

Whilst canvassing I made sure to let residents know that the environment was a top priority for myself and for the Alliance: that how we thrive as a community in Herefordshire would be reflected by the value we place on our natural capital. The obligation to consider the climate and ecological emergency (which was unanimously voted in by the previous administration) raised very real questions in relation to the proposed road schemes. The River Wye, the 'Nation's Favourite River' and a major 'biodiversity corridor' (connected habitats for interdependent living systems) is protected under environmental law. To my mind the 'bypass' schemes for Hereford were a threat to the river and to our carbon footprint. This administration committed to reviewing the schemes in order to find a less ecologically and environmentally damaging solution to the congestion we suffer in Hereford.

It has been a difficult year knowing that residents want answers and so do I but the 'machine' of local government is very slow...I have never experienced anything so frustrating!!!

As well as fulfilling to the best of my abilities local responsibilities as ward councillor (responding to requests for help from local residents) I also have duties in relation to sitting on committees.

It will be no surprise for you to learn that the two committees I am involved with (which are both proving to be long running) are

1. The Climate and Ecological Emergency
2. 'Waste' Collection and Disposal which will move us in the direction of a circular economy – treating waste as a resource – (which the government have very recently reaffirmed their commitment to).

Both committees are cross party and collaborative across political divides. I find this work both interesting and full of hope, trying to push our practice as a local authority in a more sustainable direction.

Both committees are moving towards a report for the first stage of the work and this will then be presented to an overseeing committee General Scrutiny (of which I am also a member).

General Scrutiny is available in the council's live stream service and the report on Waste will be debated on September 28th so if you would like to see a little of the work I am part of : tune in!!!

In addition I have been involved in supporting a Herefordshire resident who has been trying to ensure that children are and were legally and properly safeguarded in the event of peer on peer sexual abuse. This responsibility falls to schools, the local council (through their referral portal MASH- Multi agency safeguarding hub) and to the police via West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse centre. The journey towards getting this properly addressed has been a long and difficult one and has absorbed a lot of my time and energy.

Things are now moving in a better direction.

The recent pandemic looks to me like a coming of age 'moment' when we have the opportunity to acknowledge that there are unseen forces which we ignore at our peril – the virus ...so difficult to stay alert to something one can't see.

River pollution - again an unseen force until dead fish or loss of water crowsfoot force us to use the environmental assessment tools we have in order to look more responsibly. A fuller more balanced, diverse natural world is now our responsibility. Future generations will only see what we leave them.....already our children do not see the moth storms of the night which we 'oldies' saw in latter years on our car windscreens....

This 'moment' has given humanity pause for thought: we have been able to think more compassionately about the world around us and to long once again for a cleaner, kinder world. This has been evident in the wonderful local resilience or 'kindness' networks in Golden Valley North where teams of volunteers have organised to support the vulnerable. This has been heart-warming to witness and be a small part of.

Well done everyone.

It suggests our default position is not selfishness and each for their own, but community and togetherness, the me moving towards we and becoming 'mwe'.

Could this be the age of science when we have to face the facts as they reveal themselves to experts trained in their respective fields and not rely on the surface appearances or quick fix solutions which only serve the economic interests of the few and damage the living conditions for others with whom we share our planet.

I give credit to the previous administration for voting unanimously to declare a local climate and ecological emergency in line with the same declaration at Westminster – but I cannot yet see the evidence they meant what they said. I am working hard to show you that we do.

Please do not forget that I can be contacted on my council email:

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ROADS!!!!!! Update

We are now able to dispel a few myths about the road schemes: (there were 2) the Southern Link Road (part of the Southern Wye Transport Package SWTP) and the Hereford Relief Road (aka 'Western Bypass' part of the HTTP: Hereford Transport Package).

1. The Southern Link Road –

in brief: this administration WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOSING the awarded £27m (if you are interested in evidence – see below)

In 2014 Herefordshire Council had been awarded £27m via the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the Southern Wye Transport Package. However.....

Prior to the Alliance being elected a major error had been made in with the procurement process used to select a contractor to build the road. The Framework tendering process the Council chose via Balfour Beatty, was not sufficiently robust enough. During the tendering process it became obvious the Council was being exposed to unacceptable risk. Some Conservative councillors at the time knew of the situation but did not disclose this at the time of the election.

On election the new Cabinet was advised that the bid process was still live and had not been cancelled but that we could not proceed. Given that the Southern Link Road was, under the terms of the 2014 Local Enterprise Partnership award , required to be completed by March 2021 the timetable was now impossible.

On top of this, planning permission was about to expire on the Southern Link Road as it had taken so long for the project to get even as far as it had.

Cabinet made the decision to preserve the planning permission in order to keep the proposed 'Review of Schemes' clear of prejudice.

We then went to the LEP and asked for:

- more time.. in the light of our elected promise to review the road schemes and
- a request to reallocate the £27m on equally good measures to tackle congestion (which was the main purpose of the award) by buying electric buses and installing active travel measures.

As the tendering process was still live it was legally impossible to explain the difficulty to the LEP (which may have got us a more sympathetic hearing) or anyone else, without risk.

It was many months before the new administration was able to cancel the bidding process without significant legal risk to the Council.

Our requests were turned down by the LEP and the monies were then put back into the pot for the whole of the Marches local authorities to bid for. We managed to bid successfully for some of those funds to be re-awarded to Herefordshire –

1. for our integrated Wetlands project which will filter effluent discharge from sewage plants
2. transport measures for the Enterprise Zone in Hereford

2. The Western Route

No money has ever been committed by central government to this project. So no money has been lost by this administration. The project was on a short list of projects to be put to government for approval but approval was some way off. Even if the money was made available it would still probably be ten years before a bridge could be built to the West, so even with the previous administration's plans we would have had another ten years of

living without a bridge. And please don't forget that the previous administration had 12 years to get their act together, and failed.