

Ledbury North: Councillor Ward Report – April 2025

Herefordshire Growth Programme

At county level it appears that there has been a delay in progressing the decision to use retained business rates collected from the businesses located on the Hereford Enterprise Zone to fund a county-wide business growth, skills and inward investment programme. Hopefully this is just a minor hiccup and the decision will come forward swiftly following the Easter Break.

The proposals – as outlined – include proposals to create business hubs and co-working spaces in each of the market towns as well as to progress the delivery of each of the Market Town Economic Plans. This is to be welcomed as the emphasis on inward investment has been almost entirely focussed on Hereford for more than 15 years, to the significant and obvious detriment of the market towns and the wider county as a whole.

It is to be hoped that no future strategic housing sites will be planned without commensurate and collocated employment land also being provided to redress this imbalance and start to deliver sustainable and balanced growth for local communities that welcome and support such development.

Council Tax

The Council Tax was set for the county at the Herefordshire Council Meeting on 7 March 2025. The annual precepts making up the overall rates levied based on Band D on households qualifying to pay the charge are as follows:

- Herefordshire Council £1,969.36
- Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority £102.22
- West Mercia Police £291.50
- Ledbury Town Council £198.71

Below is a list showing the total precepts set by the city and market towns in Herefordshire, their respective Band D Tax Base and their consequent 2025-26 precepts. As a consequence of recent housing developments, Ledbury has overtaken Leominster in terms of its Tax Base. Ross remains the largest of the market towns.

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| • Bromyard & Winslow | £296,744 | 1,450 | £204.69 |
| • Hereford City | £1,087,991 | 16,540 | £65.78 |
| • Kington | £134,000 | 923 | £145.24 |
| • Ledbury | £734,622 | 3,697 | £198.71 |
| • Leominster | £736,175 | 3,681 | £199.98 |
| • Ross-on-Wye | £633,200 | 4,247 | £149.11 |

Double Council Tax is being charged for the first time on second homes and empty properties across the county – which is anticipated to raise an additional £3.1m in 2025-26 to assist in offsetting cost pressures elsewhere in service area budgets.

The 100% discount on Council Tax continues to be applied to households qualifying for the waiver. Qualification is not dependent upon the council tax banding of the property occupied. It is estimated that more than 11,300 households across the county qualify for the waiver, amounting to nearly £15,000,000 of Council Tax not levied upon these households. More information on this and other Council Tax discounts and exemptions can be found on the council website: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council-tax-1/council-tax-discounts-exemptions>.

Roadworks

Ledbury seems beset by roadworks in all directions at the moment. This is frustrating – especially over the Easter break when the area receives a lot of tourism traffic in addition to the local vehicle movements. However, much of the activity is related to much-needed and long awaited resurfacing works.

The resurfacing of the mid-section of New Street has commenced this week with night-working planned to minimise disruption to the local economy. Completion of the resurfacing of the Hereford Road just outside

Ledbury has also just been flipped to night working to complete the works taking into account forecast bad weather and complications coordinating with works also being undertaken by utility companies in the area.

Roadworks on the Dymock Road and at the Full Pitcher roundabout are ongoing but should shortly be complete. Resurfacing is also planned along the Bromyard Road. Councillors are advised to use the email streetworks updates and the information on road closures provided online for the latest information: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/roadworks>.

The works underway presently form the first third of the maintenance and capital works programme for 2025. Please advise Ward members of any suggestions for new works to be considered for the future programme phases. In the North Ward I have already requested resurfacing works in Robinson's Meadow, Knapp Lane and in lane sections in Wellington Heath.

Flooding and Drainage Issues

The recent dry spell has continued the risk of flooding from rapid run-off when we do get heavy rainfall, as is currently forecast for the remainder of the month.

Councillors are asked to encourage members of the public to continue to report blocked drains using the 'Report It' function on the Herefordshire Council website, so that these can be cleared before further heavy rainfall occurs.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/report-problem>

West Mercia Police

A new Chief Constable for West Mercia Police was confirmed in his appointment by the Police and Crime Panel at their meeting in March. Chief Constable Richard Cooper was an internal appointee and had been acting as interim Chief Constable for several months prior to his appointment. More information on CC Cooper can be found here: <https://www.westmercia.police.uk/news/west-mercia/news/2025/march/richard-cooper-confirmed-as-chief-constable-of-west-mercia-police/>

Speeding and inconsiderate driving has continued to be a theme in complaints received from the public locally this year alongside concern about antisocial behaviour and under-age drinking around the town. With the clocks having gone forward and evenings lightening, I have asked that, in addition to the ongoing speed-watch programme, officers locally act to enforce speed limits in town and check for good behaviour within the designated Alcohol Control Zone designated in Ledbury's Public Spaces Protection Order, the map for which can be found here: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/14051/ledbury-alcohol-restriction-zone-map-2024>

Malvern Hills National Landscape (MH-NL)

I attended the spring meeting of the Malvern Hills National Landscape Stakeholder Panel last week. The meeting received a very positive and informative report on the 2024-25 grant programmes supporting Farming in the Protected Landscape (FiPL) and Heritage Buildings.

The South Worcestershire Local Plan is at Examination Stage and the MH-NL team are providing feedback on housing targets for the footprint of the MH-NL which sits in this planning authority. The MH-NL straddles 3 planning authority areas, each with a different suite of planning policies, making the continued work of the team to maintain advisory documents covering planning matters ever more important to ensure some consistency of approach within the protected landscape area.

Given the undeliverable housing target applied by central government to Herefordshire (in excess of 27,000 by 2041) the MH-NL management plans and guidance documents are also very useful to the Town Council and its Neighbourhood Plan. I would encourage the Town Council to reconsider its withdrawal of support to the work of the MH-NL through voluntary donation in the coming year.

Wellington Heath – Parish links

Wellington Heath Parish Council are concerned about a number of matters affecting their residents that connect with or are the responsibility of Ledbury Town Council.

I would encourage the Town Council to consider inviting Wellington Heath PC representatives – or the entire PC – to a meeting to discuss areas of common interest and concern at a mutually convenient time.

Trees and Tree Protection

New Tree Preservation Orders have recently been successfully applied to a number of trees in the mid-section of the New Street area of the town.



Forest Research (the research agency of the Forestry Commission (FC) and Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree-related research) has just released the first national digital map recording the location of all trees outside of designated woodland areas (<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/trees-outside-woodland-map/>). I would recommend councillors to look at the map for the Ledbury area which identifies many trees which are important in our townscape and surrounding landscape, most of which have no formal protection.



Councillor Liz Harvey

It's Our County & Independents for Herefordshire – Ledbury North Ward Member – 16 April 2025

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