

Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Mr Peter McKay, Leominster	<i>Reply to question 1st May were advised that you would consider an addendum to the 2018-2028 Rights of Way Improvement Plan comprising an amplification of the Public Right of Way Glossary that says CRF's and CRB's were intended to be shown as Roads Used as Public Paths, but in fact were shown as Footpaths and Bridleways, identifying them as being prospective upgrades when redrafting the plan in 2028, and on 17th July that you would consider drafting this addendum now, in consultation with Members, Officers and the Local Access Forum members. May I enquire if this is progressing?</i>	Councillor Hurcomb
<p>Response: Following an officer review, this is not something that we are able to include in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Herefordshire recorded Carriage Road Footpaths (CRFs) as footpaths and Carriage Road Bridleways (CRBs) as bridleways when the Definitive Map was created in 1952. These legal records can only be changed by submitting an application for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) which has supporting evidence. The Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) process is legislated and is already covered in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan with each application being considered according to the Statement of Priorities on a case-by-case basis.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question: The ROWIP makes no mention of CRF's and CRB's so an addendum is requested, with a) an amplification of the Public Right of Way Glossary that says CRF's and CRB's were intended to be shown as Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPP's), plus b) a 'List of CRF's and CRB's', the LAF when asked considering that it would not be appropriate to put a document raised by a member of the public on its webpage, providing evidence base information for raising DMMOA's, supported by additional evidence, and c) providing a base for making the case to seek any additional funding required, CRF's and CRB's coming about due to Government Guidance using these non-statutory terms rather than RUPP, so will you reconsider and draft an addendum as was agreed?</p>			
<p>Supplementary Response: As stated above, following an officer review, this is not something that we are able to include in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan currently.</p>			
PQ 2.	Merry Albright,	<i>Given that Herefordshire Council are experiencing significant financial pressures, does the Cabinet think that it is now</i>	Councillor Swinglehurst

	<p>Co-Chair of the Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group</p>	<p><i>prudent, and ethically fair, to review the housing ban that has been in place since 2019? Now that agencies have confirmed in their DWPP that housing is a negligible source of the phosphorous load and that Welsh Water have reduced more than their 'fair share' of phosphate, would cabinet agree that the catastrophic social and economic losses caused by the long moratorium are not justified, and that these impacts should have been assessed and balanced against possible ecological gains before a moratorium was put in place almost 7 years ago?</i></p>	
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Response:
 Whilst there is not a ban or formal moratorium on housing development in the Lugg catchment we acknowledge that there has been a significant impact to planning applications, and the resulting constraints on housing development, due to the government's necessity to demonstrate that development is nutrient neutral before planning permission can be granted.

At our meeting with you in December, we agreed to write to government (due by the end of January) to express our concerns regarding the impact of these requirements on housing development and our wider economy, whilst recognising the need to find a sustainable long term solution to protecting and restoring the health of our rivers. In the meantime the council continues to bring forward projects to create phosphate credits such as the proposed new wetland at Dilwyn, and to accept private mitigation schemes through the planning process wherever possible (in consultation with Natural England).

Supplementary Question:
 Sadly, my question about whether the cabinet agree, having looked at the most recent data and documents, that the social and economic losses/costs endured by housing restrictions are disproportionate and unjustified wasn't answered.

Nonetheless we are relieved to hear that the Dilwyn Wetland project has finally been activated, and note that there are ample funds with Herefordshire Council from grants and credits sales, to potentially accelerate other credit projects and meet the outstanding and projected need. We very much appreciate the support work that is undertaken by council officers with regard to private mitigation proposals, despite the ever changing complexities of this. And we very much appreciate the positive meeting in December and the offer of follow up meetings, thank you.

Would it be possible to prepare an overview of the council credit situation and any long term credit delivery plans (including timescales, credit costs, allocation processes and the catchment area served by each council project) given that there is sadly still no meaningful or compliant wider catchment restoration plan from agencies, and that private mitigation projects are increasingly difficult?

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for the question. The details of current and future phosphate credits (as they become available) are published on the council website which is currently being updated ([Phosphate credits Lugg catchment - Herefordshire Council](#)). We are progressing as quickly as possible the development of the phase 2 schemes, for example we completed the acquisition of the land required for Dilwyn wetland scheme in November 2025. We intend to bring an update on all of the phase 2 schemes to a cabinet meeting in March, with information therefore in the public domain as to progress and timescales.

The Council is also exploring options to work with Private Mitigation Developers to increase the supply of credits. Similarly, the Council is also in discussions with Natural England regarding the recently announced Environmental Delivery Plans which we hope will improve the situation.

