Birlingham News online

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Editorial

What news have you heard this week? Perhaps a relative is about to fly off on holiday or a friend is having trouble with their car – or you have just discovered an annoying leaky tap?

Maybe you have been listening to the BBC and hearing about events in the wider world: the welcome ceasefire in Gaza or the troubling news from Donald Trump's inauguration that the world's largest economy is about to turn its back on wind-powered energy and electric vehicles, instead opting to increase drilling for oil and gas, with all that means for our already overburdened atmosphere.

Our brains have an extraordinary capacity for simultaneously absorbing both mundane and international reports and somehow finding a balance between those things we can change and those we cannot.

For our part, we can offer you news somewhere in the middle: neither personal nor global but relating to the world immediately around you and the community of which you are a part.

So for the next few minutes, leave aside the concerns of those closest to you and the troubles of the wider world and concentrate instead on events to look forward to, like Cuppa & Chat or the Bulb Sunday service; or things that have recently happened, such as the immensely successful Village Quiz and the ponderings of the Parish Council; or just enjoy the changing views of the River Avon, the one thing that will probably still be the same a hundred years from now.

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Cuppa & Chat



Wednesday 5th February *by Sue Hermon*

Cuppa & Chat will be held on Wednesday 5th February from 3.00pm to 4.30pm in Birlingham Village Hall. Everyone is most welcome to come along to our first gathering of 2025. There will be tea, coffee and a selection of cakes and the cost is still only £3.00 per head! On your way you might like to take a stroll through the churchyard to see how well the snowdrops are doing

For more information, or to request transport, please contact me on 01386 750096 or email sue.hermon@me.com.

St James' Church



Churchwarden: Adrianne Woodward (Tel. 01386 750936)

Here is the church news for February and March:

* The **Bulb Sunday** service this year is being held on **Sunday 9th February** at 3.00pm. Canon Claire Lording will be leading the service, supported by the Director of Music at the Abbey, James MacDowall Scott, as the organist, and members of the Abbey Choir leading the singing and contributing individual items. Refreshments are available to purchase in the Village Hall, at the Snowdrop Teas, after the service.
* There is no service in March but a short talk about Fairtrade is planned to be held in the church, with the opportunity to buy a selection of Fairtrade items. More details to follow.

Also:
St James' is introducing a 'Light up Your Special Date' scheme in 2025. Do you have a special date on the calendar that marks an anniversary, or perhaps a memory of a loved one? If so, you are invited to sponsor the floodlighting of St James' on that date for a donation of £10.00, with the option of having an inscription in a Book of Commemoration.

For more details there are leaflets available in the church or contact Sue Hayward, PCC Treasurer, on dennett90@aol.com.

Birlingham Village Hall Lighting Scheme

by Paul Burton

The Village Hall has been successful in obtaining a 100% grant from the Wychavon Rural Fund to upgrade the lighting in the Village Hall. This upgrade will make the hall more adaptable and overcome the issues some users have had with the mercury vapour bay lights.

The large bay lights will be removed and the general lighting will be provided by 8ft LED strip lights (8) on the underside of the beams. These lights will be dimmable if required and it will also be possible to adjust the colour temperature from bright through daylight to warm lighting. The small spot lights on top of the beams will be removed. Using the electrical feed to the oid bay lights will enable the introduction of two silent 'de-stratification' fans which will return the warm air that collects in the roof area to ground level.

We believe these changes will make the hall more pleasant and useful and of course will contribute to carbon reduction.

It is anticipated that the work will take place in February and will be scheduled to last three days, with as little disruption to hall activities as possible.

Next project – the boiler!

FRIENDS OF ST JAMES' CHURCH, BIRLINGHAM

SNOWDROP TEAS 2025



Birlingham Village Hall
February Saturdays and Sundays, 11am - 4pm

Every resident in the village is welcome to come in for a complimentary cup of tea - bring this flyer with you!

Snowdrop Teas support the maintenance of Birlingham's Church and Churchyard, the exquisite centrepiece of our village. As we welcome people from far and wide to see the snowdrops & crocuses, the sale of snowdrops and of teas & cakes makes a vital contribution to keeping St James' safe and sound.

