

Ross-on-Wye Town Council Newsletter

Annual Town Meeting

This takes place on **Monday 4 April 2016 at 7.30pm in the Larruperz Centre**. This is your opportunity to meet your town councillors, find out what the council has been doing over the last twelve months and ask your questions.

There will be a presentation on the progress of our Neighbourhood Plan. This initiative allows the residents to decide how the town will develop in the future, e.g. where new housing can be built, through consultation with you. The presentation will explain how anyone living in Ross can be involved and have their say.

Following the meeting there will be an opportunity to chat informally over tea and coffee (or a drink from the bar if you prefer!).



The Mayor welcomes visiting Mayors to Ross at the Christmas Fayre

From the Mayor

Looking back over my last two years representing the town as Mayor, the time has flown by.

It has been an honour to represent the people of Ross-on-Wye at so many special events in and around the County of Herefordshire. I have tried in a positive way to encourage and welcome people to our town of which I am very proud.

I should like to thank all the people who have shown support to me in so many ways, giving their time and financial support to my chosen charity and offering words of wisdom when I have needed them. In May I will continue in my role as Town Councillor representing the East Ward for my elected years.

This of course brings me to mention the by election which will have taken place by the time you read this. The elected councillor will represent the North Ward, replacing John Gasston who has returned to Uganda. This election will be interesting because the choice of candidates has widened. I wish all of them, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative, the best of luck and I look forward to working with the successful candidate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Col. Bea'.

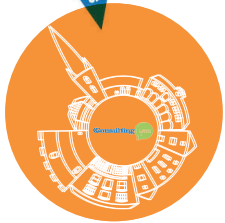
Use them or lose them!

Bus services in and around Ross are again under threat. This time it is the 33 from Hereford to Ross and the Ross Runabout, number 40. Herefordshire Council subsidises these routes at present. However, that arrangement looks set to end on the 10 April 2016, a victim of further budget cuts. Currently around £33,500 is provided by the County to support these services. It seems likely that some £250,000 may be cut from the County's 2016/17 budget. The County Council has been in contact with Ross Town Council, asking us to publicise these services and make the point that if residents do not use the buses at risk, they are more likely to lose them. Additional journeys and passengers obviously make bus services more financially viable. So the message is clear. Use the number 33 and 40 buses or risk losing them!



This year's Christmas Fayre, held in conjunction with the Christmas Lights Switch on, was organised by members of the Town Council's Events Committee. As well as giving the town a great day, proceeds of £973 were given to the Mayor's Charity, St Michael's Hospice. Pictured are Councillors Hannah Lerego and Caroline Bennett presenting the cheque at the hospice.

Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan



Summer 2016 Update

It's been a busy few months for the Neighbourhood Plan team as Ross-on-Wye gets stuck into the same process as hundreds of other communities across England, in preparing our own Neighbourhood Plan.

We started a few months ago by asking about the issues people wanted to address in the Plan. We did this through a workshop, by talking to over 200 people at pop-up events in April/May, and with an exhibition at the Library in June. We are also involving local groups, including the Scouts and Ross Walkers along with local school children (future Rossians!) as we collect evidence.

We've recently turned all the issues that might be addressed through a Neighbourhood Plan into some draft key AIMS (or objectives). These are in two main sections – aims for the Town Centre and aims for the Wider Town.

The suggested main focus for the Neighbourhood Plan is the Town Centre. This does not mean the link will be lost to the wider town and its setting; we know the importance of this from all those we have spoken to.

Over the summer we have been working on refining these draft AIMS and building more evidence.

There are two Working Groups doing some background evidence work, and we provided an opportunity for the wider community of people who live, work and visit the town to contribute through a float in the procession and then a 'call-in and comment marquee' at the Ross Carnival. We hope you noticed us and gave your comments!