The council welcomes the on-going discussions and information being shared by housing developers, in helping our understanding of the impacts and to seek identify solutions with government to unlock future growth while protecting our outstanding local environment. Thank you.

PQ 3.	Ben Albright, Border Oak Design & Construction Ltd	“Herefordshire has a very strong tradition of producing and supporting successful small and medium family businesses which serve the local area and operate further afield - representing the county and creating jobs, making products, delivering services and generating inward investment. Trading conditions for small business and family firms has become increasingly difficult - with government changes to inheritance tax, business rates, national insurance, minimum wage etc negatively impacting upon small and family businesses and placing intolerable strains upon the Herefordshire business network. Would Herefordshire Council be able to write to the Government in support of your small, medium and family owned businesses, to make clear that the burdens are unsustainable and are most keenly felt in small rural counties such as Herefordshire?”	Leader of the Council
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Response:

Yes, I will gladly write to government to highlight how the changes to inheritance tax, business rates, national insurance, and minimum wage are all having a detrimental impact on local businesses. The Herefordshire Business Growth Board has raised with government through the national business board network, and I will encourage the Board to write to government (and other relevant parties) to directly to raise their concerns as well.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for your positive response and the offer to write to the Government on behalf of the SMEs and family businesses that are proud to call Herefordshire home. It is very disheartening to hear such despondency from a diverse range of sectors that have historically served our rural areas so well - and who are integral to one another, the county economy and rural communities - especially tourism, hospitality and housing.

Is there anything that we can collectively do to help Herefordshire Council, the Economic Development Team and the Herefordshire Business Growth Board amplify and communicate our concerns to the Government?

Supplementary Response:

We would encourage any businesses negatively impacted by these changes to also write directly to government to explain and to demonstrate how this was having a negative effect. It would also be helpful for businesses to share their specific experiences with the council and the Herefordshire Business Growth Board, so we can better explain the cumulative impact on the economy. Businesses impacted should please contact the Herefordshire Growth Hub Team on 01432 383343 or email business@herefordshire.gov.uk to raise these very important issues.

<p>PQ 4.</p>	<p>Jeremy Milln, Hereford</p>	<p><i>The Capital Strategy 2026-31 at Appendix D under item 8 of today's agenda proposes a capital investment of just £1.7m to bring our network of footways and cycleways back to a 'new condition' over the five year period. It is less than proposed for traffic signals alone and only about 1% of the figure for motor road infrastructure. BCRs typically confirm that these comparatively tiny sums for footways and cycleways represent far better value in view of their environmental, financial and health benefits over motor roads. How will the cabinet member apply this knowledge to re-assessing his proposed SLR now that its cost has ballooned by another £5m to be funded by local tax-payers at a time of intense cost pressure, so will he add the missing foot and cycleways, discontinue the scheme or ignore advice and carry on regardless?</i></p>	<p>Councillor Price</p>
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Response:

Maintaining and improving our footways and cycleways is essential to ensuring safe, convenient and accessible travel for everyone. This year we will invest £50 million in Highway Maintenance programme (£23.9 million funded by the Department for Transport), including for footways and cycleways.

Alongside this, we are investing £1 million in the Public Rights of Way network next year, with a further £250,000 available to parish councils to support locally identified improvements.

However, our commitment to active travel extends well beyond maintenance. The development of the Holme Lacy Road and Quiet Routes programme is a strategic part of the wider bypass plans. From the outset, the approach has been to enhance key active-travel corridors ahead of the construction of phase one of the bypass, ensuring that safe, attractive alternatives for walking and cycling are in place as the road scheme progresses. This is why the council has been delivering major active-travel improvements across Hereford in parallel with moving the bypass forward. As previously set out, phase one of the bypass does not include footways or cycleways; instead, the strategy has been to focus investment where it will have the greatest benefit for everyday local journeys - such as Holme Lacy Road - while ensuring new strategic road infrastructure can be delivered efficiently.

Supplementary Question:

The Cabinet member misleads himself. The Holme Lacy Road and Quiet routes programmes were initiated by, and funded during, the previous administration for a completely different part of the City and have nothing whatever to do with his proposed bypass, let alone were they intended as excuses for its lack of active travel provision as he seems to think.

The Department for Transport's Manual for Streets and the Departments Manual for Roads and Bridges, by placing pedestrians and cyclists at the top of the user hierarchy, require dedicated footways and cycleways for new peri-urban roads. How then will vulnerable non-motorised users needing safe and connected infrastructure be considered to avoid severance, inequality and exclusion caused by his bypass now that his administration has redefined it as a housing growth corridor and how will he persuade National Highways to adopt it as the A49 trunk as he promises when it is obviously deficient?

