

Breinton Parish Council Chairs Annual Report 2025 – 2026

The end of the 2025-2026 parish council year sees a small change in the structure of the council. We unfortunately lost Tracey Prosser as a councillor as she felt unable to commit going forward due to family issues. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tracey for her input and the quiet wisdom that she brought to the parish council.

This led to the required procedures for sourcing a new councillor. We were ultimately able to co-opt Dr Christopher Easter from Lower Breinton. Chris brings a vast level of experience, and clearly an analytical mind that will be a great asset to us. I believe the parish is represented by councillors with a wide range of background experience, capability and enthusiasm.

We have again taken advantage of the Herefordshire Council funded Public Rights of Way (PROW) grant scheme. This along with the vigilance of our footpaths Officer John Wade provides us with footpaths, stiles and gates that are superior to the ones I walk around in other parts of the county. That said, the wet winter did lead to rather a lot of mud in places!

The wet winters also led to problems in fulfilling the Herefordshire Council funded drainage grant scheme, due to the ditches being continually full of water preventing digger clearance. It is hoped that we can complete ditching work at Warham using next year's funding. We had better luck with the Lengthsman scheme which we have used to maintain grips and drainage gullies.

Going forwards there is clearly a threat to the level of funding from the above Herefordshire Council grant schemes. We have benefitted greatly from these schemes, and the risk of reduced funding led us to implement a small increase in the parish precept after two years of zero increase.

The parlous state of the nation's finances tends to impact local authority funding which has a follow-on impact to parish council grants. The parish council has healthy financial reserves but we need to maintain these for the anticipated revision to the parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

The revised National Planning Policy Framework introduced as one of the first acts of the current Government negated any planning protections offered by our current NDP, which means it will have to be revised and reissued. This can only be done when the new housing requirements for the parish, up to 2041, are established as a result of Herefordshire Council's updated Core Development Plan. This plan is currently waiting for the request for land for development from local land owners, with land required for 10,000 houses west of Hereford. The threat to the parish, and its boundaries, from development is currently unknown, but has to be considered as significant. The update with regard to allocation of new housing requirements had been scheduled for autumn 2026 but it is unlikely that this date will be achieved.

Housing and the associated road building will still represent a major threat to the quality of life to parishioners even if the parish is to remain as a Rural Settlement. This will be particularly acute for parishioners living along Kings Acre Road.

One of the main activities initiated this year has been the Breinton Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The detail and thoroughness of this plan are due to the many hours of work put in by Councillor Emil Morfett. He is to be thanked for his dedication to this task, and the hours he has put into it. As part of this initiative, we are currently working to carry out a bat survey using acoustic measuring devices, aided by the Herefordshire Mammals Group.

Parishioners will no doubt have noticed the poor state of many of the roads in the parish after the very wet winter. Hydro-dynamic pressure and frost had, by the end of winter, resulted in a serious pothole problem. The most serious of these have been repaired by Balfour Beatty but many remain to be repaired, having been identified with white paint. Parishioners can report the location of potholes onto the Herefordshire Council website but it is important to upload a photograph of the pothole to aid in any claim for subsequent resultant vehicle damage.

One of the issues potentially affecting the quality of roads is the Herefordshire Council revisions to the Public Realm. This is resulting in the replacement of Balfour Beatty for infrastructure work by M Group, in June 2026. Breinton parish council expressed concerns over the potential loss of the Locality Stewards who have substantial local knowledge of roads and drainage infrastructure. It appears that the Locality Stewards will be inducted as Herefordshire Council employees in order to ensure continuity.

At the end of this parish council year our vigilance is required with regard to road and property flooding, most importantly in the area of Breinton Lee, where we feel an unsuitable housing planning application represents a significant threat to the already unsatisfactory flooding situation. Road flooding at Lower Breinton is also an area where solutions are being explored. These issues along with road and verge damage from Heavy Goods Vehicles supplying agriculture in the south of the parish are areas where we greatly appreciate the ongoing support of our ward councillor Charlie Taylor.

John Hull

Parish Council Chair May 2026