Bulb Sunday Church Service, February 9th at 3pm

If you can bake us a cake or do a stint in the kitchen, please email Sue Hayward at dennett90@aol.com, or ring Julia Luff on 07796 693687

Village Quiz

by Paul Burton

The Village Quiz took place on 18th January with a sell-out of 63 quizzers. Brian Chinneck was the illustrious quiz setter and host and led us through a number of rounds of brain teasers – many, many thanks to Brian and his glamorous assistant and scorer, Pat.

The great atmosphere in the hall was really tangible and I believe the quiz was warmly received by all; a number of new residents in the village took part and said how welcome they were made to the village. Additional thanks to Jessica Dormer for her superb organisation that meant we could combine groups to make up teams; and to Lucas for deigning the flyer.

Around £400 was raised, split between the Friends of St James' Church and the Village Hall. There have already been many requests for a repeat match in the autumn, if Brian is up for it!

Thank you again to Brian and all who took part.









Photos by Jessica Dormer, Steve Conder and Chris Hermon

Parish Council Report

by Ian Yates

Birlingham Parish Council held its meeting at 7.00pm on Wednesday 18th January in the Village Hall. A summary of agenda items follows:

- **English Devolution Bill – Key issues for Birlingham residents**

  Councillor Paul Middlebrough gave us a full report. Key points are summarised on the next page. The full report will appear in the Parish Council minutes.

- **South Worcestershire Development Plan Review**

  P Lewis and E Worthington, chartered Town Planners, have been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the soundness of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review.

  The timetable is as shown on the next page. Hearings to be held at the Worcester Guildhall, High St, Worcester, WR1 2EY at 9.30am.

- **'20 is plenty' – identifying the benefits of a 20mph limit in Residential Areas**

  At the November Parish Council meeting the working group agreed to try and meet with WCC's Head of Highways to discuss a proposal for a 20mph limit in parts of the village. This would help inform whether current government policy supports such a proposal. Unfortunately the meeting couldn't be arranged but the working group's proposal was circulated to him instead and we understand that his opinion on this will be received shortly. Councillor Adrian Hardman is chasing. In the meantime the following additional actions were agreed:

  - Rupert Day will contact Bewdley Parish Council, who have just had their 20mph speed limit approved, to understand how they achieved this. The information gathered from Bewdley could provide valuable insights and strategies that might help in advancing the proposal for our village.
  - Rupert Day will contact a transport consultant known to one of the residents in the working group who may be able to advise on policy and likelihood of success before a formal submission is made. The meeting agreed to provide funding for this from the Projects provision.
  - The group will also consider making a freedom of information request to better understand the council's position on 20mph limits.

- **Flooding by the Manor House, Lower End**

  The saga to try and solve the problem of the leak on the slope by the Manor House continues. Following the repair of the collapsed drainage pipe in the road, we now need Severn Trent Water (STW) to inspect and then repair their collapsed surface water sewers to the north of Manor Stables, within the Moors land. This is still the main issue causing excess water to flow onto the public highway. However, to date, we have been unable to get STW to carry out the necessary inspection and repair so it was agreed at the last meeting that with Councillor Hardman's help we would escalate the action to the Managing Director of Severn Trent, Liz Garfield. This has been done and she has delegated the request to her regional organisation and we are now waiting again for a response.

- **Consultation on Potential Community Infrastructure Projects**

  As previously reported, the Parish Council has funding available in its Provisions budget and further funds can be accessed through WCC grant funding for community facilities and infrastructure and from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that has been received. There are different criteria defined for how each of these various funds can be used but in general the monies can be spent on community infrastructure projects.

  In the next couple of weeks, Councillor Katie Parsons will contact Birlingham community groups to invite them to put forward projects. The resulting list will then be consulted upon with the local community to establish parish priorities.

- **Lengthsman's report – Carl Brassington**

  See separate item on next page.

- **Parish and Town Council event – 6 March 2025**

  This event will cover various topics, including elections and best practice for dealing with vacancies, proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system and three workshops on Rural Transport, Neighbourhood Plans and Health and Wellbeing. Councillor Rupert Day will attend.