Supplementary Response:

Thank you Mr Milln for yet another complex question. I'm afraid we're going to continue to disagree on this subject. The phase one has planning permission as was the rules and regulations at the time of getting that planning. We are coming up with the business case later this year as I've previously said to you and at that point we will explain entirely as to why in my view and the view put forward to the Department of Transport with regards to the A49 that it is not necessary to have active travel measures as part of the road. We will continue to disagree on this, so you can ask me this question every council meeting if you like but my answer will be the same. We have taken onboard the active travel measures for the Holme Lacey Road and that is deemed to be sufficient for active travel measures to support building of the phase one bypass. Thank you.

PQ 5.	Karen Ennis, Ledbury	<i>The budgeted project development costs of the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 are now shown as £9m, and the previous costs written off were £20m. I</i>	Councillor Price
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		<i>would like to ask whether bringing Phase 1 to fruition before Phase 2 (which is a long time in the future, if ever) will in fact increase traffic in the City Centre; traffic will increase due to development around the Phase 1 road, and this is only 'balanced' by the minimal reduction (which will only be at the 'Asda' roundabout and not in the City Centre) of traffic travelling between the A465 and the A49; can you provide the data to show that traffic in the City Centre will reduce when Phase 1 is built?</i>	
Response: The Hereford Bypass is more than just a road – it is the key infrastructure that will unleash Herefordshire’s future. Phase one, in the south, is the prerequisite to the full bypass to the west. This completes the southern relief, directly serving Rotherwas employment area, connecting key industrial sites to the south of the city. Our initial modelling indicates that construction of Phase One will see improvements in transport resilience; it does not indicate increased traffic in the city centre. At the same time will reduce traffic on portions of Belmont Rd, Walnut Tree Ave and Holme Lacy Road.			
Supplementary Question: None			
Supplementary Response:			
PQ 6.	Mrs Morawiecka, Brienton, Hereford	At the last cabinet meeting to confirm the CPOs for the Southern Link Road, Cllr Price was unable to confirm that the road would be built within the budget of £40.3million. We now see that just one month later the road cost is now budgeted at £45.3million with £40million to be secured through Prudential Borrowing. Para 3.4 of the borrowing strategy says that “ If borrowing is required, then the council will favour short term loans because the interest rates on long term loans are relatively high”. In view of Cllr Lester’s October 2025 letter to the Dept of Transport and the £30million funding gap what is the impact on the Council’s revenue services of the increased cost of this road?	Leader of the Council
Response:			

The Hereford Bypass will unlock economic growth, housing and jobs. It will unleash Herefordshire's future – a future we must invest in. The £5.0m proposed addition to the capital programme for Hereford Bypass Phase 1 will have an annual impact of £0.4m on the council's revenue budget from 2028/29 onwards. This proportionate and responsible investment represents 0.2% of the proposed net revenue budget of £234.1m in 2026/27.

Supplementary Question:

On the basis of the information supplied in the answer, if borrowing £5m has an annual impact of £400k per annum on the revenue budget from 28/29 onwards, then the full cost of borrowing £40m will be circa £3.2m per annum or 1.4% of the proposed net revenue of 26/27. At paragraph 2.7 of the Medium term Financial Strategy it says each 1% increase in council tax generates approximately £1.5m of recurrent funding to meet demand pressures and deliver the council services. It is proportionate or responsible for this council to either increase future council tax for all residents of Herefordshire by over 2% per annum or alternatively to cut services across the county by a further £3.2m per annum to fund a road where the claimed benefits are not supported by any factual evidence particularly information such as the traffic modelling report.

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your question. I would answer that in several ways. One of them is that it is a proportionate amount of investment. When you see that it is absolutely imperative given the financial picture of funding for local government that we grow our economy and we increase the council tax base so that we are sustainable for the future. What we will see over the next few years in terms of budgeting for this council, we will be making sure that we reprofile the services that this council delivers so that we maintain those key services that our Herefordshire residents rely on whilst at the same time growing our council tax base so we can be sustainable for the long term.