There is still time to get in touch if you have any thoughts on the draft AIMS (to the right) or, if you have any questions or would like to get more involved with the plan, get in touch with our consultants via: info@placestudio.com

And don't forget to visit the website for more details: www.rossplan.org.uk

OUR EMERGING AIMS

TOWN CENTRE

- Enhancing the environment of the town centre in ways such as...
...improving the appearance of the town centre taking care of the historic character and using a high standard of design for any new development.
- Enabling more town centre living in ways such as...
...encouraging housing development on currently empty, derelict or underused land.
- Supporting the town centre economy in ways such as...
...encouraging and supporting creative new uses where this adds to the vitality of the centre.
- Ensuring a well connected and accessible town centre for all in ways such as...
...improving the useability of the town centre by pedestrians, cyclists and those facing mobility challenges.
- Protecting and enhancing the social and cultural assets of the town centre in ways such as...
...ensuring existing community services and facilities, such as the library, are retained and enhanced.

WIDER TOWN

- Enhancing the environment of the wider town in ways such as...
...ensuring high standards of locally distinctive design and construction in all new developments.
- Delivering appropriate new housing in the wider town in ways such as...
...encouraging developments of self-build new housing.
- Supporting the wider town's economy in ways such as...
... encouraging starter units, shared serviced accommodation etc. for new businesses.
- Ensuring the wider town is well connected and accessible in ways such as...
...providing clearer signage into and around the town from main roads.
- Protecting and enhancing the social and cultural assets of the wider town in ways such as...
...protecting Local Green Spaces of significant community value through designation.



Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan

allotments

greenspaces

where
you
live

the
shops
you
use

play
areas

cycle paths



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Events Committee News

Ross-on-Wye Town Council's Events Committee has given the go ahead once again for the series 'Bands in the Park' over the summer months. The concerts will begin on Sunday 28th May and will take place every Sunday afternoon up until and including 27th August.



Last year saw the introduction of a more diverse range of bands which proved very popular, these, in addition to the more traditional brass bands provided many locals and visitors with a free afternoon's musical entertainment at the Bandstand on Wye Street. Of course, the event is weather dependant but there were still a hard core group of people who turned out even when the great British weather did its worst!

There is an opportunity for local charities to get involved and come along to take a collection each week during the concert, so if you know of groups that might be interested please ask their representatives to contact the office.

Proms in the Park

We are trying to enhance the Bands in the Park event and by working closely with the organiser are hoping to be able to put on a 'one off' Proms in the Park on a Saturday in August. This is still in the very early planning phase but the Committee is hopeful an event such as this will draw people into town to enjoy an afternoon and evening of free music.

Christmas Fayre

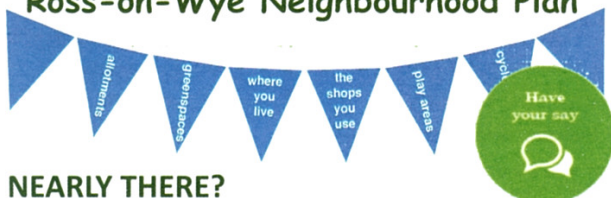
In November, we organised a very successful Christmas Fayre which culminated with the switching on of the town's Christmas Lights. It is hoped to repeat this event in 2017 on 19th November.

Busking Festival

Plans are currently underway for a Busking Festival in the town centre to be held one Saturday, possibly in September. This will be a family friendly event for both residents and visitors, as well as benefiting local businesses with the additional footfall.



Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan



NEARLY THERE?

There are three parts to the story of the Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan. Each part describes a possible route which will determine the answer to the question: "Are we nearly there yet?".

In part one, thanks mainly to lots of great work on evidence collection by local people, what we're calling the **Initial Neighbourhood Plan** is just about finished in draft form – which is great! This version of the plan includes, amongst other things, policies about some more housing, ensuring that all future designs add to the distinctive character of Ross, protecting valued local green spaces from future development, revitalising the town centre and retaining key community facilities. Were it not for the two other parts of the story that follow, after a bit of final polishing, this draft plan would be made available very soon for everybody in the town to see and comment on.

The second part of the story started when Herefordshire Council told us they were possibly looking for a site for a new primary school in Ross. It is still early days but, if it is decided that a new school is needed and a new site has to be found, that site will have to be added into the Initial Neighbourhood Plan



because it will need to be formally 'allocated' (to use the legal terminology). We are keeping well in touch with the Herefordshire Council officers working on this project; in fact, we may well have found them a site they might not

have found without us! This is potentially very positive but it does mean that the plan now has to wait until a final decision is made about a school and a site. At the same time, with the draft plan sitting ready by then, the proposed site can just be slotted in and things can then move very quickly to formal consultation on your plan.

