

New of NMITie University -

Following the Universities Minister Jo Johnson announcing funding of up to £15 million over three years to support the establishment of a new university in Hereford, Herefordshire Council has been asked to become the accountable body for all accessed public monies acquired by the University. This means the close relationship that the Council has had with the University has strengthened the relationship with this role.

As I have previously said and it bears repeating, Herefordshire is one of only three English counties not to have a university, leading to an estimated 1,800 young people between the ages of 16 and 25 leaving the county for higher education or graduate jobs. Government investment in this project will help to reverse this trend by offering high quality technical education in engineering, tailored to local employer needs. The first limited number of students are anticipated for next September.

Transport minister sees Bikeability training in action

Herefordshire Council's Bikeability team welcomed Jesse Norman MP to Lord Scudamore Academy in Hereford on 24 November 2017. Mr Norman met a group of Level 2 Bikeability pupils at the academy to see their first on-road cycle training session.

Bikeability training for children is funded by a dedicated grant from the Department for Transport (DfT). The scheme offers three levels of training; starting from developing bike control and confidence to on-road cycle skills negotiating multi-lane roads and junctions.

Mr Norman was visiting as part of his new ministerial role as Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the Department for Transport. Paul Robison, Chief Executive of the national Bikeability Trust, explained how the DfT funding is used in Herefordshire to improve cycling confidence and safety.

My statement for press was that:

“Bikeability is a high quality cycle training programme which gives confidence and skills to those who wish to cycle safely. Our scheme provides free practical cycle training to over 1,000 pupils and adults across Herefordshire each year, enabling our residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives.”

Earlier this year, Herefordshire Council was the only local authority in the West Midlands to secure a £1.5m share of the government's Sustainable Travel Access Fund. Through this funding, Herefordshire Council works closely with schools and the wider community to deliver scooter and cycle skills, bike maintenance sessions, led rides and walks.

Find out more about our cycling provision on the Herefordshire Council website or email the team for more information about Bikeability.

Herefordshire Council to restrict use of sky lanterns and helium balloons

Herefordshire Council will no longer permit the use of sky lanterns and helium balloons on council owned or leased land and at council run events. Their use will also be discouraged at licensed events across the county.

The use of sky lanterns (also known as Chinese lanterns) and helium balloons have become

a popular way to mark a special event, yet their use poses a serious threat to wildlife and the environment as it is impossible to control where the released lanterns and balloons land.

Sky lanterns and balloons pose a serious threat to livestock – animals eat lantern debris which can be poisonous or puncture internal organs, and smaller birds can become trapped and killed. There are also environmental dangers with littering, the risk of fire to crops and trees and a significant danger to aircraft and helicopters.

Councillor David Harlow, Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Services, said:

“The use of sky lanterns and helium balloons pose a serious threat to the county’s environment and wildlife, so I am pleased Herefordshire Council has joined over 60 other councils across the UK in banning their use.

“Sky lanterns and helium balloons will no longer be allowed at licensed events, or at events run on council owned or leased land. We would encourage those celebrating special occasions or fundraising to consider more environmentally-friendly options, such as planting a tree, or using lighting, bunting and flags.”

For more information about the dangers of sky lanterns and helium balloons visit www.herefordshire.gov.uk/skylanterns

New health podcast series launched for young people

A great series of podcasts have been launched on Monday 27 November, aimed at helping young people to get more in tune with their health and wellbeing.

The free ‘Health Uncovered’ podcasts feature young people talking about a range of different topics from sexual health, bullying and grooming to substance misuse, mental health and the pressure of social media, supported by professionals who offer additional advice and guidance.

The podcasts are hosted by TV and radio personality, Cel Spellman, who recorded the sessions with young people in five different locations across the UK. The young people talk openly and honestly about their experiences of different health issues, which they say can often be embarrassing, uncomfortable and misunderstood. The easy to listen to sessions only last for 20 minutes and are amusing, revealing, sometimes emotional and often slightly rude!

Four young people from Herefordshire were delighted to take part in recording the fifth podcast in the series, entitled ‘Mental health: Are you okay?’ The young people were supported by Herefordshire Council’s public health team in partnership with The CLD Trust and Wye Valley Trust school nursing service.