- **Safer Neighbourhood Team – drop-in sessions**

  These are held regularly in local villages and are an opportunity to meet with police team and discuss any concerns. Councillor David Glover will attend the next one local to Birlingham on behalf of the village. Dates can be found here: Upcoming drop-in sessions – Neighbourhood Alert.

Full minutes of the Parish Council meeting will be posted on the village website shortly.

English Devolution Bill – Key issues for Birlingham residents

Report by Cllr Paul Middlebrough

The Government has now announced its plans for reorganising Local Government into unitary authorities in the shire county areas which still have a two tier arrangement with district councils. For Wychavon and Worcestershire this will result in both the county council and the six districts being abolished and moving to one unitary or more than one unitary authority providing the services currently run by both county and district councils.

The initial part of the process has been for the County Council to indicate its willingness to engage with the government. To this end the leader of the county council Simon Geraghty has written to the Jim McMahon, Minister of State for Local Government in a positive manner.

Dear Minister
Further to your letter of the 16 December 2024 outlining the English Devolution White Paper and the Government's ambition, we write to inform you that Worcestershire County Council is keen to move at pace to deliver devolution and enable the county to achieve better efficiencies, economies of scale and improved outcomes for our residents and businesses. Therefore, with the pace of change in mind, we are writing to ask you to exercise your Ministerial powers to postpone the County Council elections, which are due to take place in May 2025. This will give us the time to work with partners and stakeholders to put together proposals for local government reform that are necessary to unlock devolution for Worcestershire.
Yours sincerely

The leader of Wychavon District Council Christopher Day has followed this up with his own letter to the minister. In it he references the importance of protecting the WDC legacy and ongoing services. He points out that Wychavon has the third lowest Council Tax rate in England, out of 164 Districts, and enjoys high resident satisfaction levels with 71% of residents saying they are satisfied with how Wychavon runs services. He is concerned that merging District budgets with the statutory needs of the County will put much of their good work at risk. In particular the expansion in the cost of adult and children's social care will take precedence in the new unitary authority over other discretionary services previously provided by WCC such as parks, leisure centres, health and well-being.

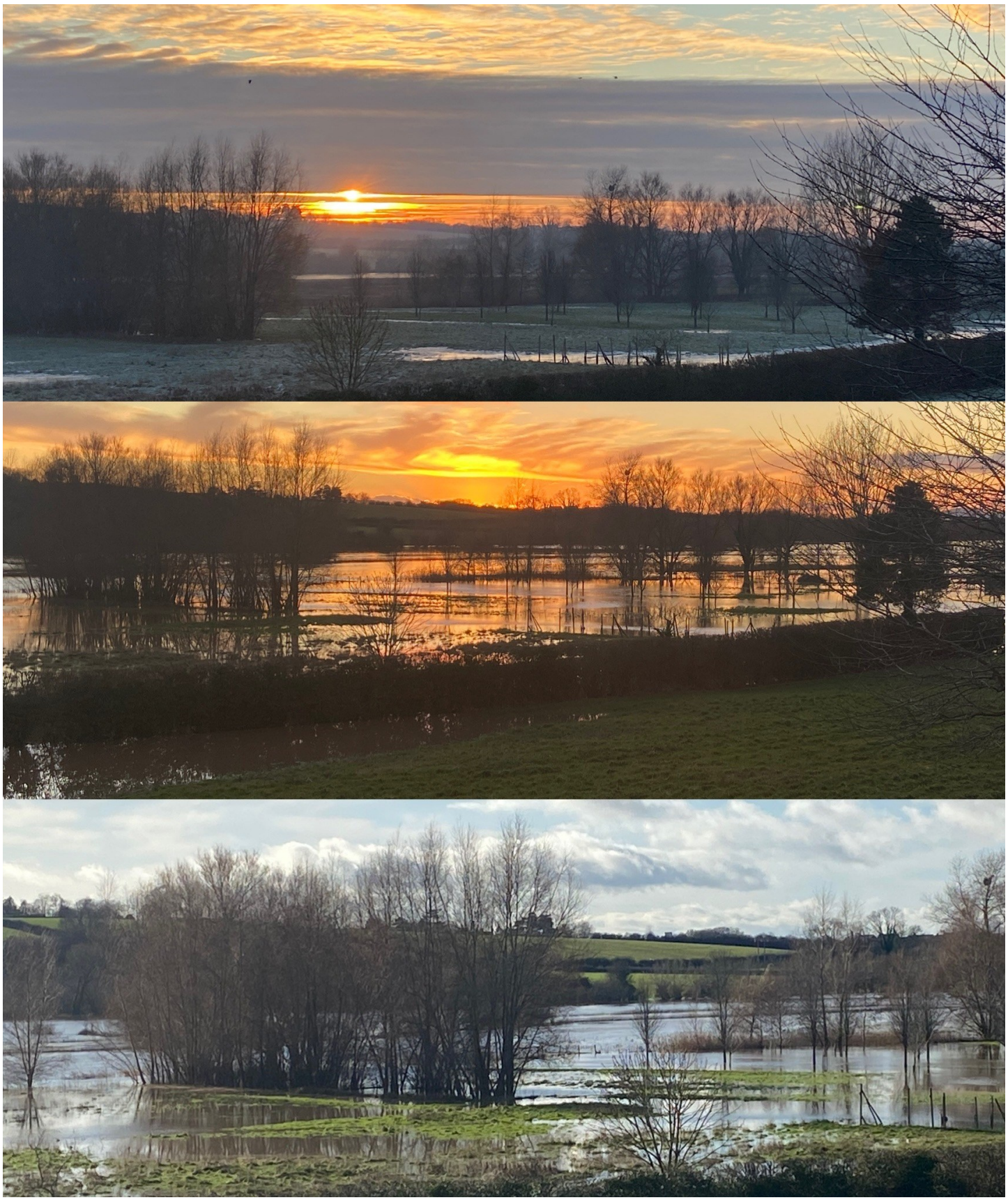
However he goes on to say that accepting these concerns, the ambitious timeline and the limits on the size of both unitary and Mayoral Combination Authorities set out in the White paper, there are in my view significant benefits to operating a One Worcestershire Unitary authority as opposed to anything smaller.