Part three of the story could be said to be still unwritten! For some time Herefordshire Council have been developing plans for 200 or so new houses at Hildersley and a major employment development at Model Farm. The housing, though approved by Herefordshire Council, could be 'called in' for review by the Secretary of State at the request of the Ministry of Defence on noise and safety grounds associated with the firing range. Model Farm is uncertain because the situation relating to provision of the necessary financial underpinning from the government's Growth Fund still remains unclear – no funding was granted in the recent round of announcements. If one or both projects was to fail or get delayed indefinitely, Herefordshire Council are likely to look to the Neighbourhood Plan to find sites to recover some, if not all, of the housing and employment provision written into the current Herefordshire Local Plan and required by central government. What we're calling an Extended Neighbourhood Plan might then be really exciting (that is what our Steering Group thought) but it would take some time to pull together.



So the honest answer is: "it depends". One way or another, we will continue to keep you in touch with progress and provide further opportunities for people to contribute. Please stay with us; this is your Neighbourhood Plan (whichever one it is) and it is fundamental to a positive future for Ross.

Riverside work helps conserve wildlife and landscape!



The partnership between Ross-on-Wye Town Council, Natural England and the Wye Valley AONB Unit has continued to manage the riverside in Ross to encourage biodiversity and improve riverside views. A programme of tree management to help create better habitats for a variety of flora and fauna along the river involves pollarding and coppicing trees. This helps to improve the age structure of riverside trees and provide a good habitat for a variety of species. This also creates views of the river, and light and shade on the river and along the river bank. Shade helps to maintain beneficially high oxygen levels in the water, whilst adequate light means the growth of aquatic plants is not inhibited.

Coppicing is when trees are cut down at their base to encourage growth of new stems. It creates a sustainable timber supply for future generations. Some of the Alder trees along the river bank in Ross show signs of the disease Phytophthora and, if left unmanaged, these trees would die. Coppiced trees are less likely to be affected by the disease when the regrowth starts in the spring.

It is hoped that some of the Willow trees will be 'pleached'. The tree is 'hinged' at its base and laid along the river bank. This is an innovative form of riverbank management. The tree will continue to grow, and the vegetation in the water will create habitat for aquatic animals. The branches will slow down the flow of water, creating 'slack' water. This slower flowing water will provide habitat for fish to shelter in.

Pollarding and coppicing have been undertaken on the flood plains of the River Wye for many centuries, particularly at Ross. The town had a thriving basket making industry, which relied on the new growth of the coppiced willow trees lining the river. A blue plaque on the Hope and Anchor pub remembers this part of the town's history.

Further work of pollarding and coppicing will continue in March with some additional work to help prevent erosion along Long Acre. This will involve willow spiling, a means by which two fishing platforms are created using live willow woven in tiers to retain them.

The River Wye is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because it is an important migration route, wildlife corridor and breeding area for many nationally and internationally important species.

Further information from:
Ruth Waycott, Wye Valley
AONB Communications Officer,
email: information@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk



Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan



Where are we at?

Since the last newsletter update we had a very useful "show, tell and consult" session at the Carnival, with a good number of people looking at the policies and projects in the draft Plan. Some of the detailed feedback enabled significant progress on one of the trickier sites.

The open Steering Committee recognises that the long gestation period of the Plan is frustrating and, to make progress, has sought alternatives to site allocations for housing, employment and infrastructure facilities. We have therefore been asked by town councillors to use two approaches: robust site allocation where information is readily available; and the less robust 'criteria based' approach for areas where information remains lacking.

This could still mean that, within the term of the Plan, inappropriate speculative developments are unavoidable simply in order to meet the government's 5-year housing land supply requirements; but we are seeking to mitigate this by prioritising sites based on additional criteria.

Herefordshire Council policy on the replacement school proposals remains unresolved so we have been advised also to pursue a 'criteria based' site selection policy for a school site (a model used elsewhere in the county). Herefordshire Council have already largely agreed with the Economic Development department for our criteria based policies for the area under strategic review on the east side of the A40 (relief road).

