

## BUMPER CHRISTMAS EDITION

Report of Elissa Swinglehurst – ward member for Llangarron

Serving the communities of Welsh Newton and Llanrothal, Llangarron, Bridstow, Peterstow, Marstow, Sellack.

### Coronavirus, the Omicron variant.

Just when you thought it was safe....please take sensible precautions during the festive season to reduce the spread of Covid. Mask wearing, hand cleaning and social distancing are all helpful along with getting vaccinated when you are eligible. I'm having my third any time now – along with my seasonal flu jab so I'll be feeling like a pin cushion!

UPDATE. The council is cancelling all public face to face meetings in response to the Government advice as at 9.12.21

### Flooding

The Environment Agency has published its draft flood risk management plan for 2021-2027 and are important to those households liable to flooding. The plan requires risk management authorities to develop a long term strategic vision and delivery plan for managing the future flood risk from all sources. It proposes to work with communities, landowners and businesses to determine the level of maintenance required. By 2027 a capital scheme to reduce flooding risk will be implemented.

More details can be found

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fcrm/draft-second-cycle-flood-risk-managementplans/>

### Spend, spend, spend

The run-up to Christmas is a key period for the economy and using some of the Governments 6 million pound covid recovery grant Herefordshire Council is offering a Shop Local prepaid card to every household in the county . From this week households will be able to apply for a pre paid card loaded with £15 to spend as part of a shop local campaign until the 31<sup>st</sup> January incentivising residents to support local producers, retailers, and shopkeepers. I would urge you to sign up and support our local business and most particularly perhaps spend that first £15 in our own local community.

### Grant for local events.

Can I remind organisers of local events of the Revive and Thrive Grant Scheme – grants of between £2,500 and £10,000 to bring vacant high street units back into use, or to support micro and SME businesses to occupy a commercial unit. Start up trial grant of between £500 and £2,500. Festivals and Events Discretionary Grants - This is a one off discretionary grant of between £5,000 and £50,000 to support regular festivals and events hosted in Herefordshire. The grant is to assist these festivals and events with their long term sustainability by offering a discretionary grant to support the next event, held before 31 December 2022.

### Children's Services and Planning update

Challenges still remain in the Children's care and planning departments. Of the 84 posts in children care as of the 19<sup>th</sup> November 33 posts are vacant and 14 of the remainder are filled by agency staff. Recruitment will be critical to ensure sustained improvement in the service.

Due to the level of concern around the timeliness of processing of planning applications there will be a scrutiny review into the planning department in January. We have a new head of planning started this week Ms Florence Churchill.

### Rubbish

The council is changing the way the bins are being collected. There will be an extra recycling bin plus a small weekly food collection bin and an optional green waste bin. 'Residual waste' (black bin waste) will only be collected every three weeks.

### County new waste collection plan

Due to rising government targets following consultation earlier this year, the council is proposing to enhance the waste collection service from autumn 2023 in order to increase recycling. Achieving a reduction in household waste by 36 per cent to less than 330kg a year and more than double the county's reuse and recycling rates from 40 per cent to 85 per cent by 2035 helping to meet the councils target for net zero emissions by 2030.

The system will change from an alternate green/black bin collection to a three week cycle with three bins plus a food bin and an optional garden waste bin.

- Week 1 -- New bin. Paper and cardboard will be collected separately in new 240-litre wheelie bins
- Week 2 -- Existing green bin. Metals (tins and cans), most plastics (pots, tubs, trays and bottles) and glass
- Week 3 -- Existing black bin. Anything that cannot be recycled or put into food waste
- Food waste collected every week - households provided with a new, 23-litre food caddy and liners
- Garden waste bin. Residents can opt for a seasonal garden waste fortnightly collection.

The last substantial change was 10 years ago and it helped the county achieve recycling targets of nearly 40% but the weakness of the scheme was food waste collection. There is no doubt that with new Government targets the scheme had to be adapted and address the food and garden waste issues.

We are currently part of a joint waste disposal contract with Worcestershire County Council and all our green bin waste is sorted and recycled by EnviroSort. Our black bin contents are sent to an energy from waste plant at Hartlebury which generates enough electricity to power a city the size of Hereford. I have been there and can report that it is a very impressive operation.

I served on the task and finish group that made a variety of recommendations around the world of waste – the most central theme was that waste is only waste because we are wasting it. I am a firm believer in the virtue of a circular economy or, as my Mother used to say, 'waste not, want not'.



### Connectivity – the change to broadband roll out.

I cannot tell you how frustrating it is to be back at square one – I probably don't have to tell you, you probably know! My own broadband limps along at under 2MPS on a good day as long as the neighbours don't play Fortnite. I've been waiting patiently – like so many of you – for Gigaclear to deliver. They surveyed my house, we were on the starting blocks, and then...nothing. The council is having to think again. The decision is to apply to the Government's roll out of Gigabit but that will mean another delay – more time to spend staring at the blue donut of doom. There is some consolation in that the council, acknowledging the inequity of the situation, is looking at proving householder grant schemes to pay for alternative (satellite or whatever) provision as a stop gap. More details will come forward next year and I will continue to lobby on behalf of my residents to get a decent service.

### Covid Update

I don't usually include this but thought it might be a good idea to do so every so often – this is the update from mid Nov. We are not out of the woods yet.

The UK Covid response relies on effective vaccination coverage, and all eligible individuals are encouraged to take up both doses of their vaccine and their booster dose.