Councillor Jonathan Lester, Cabinet member for young people and children’s wellbeing, said:

“This is a great initiative to help encourage young people to discuss the different health and wellbeing issues they may be facing in Herefordshire. It is really good that four of our young people were able to participate in the series and have the opportunity to not only work in a recording studio, but also share their own personal experiences with other young people, who may be facing similar issues.”

James, who participated in the Herefordshire podcast, said:

“When I was growing up and dealing with mental health issues, I felt trapped, isolated and alone. I wanted to do the podcast, so I can show other young people that they’re not alone, there are other people going through it and there’s help available, if they need it. Even if I can help just one person, I’ll feel like I’ve achieved something.”

Cel Spellman, who presents the podcasts, said:

“I feel pretty privileged to have heard such touching personal stories. Young people today have to deal with all the classic teenage worries, but they also have the extra challenges that belong uniquely to this digital generation.”

Cel is passionate about encouraging young people to ask for help if they have any problems. He has previously spoken about his own challenges of dealing with bullies at school, saying: “I preferred to deal with problems on my own, but there comes a breaking point.”

To download one of the ten available podcasts, search for 'Health Uncovered' on Apple iTunes or Stitcher Android. You can also follow the series on Twitter: @HealthUncovNHS and Instagram: @healthuncovered.

If you need advice or support in relation to any of the issues covered on the podcasts, there’s lots of local and national help available. Alternatively, you can also speak to your school nurse.

The CLD Trust
WISH
No Wrong Door
Addaction (search ‘Herefordshire’)
Let’s Talk
Strong Young Minds
Change 4 Life
Childline
Barnardo’s

National Road Safety Week 2017

This week is National Road Safety Week, organised by the national road safety charity Brake. This year's campaign encourages everyone to be more aware of their speed and slow down. In the UK speeding is still a major problem. It causes needless collisions, untold suffering and stops people living safe and healthy lives.

Over the last ten years, Herefordshire saw an overall decrease in serious road accidents across the county, however in the last two years, these number have started to rise. Research suggests that if the speed of traffic is reduced by just 1mph, there would be a 5% reduction in casualties. Drivers who reduce their speed will also save money by using their car more efficiently.

My press statement said:

“The increase in serious road accidents across the county is a concern. As early nights and

cold temperatures begin, driving conditions get more difficult. There are also more cars on our roads, so it's more important than ever for people to be more aware of the speed they are travelling and the impact this can have.”

Herefordshire Council is part of West Mercia Police’s Safer Roads Partnership and together we deliver education, enforcement and engineering to help improve the county’s roads. Ongoing road maintenance and road improvement works help to maintain our roads to a safe standard, such as the recent Challenge Fund works which have improved road surfaces on our key routes.

Herefordshire Council also provides a range of activities to help people stay safe on the roads, including the Be Bright, Be Seen campaign, cycle training for children and adults, and urban driving courses for HGV drivers, however we all need to play our part in making Herefordshire a safer county.

Please help everyone stay safe this winter by being speed aware, and drive appropriately for the weather conditions. Follow @HfdsStreets on Twitter for the latest winter road updates, including gritting.

Fastershire Rollout Update

Phase 1 of the Fastershire strategy has enabled 34,166 premises in Herefordshire to access a broadband connection greater than 30Mbps across with the project is now working to build on what has already been achieved. This is additional to the premises enabled in parts of Hereford, Leominster and Ledbury as BT’s own investment programme.

Phase 2 – Gigaclear

The project has now published the indicative build timescales for communities in the phase 2 rollout areas and individual residents can now use the Fastershire website address checker to see when work is likely to start in their area - www.fastershire.com

The rollout in these areas will be delivered by Gigaclear, who specialise in connecting rural communities and will install a brand new fibre to the premises (FTTP) broadband network providing access to speeds up to 1000Mbps. The network build within a community could take up to a year to complete, however, individual properties will be able to order a service as soon as their property is reached. By the end of this rollout Fastershire will have enabled over 95% of Herefordshire properties.

Business Grants

Through the Fastershire project Herefordshire along with Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin authorities have developed a £4.5m business broadband grant exclusively for businesses that have yet to access superfast broadband and are not in plan to receive access.

