

Birch Ward Update – March 2024

Cllr Toni Fagan

Phosphate Credits releasing housing sites in North Herefordshire

Herefordshire Council responded to the issue of the North Herefordshire moratorium on housing due to phosphates in the Lugg with a unique global first in developing the Luston Wetland to capture and remove phosphate, creating credits that could be used for new homes. The Luston Wetland is now complete and, partly funded by developers, and the remainder through New Homes Bonus and Local Enterprise Partnership funding, has secured credits for 1112 new homes.

The Council has now been successful in securing £1.9m further funding from the Department of Levelling Up for Homes and Communities for two further phases of mitigation measures, including a new Wetland at Tarrington.

Three Counties Hotel

The Home Office are no longer using the Three Counties Hotel as contingency hotel accommodation for asylum seekers, and all residents have now moved on to other accommodation outside of the county.

Localised flooding

Reminder that those affected by flooding must let the council know via website <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/flooding-emergency>

<https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/latest-news/2024/february/cost-of-living-monthly-monitoring-report-february-2024/>

Register of Planning Enforcement actions now live and free to use

A Planning Enforcement Register is now available on the Herefordshire Council website that enables anybody to check the status of any enforcement notices issued in relation to a property or piece of land in the county. Anybody can now access the details we hold in relation to enforcement notices, including any appeals, and searches can be made by:

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- Enforcement case reference (ENF)

- Local Authority reference (LA)
- Site location – postcode/name of property or land
- Date period (Start/Close of notice)

Beryl e-bikes

Herefordshire Council and partner Beryl, are celebrating the impact of the introduction of e-bikes, after they replaced almost 21,000 private road transport journeys in their first year.

Festival and Events Grants

Grants of up to £15,000 are now available to support the development or growth of Festivals and Events in Herefordshire via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Herefordshire Council have been allocated £7.3m to help improve pride in place and increase life chances, investing in communities and place, supporting local business, people and skills over the next three years. This second round of funding will help to support festivals and events, building on the county's fantastic tourism and cultural offer as a great place to visit, live or work.

Home Upgrade Grant

County residents are being encouraged to check their eligibility as the first households in Herefordshire are seeing the benefits of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) scheme.

Continuing high energy prices mean many Herefordshire households are experiencing another cold and expensive winter. Now that HUG funding is being implemented some of those bills will begin to fall over the long term, as their improved energy efficiency makes homes easier to heat and power, and lowers carbon emissions.

RESIDENTS and businesses in South Herefordshire settlements are being urged to sign up to an offer to upgrade and future-proof their broadband infrastructure before it expires at the end of March.

Much Dewchurch, Wormelow, Much Birch, Little Birch and Orcop Hill have the opportunity to upgrade their broadband through the Wormelow exchange, enabling a faster and more reliable service, with the help of government broadband vouchers.

The infrastructure upgrade will be delivered by Openreach and Coun Toni Fagan is urging local residents to take up the offer before it expires.

‘I would really urge residents and businesses to use this opportunity to upgrade the broadband service of every house in the Wormelow exchange. If we miss this round of government support it could be years before we can properly future-proof our broadband needs,’ said Coun Fagan.

‘The government is offering every household free vouchers to enable Openreach to upgrade from copper to full fibre broadband. This is important for those who work from home, have children who need broadband for their education and everyone who will increasingly need the internet to access services or keep in touch with family and friends. It will mean that everyone in the exchange has a reliable broadband service with greater speeds. Currently those who are close to the cabinets get a good service and those on the edges can have patchy and unreliable broadband.’

The free vouchers simply require households to pledge to use a full-fibre broadband service when the infrastructure upgrade is complete- for many households this will mean a cheaper and faster internet service depending on which internet service provider they choose. But the scheme will only be built if enough households sign up to it.

Openreach has identified the settlements as being within scope for full fibre through new technology and is urging local people to take the next step by applying for free [Government Gigabit Vouchers](#) to help fund the build.

Residents can check if they qualify and pledge their voucher on the Connect My Community website. Using the vouchers – which don’t cost residents anything - enables Openreach to work with a local community to build a

customised, co-funded network. The vouchers will be combined to extend the ultrafast, ultra-reliable network to premises in outlying rural areas which will not be covered by private investment.

David Linton, Openreach Partnership Manager, said: 'Our Fibre Community Partnership programme has meant that we're able to potentially bring hundreds more communities across the UK into our full fibre build plans. But building out the network to these harder to reach locations is still challenging – which is why its only possible with everyone working together. Everyone who pledges a voucher will be doing their bit to help make these villages among the best-connected places in the UK.'

Once the pledge target for the scheme is reached, residents need to ensure they then validate their vouchers with the Government so that Openreach can confirm that building work can get underway. As part of the funding conditions, residents must commit to ordering a full fibre service from a provider of their choice for at least 12 months once the new network is available.

A meeting will be held on 26th March at 7.30pm in Much Birch Community Hall to answer any questions on full fibre broadband and the Openreach scheme, with the opportunity to join online.

NOTES:

Full fibre technology provides more reliable, resilient and future-proof connectivity; meaning fewer faults; more predictable, consistent speeds and enough capacity to easily meet growing data demands. It's also future-proof, which means it will serve generations to come and won't need to be upgraded for decades.

Fibre optics - strands of glass around one-tenth the thickness of a human hair - transmit data using light signals. Fibre is smaller, lighter and more durable than copper cabling and less vulnerable to damage. This short video explains what full fibre technology is and there's more info here.