- The second dose more than doubles the resistance against developing symptoms, and considerably reduces the risk of death. The booster dose helps to extend the protection offer by the first two doses.
- 86% of Herefordshire residents (aged 12+) who are registered with an English GP have received a first dose, and 80% a second dose. However, fewer under 40s have been fully vaccinated and vaccine uptake is noticeably lower in some of the more deprived areas of the county.

**791 new cases** were recorded in Herefordshire in the last week. Herefordshire's seven day case rate has fallen over the last week (409 per 100,000), - a similar pattern has been seen across the country. However, rates remain relatively high across the county with widespread community transmission evident and the local rate is higher than both the national and regional rates, although considerably lower than that seen in the September surge.

**Confirmed cases in school aged children continue to drive the overall case rate.** There continues to be a number of cases linked to children and young people settings with 11 situations in schools. This is not unexpected, as case rates are high, with widespread community transmission. **The rate amongst over 60s has decreased** in the last two weeks.

The number of **hospital admissions remain high** with Wye Valley Trust remaining in a challenging position. During October, 102 were admitted while since the beginning of November a further 23

have been admitted. Overall total **deaths** are slightly above average for the time of year, there were six Covid-related deaths registered week ending 05 November.

The **number of LFD tests** reported this week has plateaued, similarly the number of PCR tests. Test positivity has decreased slightly suggesting there has been a modest decline in the overall prevalence of the virus within the county.

About **1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms** but can still infect others. People are encouraged to **do a LFD test twice a week** to check for the virus. Even if you're vaccinated, there's still a chance you can pass COVID-19 on, so you should keep getting tested regularly. [Free tests are available](#) to order or collect.

### Patients with Covid-19 in Herefordshire hospitals

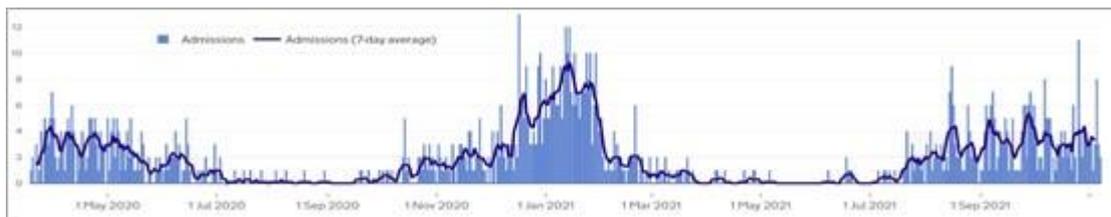
- The number of Covid-19 patients admitted to Wye Valley Trust hospitals increased in the second half of the summer with 26 admitted in July, 82 in August and 107 in September 107. During October 102 were admitted while since the beginning of November a further 23 have been admitted.
- As of 08 November there were no patients on mechanical ventilation.

Local data indicates that during the pandemic those aged 65+ have accounted for 74% Covid-19 inpatients, although the proportions have changed over the pandemic.

- April and July 2020 (when there were a total of 129 inpatients) all inpatients were aged 65+
- October 2020 and March 2021 (664 inpatients) 80% were 65+, 19% were 18-64 and less than 1% were under 18
- Between April and July (22 inpatients) 16% were 65+ and 72% aged 18-64
- Since the beginning of August (317 inpatients) 64% were 65+, 34% were 18-64 4% were under 18

### For more detailed information for

Herefordshire <https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/health/covid-19-summary/>  
And National guidance <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>



And finally.....

The Rivers Wye and Lugg continue to be central to my work. This month I attended the Wye Navigation Board (which looks at the use of the river for canoeing and other leisure activities). The environmental impact of activities and the general health of the river was a theme of the meeting and I encouraged all present to join one of the existing citizen science groups to undertake water quality monitoring. It seems to me that we have to relearn our relationship with the rivers. They are not there for our amusement, whether we are anglers or paddleboarders, wild swimmers or kayakers or canoeists we have got to start to really consider our impact on the river we say we love. Partly there is an issue of education – does a tourist dragging a canoe over spawning gravels to get to the bank and have a picnic understand the damage that they are doing? Do swimmers, wading over those same gravels understand the impact? Does anyone consider the salmon lying up in the shallows to get some oxygen when they let their Labrador rush in to the water? If the river ecology

was in robust health then it could probably withstand our thoughtlessness, but as it is, I hope that we all treat it with the care it deserves.

I also attended an inspiring evening (not something you often say about an AGM) run by the Wye Preservation Trust. Jesse Norman MP spoke of his efforts to get more support from government for the river and then Ben Taylor Davis of Townsend Farm, Brampton Abbots, gave us a whistle stop tour of his farming methods. If you aren't familiar with Ben's farm please treat yourself and take a look at his website – [www.regenben.com](http://www.regenben.com)

The following evening I attended another event about the river that was hosted by the Labour Party. There were some lovely poems and music. To his complete credit John Reed from Avara was present along with Kate Speke Adams (Wye Usk Foundation) and Martin Williams (NFU). There were some strong challenges put to John Reed about the ethics of the intensive poultry industry in terms of animal welfare. The evening set out to solve the problem but, of course, it could never do that. Hopefully everyone got a bit more of a sense of how complicated this is and how unhelpful a politicised approach is likely to be. If we are going to get anywhere we are going to need to do it together with only one thing in mind – the river.

So, have a peaceful and happy festive season and remember to recycle.

[Christmas rubbish and recycling – Herefordshire Council](#)

Ho, Ho, Ho.