Grants of up to £25,000 of EU funding are available to access faster broadband and businesses can use the Fastershire website address checker to see if a business grant is an option - www.fastershire.com.

Viable Clusters Broadband Project

For some of those properties in Herefordshire that are not in plan for phase 2 and are yet to receive access to faster broadband, Fastershire has bid to secure more funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to extend superfast broadband further.

The project identified a number of viable property ‘clusters’ that could use this funding to provide superfast broadband and stage 4 of the Fastershire Broadband Strategy will be delivered in partnership with Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

As soon as the funding is confirmed, Fastershire will seek to engage a supplier or suppliers to deliver this rollout. The project has contacted those councillors directly whose areas are hoped to benefit from this funding.

Contract Extensions

For properties that are not in plan for phase 2 and do not form a viable cluster, the Fastershire project will explore the option of extending existing provider contracts to reach them. This will be subject to a value for money test unique to each property. Residents can help identify their properties for this process by using the Fastershire website address - www.fastershire.com.

Better Broadband Scheme

The Better Broadband Scheme, developed by the UK government is still available for those eligible properties with a download capacity below 2Mbps and are not included in plans to provide faster broadband.

The scheme will provide an eligible household or business with a unique ordering code that will cover most of the installation cost of a basic broadband service (up to £350) and aims to provide access to speeds of at least 2Mbps.

Advice for residents

Information about all elements of the Fastershire rollout can be found on the project’s website and individuals should use the Fastershire website address checker for updates - www.fastershire.com.

Hereford – Open for Christmas New!

Representatives from Old Market, Hereford BID, Maylord Orchards and independent retailers, Tanners Wines and Fodder, have come together to champion Hereford being open for Christmas.

The significant improvement work taking place to the city’s roads will stop at the end of November until January 2018, to encourage shoppers into Hereford in the run up to the festive period.

The new City Link Road opens in mid-December, just in time for the busiest shopping period, providing access to Merton Meadow car park from Widemarsh Street and improved

movement across the city centre.

Mark Hubbard, Fodder, said: “It's fantastic that the roadworks have been cleared in time for Hereford to have a great Christmas season! With access getting even easier when the City Link Road opens and extra parking in Merton Meadow, it looks like it will be another record breaking Christmas at Fodder and for all independent retailers.”

Alan Anderson, Centre Manager for Old Market, said: “We are delighted to support Hereford’s excellent retail offering and keeping the city open for Christmas. It’s a great initiative and kicks off our late night Christmas shopping and free parking period, taking place every Wednesday during the festive season at Old Market.”

Councillor David Harlow, Cabinet member for Economy and Corporate Services, added: “Hereford’s retail landscape is in healthy shape and we look forward to a prosperous Christmas shopping period. The city’s infrastructure and retail offer has been greatly improved over recent years and we will continue to see improvement and growth in coming years.”

For more information on free parking during late night shopping on Wednesdays and Hereford’s Christmas Markets, please visit the council’s website.

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) – continuing reminder

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) launched its third and final consultation on changes to Parliamentary constituencies in England today (17 October 2017), intended to come into effect for the next scheduled general election in 2022.

This is the last chance to have your say on decisions that could affect Herefordshire. The proposals published today are a result of feedback from public consultations in September 2016 and March 2017.

Following a decision by Parliament to reduce the number of constituencies in the UK to 600 from 650, and to ensure that the number of electors in each constituency is more equal, the Boundary Commission for England is conducting the necessary review of all English constituencies.

It will take just a few minutes to respond to the consultation online, where you can also see other people’s comments and view the proposed changes for Herefordshire on the interactive map www.bce2018.org.uk

News from the parishes.

I have been asked by one of my parishes to provide some news from my parishes that is Old Gore related. Nobody is better placed to know what is happening in parishes other than the individual parish council. With this in mind some months ago I requested that each parish council provide me with information that is current and appropriate to each parish. To date of this monthly report I have not received any local information; therefore, with this monthly report there is no news from the parishes. However, I shall continue to be available for news from each parish and will publish it with my broader ranging monthly report.

There will not be a report issued in December but will recommence in January. However, should anything interesting occur in the interim I will of course acquaint you all parish councils.

May I wish all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Barry

Barry Durkin
Cabinet Member – Transport and Roads
Old Gore Ward
November 2017