



Report of Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst  
Llangarron Ward

Happily serving the parishes of Llangarron, Marstow, Peterstow, Bridstow, Sellack, Welsh Newton and Llanrothal

March 2026

## **Back the Bypass**

The Big News this month is that we have launched the 'Back the Bypass' Campaign. I gave a speech at the launch in the Green Dragon in my capacity as the Cabinet Member for Culture and the Environment. I was able to highlight the mitigation that is in place for the environmental impact of the first phase with things like the loss of 1460m of hedgerow being compensated for by the planting of 4.5km of hedgerow, the loss of 755 sq m of mixed woodland being compensated for by 34,200 sq m of species rich woodland and the loss of 2 acres of Grafton Wood being compensated for with 13 acres of contiguous planting. That is not all of the story but it does show that the intention is to create more habitat, plant more trees, connect more hedges so in the end we will have an overall benefit.

The chosen contractor for phase 1 has a good track record and is an Achilles Carbon Reduce and PAS 2080 certified company with carbon reduction as an integral part of their approach. There will be a target for carbon savings over the contract which will be met by optimising efficiency, using alternative fuels and lower carbon materials. They will also minimise waste and divert 99% from landfill to meet the council standards.

Every stage of the construction will follow strict pollution controls and be supported by on-site ecological oversight to protect watercourses and the natural environment.

I was also able to highlight the way in which the road will be crucial to planning for the 30,000 houses that the government is requiring of Herefordshire. They will be built throughout the county but it just makes sense to put a concentration around the city – where there are jobs, amenities, a hospital, schools and where there is a need for affordable housing for local people. If we do not build the bypass the housing will have to go somewhere else – the market towns and villages. Is that sustainable and sensible planning? I don't think so. We will need to plan for housing in the market towns and villages but if we can't put strategic sites around the west of Hereford then the numbers needed elsewhere will double.

This road is not just about congestion. It is about resilience so that when someone breaks down on Greyfriars Bridge the entire city doesn't grind to a halt. It is about improving air quality by reducing the endless stop/start traffic in Hereford that goes past our schools. It is about improving active travel by allowing the de-trunking of the existing road and creating road space for cyclists and buses. It is about supporting the planning for housing where we need it – including affordable housing. It is about supporting businesses to grow with confidence and to give our young people good employment opportunities in the county.

It has been a very long time coming and we still have a great deal of work to do. We have had a lot of false dawns in the past – most recently in 2019/20 when the council (Independent/Green coalition) decided to cancel it, losing millions in the process.

We had got so close but had to start again in 2023 with much higher build costs but to delay would only increase those costs even more. We are funding the first phase as a down payment, demonstrating to government that we are committed to the project because, understandably after

the cancellation in 2019/20, the Department for Transport needs to know that we are not going to cancel it again. The contractor has been chosen and works will begin in December 2026.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/back-the-bypass>

### **And a bit more about getting from here to there**

We have also just adopted the Local Cycling, Wheeling, Walking Infrastructure Plan or LCWWIP (acronyms!) which sits alongside the Local Transport Strategy as a plan to develop and support active travel throughout the county. The overall aim of the strategy is to give people a better set of choices. We do not think that it is appropriate in a rural county to penalise the driver, but we do think that better provision for cycling and walking or wheeling where appropriate can reduce short car journeys in the towns and city.

[Herefordshire Council reveals plans to improve walking, cycling and wheeling across the county - Herefordshire Council](#)

### **County of Culture**

I was very disappointed that we didn't get shortlisted for the City of Culture. For the first time it was possible to apply for a wider geography, so we were applying as Herefordshire. Just making the application has coalesced and energised the sector – a sector that is worth some £230m to the local economy – and I know that we will continue to work together to promote and support the creative industries in the county.

The bid also made me reflect on the nature of culture – there were some negative posts on social media to the effect that Herefordshire doesn't have any culture, but that is to fundamentally misunderstand what culture is. You can only really define culture and art together – culture is who we are, it is the things we do, the way we live, the habits and norms of our lives; art is the expression of culture, it is how we understand who we are, the things we do and so forth. To rule Herefordshire out of the running because we don't have the Sydney Opera House is to fail to see what is all around us. Our culture. Herefordshire culture. So here is a challenge to you all – what is 'Herefordshire culture'?

Here is my starter for 10.

Herefordshire Culture is 3am in a lambing shed. The ambition of the Cathedral, the modesty of the parish church. The sense of all things being on a border – the Green Man on the door of Kilpeck Church. The autumn mist on the Wye....

I am a firm believer in the importance of culture and the importance of retaining as much richness and diversity as possible. As a country we are blessed with cultural variety but there are some areas where I worry that we are losing some of the distinctive and essential threads in our cultural tapestry. Herefordshire is one of those places. It is authentic, it has deep roots, it speaks to our history and our present and it is distinctive. Sadly, none of the shortlisted candidates represent the rural areas of England. In my view, *that* is the culture that is under threat and that should be celebrated but, to end where I began, it depends on your definition of culture.

### **Littering the land**

I have done two litter picks – one in Llangrove and one in Welsh Newton and I will be doing my annual litter pick on the Monnow in a few weeks. Many thanks to ACEG for organising the litter picks in Llangrove. I know that all of the parishes do litter picks or have wonderful residents picking up after others and to them I say 'thank you' for what you do. You keep our countryside looking lovely and you protect wildlife and livestock.

A long standing and apparently intractable issue is the litter on the A40. Honestly, I have been trying to get this sorted for the past 10 years!!! The problem is that the road is managed by National Highways and the litter is the responsibility of the council. Health and safety dictates that we can't litter pick without traffic management but that must be arranged by National Highways. What we have tried to do is liaise with NH to take advantage of closures when they are in place but often these are not planned and are overnight, so this has been of limited success. The cost of closing the road to litter pick is prohibitive so we have an impasse. I have secured £50,000 in this year's budget to deal with litter and am determined to get a solution for the A40 so watch this space....

### **The Cost of Heating Oil and Gas**

The Government has recognized the challenges faced by off gas grid households and particularly those who have seen the cost of oil double in days due to the Iran conflict. With more than 13,600 homes using solely oil heating, and almost 3,000 on LPG only, Herefordshire has a very high proportion of such properties, based on 2021 UK Census data. It means an estimated c18% of the total 88,000 properties.

Herefordshire Council has secured £517,865 additional funding from government to help low-income households afford the huge increases in cost of oil and LPG. One national average price cited has highlighted the cost of LPG rising from 67pence to £1.45 per litre in recent weeks.

Eligibility for financial support through the fund is based on criteria aligned to the Council's existing Warm Homes Local Grant programme. Households receive funding covering a proportion of the difference in cost between their previous average bills and the current price: household incomes £36,000 or below - 100%; £36,000 - £50,000 - 50%. Details on Council's website.

[Low-income oil and LPG heating households urged to take up financial support in Herefordshire - Herefordshire Council](#)

### **Growing the local economy.**

I attended a business breakfast event to mark the start of work to deliver an enterprise park in Ross on Wye. This has been a long time coming and it is great that we are able to get to work at last. The businesses in the room were keen to see the first phase done and the second phase underway as soon as possible, so they are able to expand, employ more local people and drive our local economy forwards.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/news/2026/march/ross-on-wye-enterprise-park-launched/>

As always, if you have any questions or issues you wish to raise with me please do not hesitate to get in touch.