workforce.

The conference will look at some of the key issues facing employers, including the impact of artificial intelligence and new technology, skills shortages, recruitment and retention, productivity, changing expectations of work and creating more inclusive workplaces.

New bursary backed by Herefordshire Council to help more local people access higher education and study for degrees in Herefordshire.

The Herefordshire Futures Bursary, offered through Hereford College of Arts and Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College, is designed to help college leavers and career changers

overcome financial barriers to higher education and develop the skills they need for their future careers.

Eligible students can receive £1,000 for each year of full-time undergraduate study, up to a maximum of £3,000, with support of £500 per year available for eligible part-time study.

Priority will be given to applicants from some of Herefordshire's most disadvantaged communities, low-income households and those who were eligible for free school meals in further education in 2025/26. Other Herefordshire residents experiencing financial barriers to higher education may also be considered.

The bursary is part of a partnership between Herefordshire Council and local education providers, including Hereford College of Arts and Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College, to strengthen pathways from education into higher-skilled employment and help local people develop the skills needed by employers across the county.

Commercial Road and Blueschool Street junction traffic signal replacement 12 Oct-4 Dec

Council is replacing the traffic signal system at the Commercial Road and Blueschool Street junction as part of ongoing investment in improving traffic signals around the city centre.

The existing system is being replaced with modern, more reliable equipment to help keep traffic moving through this busy part of the city and reduce the risk of faults causing disruption.

and the junction will remain open to traffic for the majority of the essential works. However, while the permanent traffic lights are being physically replaced, temporary three-way traffic signals will control traffic through the junction.

Loft insulation scam! Herefordshire Council is warning residents to be on their guard against cold callers offering loft insulation and claiming to be from or working with the Council or government.

Council Trading Standards officers recently stepped in to help two Herefordshire residents in their 80s after salesmen arrived at their homes falsely purporting to be surveyors. They were offering bogus loft insulation surveys with the sole intention of conning them into unnecessary work at a grossly inflated price.

The residents had received unsolicited telephone calls to arrange the appointments, with the caller falsely claiming to be calling from Herefordshire Council in one instance and calling on behalf of the government in the other.

[Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation](#) - Have your say on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme from April 2027. Wednesday 16 September to Wednesday 4 November 2026.

Herefordshire residents are encouraged to have their say on potential changes to the **[Council Tax Reduction Scheme \(CTRS\)](#)** for working age adults on low incomes. The overall cost of CTRS awarded to working age and pensioner claimants in 2026/27 is approximately £16.4 million per annum, supporting over 6,500 working age adults and 4,700 pensioners. The cost of this scheme is funded by all taxpayers in Herefordshire.