PQ 7.	Hayden Osborne Brooks, Leominster	<p><i>"The Council says that it is making difficult choices to address the £30million funding gap in its budget. At the same time borrowing for the Southern Link Road (Hereford Western Bypass Phase 1) has increased by £5million, bringing total borrowing for the road to over £45million. In October Cllr Lester told the Department for Transport that the prudent borrowing would "significantly impact our revenue budget at a time when we face substantial cost pressures in social care, temporary accommodation and home-to-school transport".</i></p> <p><i>With no detailed evidence, how has the Council assessed that a £45million road scheme is better value for county taxpayers than say reopening stations such as Pontrilas, which this administration said was a priority, improving bus services and safe active travel to reduce congestion and improve access for all, including those accessing education?"</i></p>	Councillor Price
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Response:

In relation to borrowing costs, I refer you to the answer given at PQ6. For your substantive question: The Hereford Bypass is more than just a road – it is the key infrastructure that will unleash Herefordshire's future. As well as more jobs, housing and employment land, it will unlock opportunities to

integrate existing - and new - transport connections. Officers are working on commissioning a rail study looking at potential stations across Herefordshire so that future investment can be prioritised. This administration continues to invest in improving roads, rail, bus and active travel and this is clearly demonstrated with the work that is currently taking place on the development of the Transport Hub, active travel improvements on Holme Lacy Road, improvements to the Great Western Way, school streets scheme and quiet routes development.

Supplementary Question:

The answer to PQ6 explains that the extra £5m needed for the Southern Link Road phase 1 will have an annual impact of £400k on the council's revenue budget from 2028/29 onward. Despite the answer saying this road will unleash Herefordshire's future, on the basis of the figures provided borrowing over £40m for this road could require over £3m in service cuts over future years. And following an estimate for the cost of the entire bypass at over £300m, cuts of over £24m could be required in future years for the entire bypass, that's over 10% of the council's revenue budget. The council is already struggling enough to provide basic services thanks to the Government's failure to fund local authorities properly. Therefore, I repeat my initial question. How has the council determined that it is better to cut future services including public transport, active travel finding etc. to repay the cost of the southern link road alongside the cost of the entire proposed Hereford Bypass.

Supplementary Response:

The Leader answered - Thank you for your question. I think I've answered it pretty much in what I said just before but over to you Cllr Price.

Cllr Price – I was going to say exactly the same thing, so thank you for your supplementary question. I think the answer that the Leader has just given would suffice in exactly the same way to answer your question. So thank you for that but you must understand that we as a council are committed to grow the economy of Herefordshire and to do that there are a number of capital projects that will unleash that potential and this is one of them. So, between the Leader and myself the answer before should answer your question.

PQ 8.	Jim Smith, Herefordshire Headway	<i>What impact in relation to the budget cuts will this have on our council funded clients with ABI, will any of the qualifying criteria for funding change and is so, how?</i>	Cllr Gandy
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Response:

Herefordshire Council greatly values the excellent work undertaken by Herefordshire Headway, supporting adults living with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). I can reassure those with this condition that the qualifying criteria for funding will not change, and that council-funded clients with ABI will continue to receive the care and support they require. The council remains committed to working with specialist organisations like Headway to ensure high-quality, person-centred support for those living with ABI in Herefordshire.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

PQ 9.

**Carole
Protherough,
Clehonger**

The Capital budget for the Western Bypass Phase 1 shows that additional borrowing of £5million is needed to fund this road scheme, taking the current estimated cost to £45.3Million. In the written answer to a public supplementary question at the last Cabinet meeting the public were told “The construction of Phase One could potentially lead to some of the constraints on the Bloor Homes site being reduced allowing for more houses and the potential for S106 funding to be sought to support the costs of construction of Phase One”.

Cllr Price

If this road will unlock land for housing, why do the capital budget and the MTFs not show the borrowing costs to Herefordshire taxpayers being reduced by contributions from developers for this road scheme rather than increased borrowing?

Response:

The construction of the bypass will release some additional housing sites in the future, but these are not known at this point and can't be estimated or accounted for in the current budget setting. As and when developments come forward the Council will seek appropriate contributions to support the bypass and these will help to reduce budget pressures in future years.

Supplementary Question:

If the Hereford Southern Link Road does not unlock land for housing and help the county to meet the new increased housing demand from central government, why is the Council not investing in other roads or infrastructure in the County, such as infrastructure that will unlock over 1,400 new homes South of Leominster and result in developer contributions towards the cost of the new infrastructure, reducing the impact of service cuts arising from this Council borrowing £40million for the Hereford Southern Link Road which may or may not open up land for housing?

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your supplementary. Phase One of the Hereford Western Bypass is the first section of the wider bypass which will unlock additional housing and employment land growth. It is an important first step which clearly communicates the commitment to the delivery of the full bypass. The strategic outline business case for Phase Two will be published later this year.