

## **Annual Chairman's report - HMPC May 2026**

My second year as Chair of Hope Mansell Parish Council has been a rewarding period but not without its challenges. We have had three clerks over the last 18 months which has caused inconsistency in processes and provided some unwelcome instability, plus we have been under-financed because of no precept increases over several years, prior to my tenure. Both of these issues have been resolved, which I will talk about later in this report. However, despite that, I believe that as a Council we have continued to be effective in addressing concerns of residents and managing areas over which we have had sufficient budget and agency.

We have used our lengthsman to improve drainage in a number of areas in the parish, including at the bottom of Kiln Lane in Hope Mansell, an area which leaked water across the lane making it hazardous during periods of freezing temperatures. We have recently applied for the maximum grant available this financial year, to improve areas such as the culvert at Sutton Barn, in Hope Mansell. The maintenance of culverts is an ongoing priority, in Hope Mansell in particular. In addition, we continue to monitor the drainage situation at BLE and the efficacy of the grips installed last year.

The roads in and around the parish continue to be a problem, particularly Hope Mansell Lane which is worse than ever. At the time of writing I have met with the clerk of works at Herefordshire County Council who is due to survey the road from the Gloucestershire border to Parkfields T junction. In addition in early June, Councillor Janet Wall and I are due to meet with Herefordshire County Ward Councillors Harry Bramer and Barry Durkin (who is responsible for roads in the county) and also with our MP Jesse Norman. I hope that they can influence the necessary spend and prioritisation required to get Hope Mansell Lane resurfaced. This is the only repair which is going to guarantee a lasting solution to the state of the road. It is a big focus for your parish council and we are doing all we can to get noticed!

We continue to monitor the HM14 consultation with HCC on which we have encouraged residents to voice their views. You may recall that the consultation is to agree whether any restriction of vehicle access should be applied to the lane. The next step we understand is a court case in August, followed by another consultation. It seems to be a long process but we aim to be an impartial conduit for views between residents and HCC about any change of designation of the lane.

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Councillor Phelps monitors and is in regular contact with the Forestry Commission to try to reduce the use of roads in and around Dancing Green by their large, heavy vehicles. This is to minimise damage to road surfaces and passing spaces.

We have maintained many footpaths and rights of way for our residents, thanks largely to the efforts of Councillor Tim Hardie and with valued help from local residents. Examples we actioned or oversaw in this last year included the replacement of the stile at Bailey Brook, new finger post signs in Hope Mansell, on HM12 near Upper End Farm and at the Parkfields end of the main lane, and the cutting back of trees at the Hope Mansell Viewpoint. Residents regularly cut back the hedges along Bailey Lane to maintain accessibility of this convenient route in all seasons - we are most grateful to those concerned.

Criminal drugs activity in the parish is still going on both in Bailey Lane End and at the Viewpoint in Hope Mansell but it is nowhere near the levels experienced in previous years. We continue to monitor both areas and to work closely with PC Claire Denton and her team, and with Herefordshire County Council where appropriate. Local resident information about illegal drugs activity in these areas is very useful and we would encourage this to continue. We provide PC Denton with our priorities on an annual basis to help her target the West Mercia Police resources to the most important areas in our parish. These are drugs activity and road safety, particularly pertinent through Bailey Lane End.

Over the last year we have spent many hours updating our policies and will have these completed over the next few months. All policies are available on our website, as are minutes, agendas and useful links to HCC consultations and resident participation surveys.

This year we refined and updated our budget planning and as a result we applied for and have been granted an increased precept for the year 26/27. This will enable us to match grants available for drainage work and the replacement of hardware around the parish. It also gives us flexibility to support our assets such as defibrillators and noticeboards. We constantly strive to deliver value for money for your parish council tax payment, both by being available and efficient in our response to parishioners and by keeping abreast of, and applying for, all available grants for work required.

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Finally, some thanks. I would express our gratitude to Susan Mountcastle for the six months she spent as our clerk during this year and to thank and welcome Kate Howle who took over as clerk in February. I would also like to thank Diana Tobin who stepped down as a councillor and my vice-chair in December of last year. She gave several years to the Council with energy and dedication. Our newest member of the council is Amber Margrett who we welcome warmly to the team.

My thanks to all the Councillors who work very hard behind the scenes on a number of different issues, and for their continued advice and support - we really are an excellent team. We welcome comment and interaction from our residents so that we can consider and action steps where appropriate. Your parish council is now at full complement and with such an enthusiastic team spread across the villages of the parish, a bigger budget and an efficient clerk, we look forward to providing the best service to our parishioners that we possibly can.

*Lori Weber*  
Chair

May 2026