

September 2026 – Ward Report – Sutton Walls

The magnificent new Marden Parish Hall was opened at a grand ceremony on Sunday. The hall nicknamed the 'New Tin Shed' for those who remember the old tin shed which preceded it some years ago.



The event was extremely well attended by more than 100 local residents, and the ceremonial ribbon was cut by Mrs Debbie Owens, of the family who generously donated the land on which the new hall stands. After the formalities were over the Hall was open for all and there were activities and catering for all provided by many local volunteers.

Exam Results:

Herefordshire students have celebrated another strong year of A Level and GCSE results. At A level an impressive 98.7% pass rate (A*-E). This exceeds both the West Midlands average of 97.4% and the national average for England of 97.9%.

The GCSE results continue to be impressive with 69.1% of Herefordshire young people achieving a Grade 4 or above in all subjects, this is significantly above the West Midlands average of 66.6%. Performance in both English and Maths has been particularly strong, with the Herefordshire outcomes in both English and Maths at Grade 4 and above beating the West Midlands and England averages results. English at Grade 4 or above averages at 64.8% for Herefordshire, which is well above the West Midlands at 55.5% and England at 59.5%. Maths is similarly impressive at 65.3%, with the West Midlands at 52.4%, and the England average at 57.2%.

Herefordshire students also excelled in their Combined Science results with averages of 63.6%, compared to West Midlands at 52.7% and England averages at 58.1%. A clear endorsement of the strong professional standards of our schools.

I was pleased to see the council supporting hospitality business by reducing the pavement licence fees by 70%. Pavement licences allow businesses including cafés, restaurants, pubs and coffee shops to place tables, chairs and other approved removable furniture on the public area outside their premises. The cost of a new pavement license will fall from £500 to £150, while renewal fees will reduce from £350 to £105.

The Council has published its Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which will provide a framework for coordinated action to help nature recover across the county – identifying where improvements to habitats could deliver the greatest benefits for wildlife, the environment and local communities.

The strategy includes a Local Habitat Map, showing important existing areas for biodiversity as well as locations where action could create or improve habitats for nature. It also sets out 37 priorities and 100 measures and supporting actions, covering some of the habitats and species most important to Herefordshire – from rivers, wetlands, woodlands and traditional orchards to hedgerows, grasslands, farmland and nature-rich urban areas.

Phase one of Hereford Bypass set to go ahead



Herefordshire Council has published the Full Business Case for Phase One of the Hereford Bypass, marking another important step towards delivering new transport infrastructure and supporting future growth across the county.

The bypass is part of an ambitious program of major projects being progressed by Herefordshire Council to improve transport, support businesses, strengthen communities and create better places across the county. Phase One of the Hereford Bypass represents a significant investment in the future of Herefordshire's transport network.

Phase One of the bypass will provide a new 3.6km link between the A49 and A465, creating a more direct route to the Rotherwas Industrial Estate and Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ). It will help improve connections, reduce pressure on existing routes and support future development.

The Full Business Case explains how the scheme will help address current transport challenges while supporting wider plans for economic growth across the county. It is scheduled to be begin this December ahead of the local government elections in May.

The real sadness about this is that having the planning permission, land purchased and Government funding to pay for it all in place in 2019 the previous administration pulled the project and sent the funding back to Government.! We now have to borrow the increased funding required and the strain will be on our council tax bills. Phase One is the first stage of the wider Hereford Western Bypass which is required to support our infrastructure around the City with the Government's requirement to provide 30,000 houses in the next 20 years. The cost of that will need funding from central government and housing development.

Challenging Summer for our Fire service



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has been closely involved with the challenges we have faced with this hot dry summer. Since May they have attended over 800 outdoor fires with nearly 300 incidents a week compared to the norm of 150 incidents. The nature and size of these incidents and the fact that this is also happening with our neighbouring Fire Authorities and nationally has posed some significant challenges, however we are well prepared and equipped to face these challenges. We are attending many mid-size incidents requiring between 4-8 fire engines, often concurrent and requiring over 24-hour cover plus supporting neighbouring fire services.

August 13th saw this activity peak with around 40 serious incidents attended in one day. We supplied several crews and engines to support West Midlands Fire service at the major incident at Stourbridge where 19 houses were destroyed, and our own serious incident at Pershore which saw three houses destroyed by fire and seven more damaged, with over 30 people evacuated. Whilst we were immensely proud of the fire crews operating under very challenging conditions and preventing many more houses being destroyed in Pershore, this was also a superb multi-agency effort to coordinate support to the local community.

Thanks go to the professionalism of our firefighters and staff for working to protect our communities in tough conditions.

Also, the support of the farming community helping create firebreaks, the employers of retained firefighters who saw less of their employees, and the public for their assistance and support. Lots of lessons to learn from this summer and the impact of our changing climate.

Last month also saw the publication of the Government's inspection of HWFRS which rated us as good with no significant causes for concern or major issues highlighted in the report.

The Chief Inspector Katherine Stone said "I congratulate Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service on its performance in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. The service has made strong progress and continues to demonstrate clear and sustained improvement. This is supported by a robust governance structure with stable, self-aware leadership and improved data and intelligence to support decision-making at all levels. This progress has been achieved through the work of dedicated staff at all levels. All of this has to be taken in the context of a Service that has a decade of financial challenges, most recently in 2025/26 being forced to make £1.2m of cuts in a 45m budget.

Image: Potato Sheds Fire at Milton.