If, during the Regulation 14 consultation phase, new information emerges that enables criteria based policies to be converted to allocations, that may be both desirable and feasible.

Our current timeline for completion of the Plan looks like:

Spring 2018	Public Consultation (Regulation 14),
Summer 2018	Resolve issues from consultation
Winter 2018/2019	Submit for (Regulation 16) examination, and Referendum

Melvin Reynolds, Chair of Steering Group - Jan 2018

The Mayor's Ball

The Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Nigel and Mrs. Gill Gibbs are delighted to invite you to join them at the Mayor's Ball on Saturday 24th March 2018, 7.00pm for 7.30pm at the Chase Hotel. There will be a three course meal with choices of menu (please ring the Town Council office for details), followed by a disco. Tickets are £35 pp, available from the office and all profits will go to the Mayor's charity, the Midlands Air Ambulance.



Ross-on-Wye Town Council Newsletter



Ross-on-Wye

Neighbourhood Development Plan
2018 - 2032

Consultation Draft
November 2018



Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Development Plan 6-week Public Consultation underway.

The Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Development Plan started 6 weeks of Public Consultation on Friday 9th November. The consultation and commenting period will therefore end at midnight on Friday 21st December.

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) would give our community substantial influence over future development with local-level vision for the future, objectives and planning policies. It would give Ross legally enforceable power; in a national planning hierarchy they are the third tier below National Policy and (for Herefordshire) the Local Plan of 2011.

The preparation of the NDP has been led by a steering group of local people with the support of Ross-on-Wye Town Council but the aim is to engage widely with individuals and groups in Ross to produce a Plan that will properly reflect local aspirations; so this consultation is to ensure that the Plan reflects local wishes.

What does the Plan say?

The Plan is key to shaping the future of Ross-on-Wye but is big because Ross is a large market town and because for the plan to gain its full legal status there are a number of things it must contain and some, especially the policies, have to be written in formal planning language. So the Draft contains a guide to the structure:

The Introduction (p. 8-23) sets the scene about Neighbourhood Plans generally but mostly about this plan in particular, with lots of basic facts and figures.

The Vision (p.24-25) (every Neighbourhood Plan must have one) is very important. It describes, hopefully in a very accessible way, what Ross-on-Wye could be like in 2031 if the plan is as successful as hoped.

The five main Objectives are listed on page 26. These are also required legally because they say what the plan hopes to achieve; later sections detail how that will be done.

The Policies (p.27- 75) are key. They are in five overall sections and each has one or more detailed sub-objectives. The policies are the most important part of the Neighbourhood Plan because, once the plan is fully agreed, it will then be Herefordshire Council planning officers who must take account of it in deciding if future planning applications satisfy (or not) the policies in the plan. The policies must be right for Ross

and also strong enough to prevent inappropriate developments getting through (hence the formal language). *We suggest a quick skip through all the policies, then come back to look in detail at those that are of most interest to you.*

The Development Strategy and Sites section (p.76-94) is a summary of how the key objectives will be achieved, especially what new developments will happen where.

The last, Projects, section starts on page 95 and lists an array of practical projects that will be set in motion to support what is in all the earlier sections. The projects are not a formal, legal part of the Neighbourhood Plan but they can often be crucial to making it really effective.

Finally, you will notice lots of mentions of supporting evidence. That is key to justifying the policies and is available through the Ross Town Council website, or paper copies of evidence can be requested in person at the Town Council offices.

How to comment on the Plan

The full text, all supporting information and comment forms are available online at <http://www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk>. For those who prefer to read paper copies and comment on paper the Plan, its Appendices and Comment Forms are available at the Ross Town Council offices, Ross Library and the Larruperz Centre.

All comments must be received by email or at the Town Council offices by midnight on December 21st.

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Community, Markets and
Tourism Committee News
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New faces on the Council
Staff changes

Colin Gray

The Town Council was deeply saddened by the sudden and untimely death in July of former mayor and serving councillor, Colin Gray. Colin was a member of the Planning and Amenities Committees, he was the town's Emergency Co-ordinator and had been a town councillor since 2011.

