

April 2026 – Ward Report – Sutton Walls

Following the announcement in the New Year, our Chairman, Cllr Roger Phillips, had the honour of attending an investiture at Windsor Castle to receive his OBE for services to the Herefordshire Community from HRH Prince William. A very special day, and well-deserved recognition of his work over many years for Herefordshire, Rural communities, the Magistracy, Fire service and Local Government.



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FIRST SECTION OF HEREFORD BYPASS BEGINS THIS DECEMBER

Herefordshire Council has appointed Civil engineering firm, Graham as the contractor to undertake detailed design and early technical work for the first phase of the Hereford Bypass, paving the way for construction to begin by December this year.

Following a comprehensive tender process launched last year, the contractor will work on the project, which will see a new road linking the A49 and A465 to the south-west of Hereford. A further tender process will

see the final construction contract being awarded in the summer.

The new 3.6km single-carriageway road will link the A49/Ross Road–Rotherwas Access Road roundabout with the A465 Abergavenny Road and provide a connection onwards to the B4349 Clehonger Road, completion in 2028. The scheme includes a series of

underpasses and structures, including a new bridge over the Hereford-Newport railway line, to maintain regional and local access, and provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and wildlife.

The new highway will help reduce congestion at Asda roundabout and Belmont and open up the next phase of linking to the A49 to the west of the city.

The disappointment of course is that the Government had originally given the money for this section of highway but the change in Herefordshire politics in 2019-23 meant the money was handed back to Government and the purchased land sold back. Now the land is being repurchased and the funding borrowed by the Council. More details

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/back-the-bypass>

NEW HEREFORD FIRE STATION ON TARGET

Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority met with our Fire Chief Jon Pryce and representatives of our contractors Speller Metcalfe to sign off the completion of the steel erection stage of the new four-storey building.

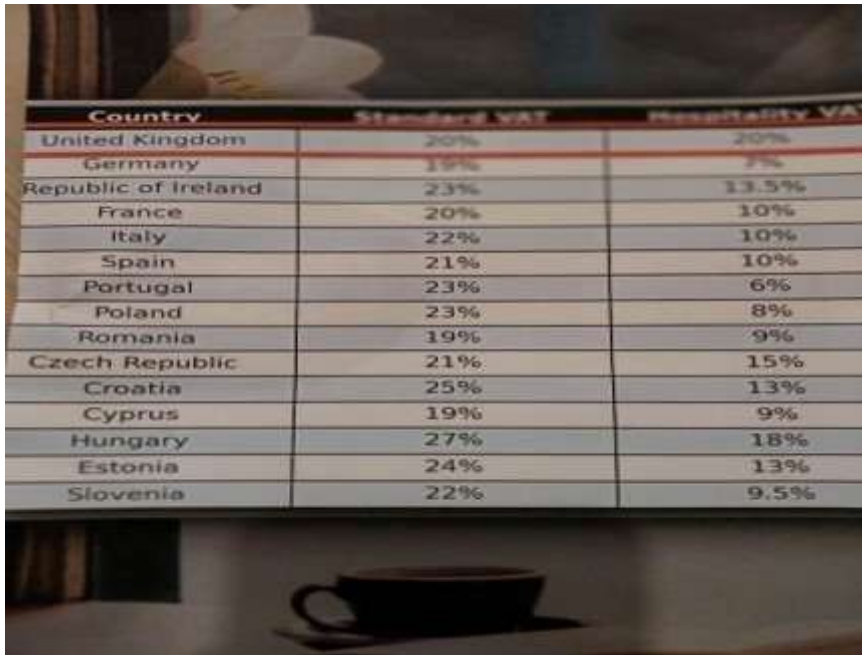
We searched for sites for over 15 years to replace the old 1951 building trying to identify other sites but had to build on our existing site. Despite the weather and a restricted area the project is on time with hand over forecast at the end of the year and following fit out we should be moving in and operating from next March.

Hereford has the only two full time crews in the County with all our other ten stations all crewed by on-call retained firefighters from the community. The four-storey new build is one of the highest buildings in the city- as the picture below shows the fourth floor is the same height as Cathedral Tower.





Huge Increases in Business rates hit our local businesses



Country	Standard VAT	Reduced VAT
United Kingdom	20%	20%
Germany	19%	7%
Republic of Ireland	23%	13.5%
France	20%	10%
Italy	22%	10%
Spain	21%	10%
Portugal	23%	6%
Poland	23%	8%
Romania	19%	9%
Czech Republic	21%	15%
Croatia	25%	13%
Cyprus	19%	9%
Hungary	27%	18%
Estonia	24%	13%
Slovenia	22%	9.5%

The Government issued new increased business rates this year and local business have seen some huge rises in their bills. A meeting was arranged with our local MP Ellie Chowns and other representatives of local business to discuss this and she has written to the Treasury on the subject.

All sectors have been hit, with a local haulage business seeing its business rates rise from £22k to £85K,

but particular focus is on the hospitality and tourism business.

The 542 tourism businesses who pay a levy to Visit Herefordshire to promote local tourism saw their business valuations increase by 4.7 million pounds and there are a further 2,500 other smaller business in the county. Meanwhile the local supermarkets have seen increases in line with inflation despite their size and ability to absorb cost pressures.

The other issue raised was the difference across Europe on VAT taxes with most countries imposing VAT at half the 20% rate of the UK. See figures in photograph. These increases come on the back of the rise in National Insurance and the lowering of their thresholds, increases in the minimum wage, utility costs and leave many of our small business with very small margins. The message is clear we need to support our local businesses or lose them.

Support for rising Energy costs in rural areas

I was pleased that DEFRA contacted the Rural Services Network regarding the impact of off grid oil and gas price increases because of the USA/Iran war on rural communities. Homes in the countryside are not connected to national networks and therefore are outside government price control legislation. The problem is finding a scheme to support rural areas that is practical to deliver hence the targeting of low-income families who are already in the system.

With more than 13,600 homes using solely oil heating, and almost 3,000 on LPG only,

Herefordshire has a very high proportion of such properties, based on 2021 UK Census data. It means an estimated c18% of the total 88,000 properties. Herefordshire Council has secured £517,865 additional funding from government to help low-income households afford the huge increases in cost of oil and LPG. One national average price cited has highlighted the cost of LPG rising from 67pence to £1.45 per litre in recent weeks.

Eligibility for financial support through the fund is based on criteria aligned to the Council's existing Warm Homes Local Grant programme. Households receive funding covering a proportion of the difference in cost between their previous average bills and the current price: household incomes £36,000 or below - 100%; £36,000 - £50,000 - 50%.

Details on Herefordshire Council website.

PLEASE report potholes and concerns



[Report problems on the road](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road)

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/report-problems-road

[Check on progress of a defect](http://herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/pothole-road-defect-progress-map)

herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/pothole-road-defect-progress-map

Report a serious pothole, flooded road or highway obstruction- Balfour Beatty Living Places: 01432 261800

Making a claim for vehicle damage : www.herefordshire.gov.uk/roads-1/highway-claims

Footpaths issues –

- PROW - PROW@herefordshire.gov.uk
- PROW No – 01432 383 550

Report fly tipping. It will be dealt with in a much quicker time frame by either calling the Contact Centre on 01432 261800 or by logging the fly tipping via the council website on the links below as your www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/fly_tipping