Lengthsman's report – Carl Brassington

- 6 January 2025. Flooding in Broadway was a result of the blocked/broken drain in this stretch which is on Highways investigation list. Reported again on 10 January 2025, reference number 70645.
- Flooding by Court Cottages was due to debris being washed down the road and blocking the grids.
- Potholes near the Court House, 9 January 2025, reported to Highways, reference number 70517, What3Words – items.glory.factored.
- Potholes near Barncroft, 9 January 2025, reported to Highways, reference 70516, What3Words – pimples.reset.caps.
- On the highways issues WCC have been active at Upper End clearing the gullies near Barncroft and Court Cottages. They also cleared the gullies at the junction of Upper End and A4104.
- The issue of street sweeping has been raised as some flooding caused by leaf litter. Have had no response from Wychavon contractors who say every village is on a schedule. If Wychavon have instructed the contractor to reduce or even cease street sweeping then we should be informed.
- Slow emptying of the gully at Maryworth Barn causing some flooding to the carriageway in heavy inundations.
- Blocked or damaged pipe work in Broadway between Cart House and Birlingham House causing lifting of the access covers in heavy inundations.
- No issues at the junction of Shorthill and The Avenue recently.
- The footway in Eckington Road was cleared during the summer which is a great improvement although the hedge is still overbearing and has not been trimmed yet.

South Worcestershire Development Plan Review Timetable

Tuesday 4 March
Matter 1 Procedural/legal requirements
Matter 2: Policy SWDPR 03 The Spatial Development Strategy
Matter 3 The Green Belt
Wednesday 5 March
Matter 4: Provision for housing
Matter 5: Housing Land Supply
Matter 6: Housing, health and wellbeing and Implementation and Monitoring Policies
Tuesday 11 March
Matter 8: Economic Growth Strategy and Policies
Matter 9: Strategic Housing Allocations
SWDPR 54: Mitton
Wednesday 12 March
Matter 9: Strategic Housing Allocations continued
SWDPR 51: Worcestershire Parkway
SWDPR 52: Land at Throckmorton New Settlement
Thursday 13 March
Matter 9: Strategic Housing Allocations continued
(SWDPR 52: Land at Throckmorton New Settlement continued as necessary)
SWDPR 53: Rushwick Expanded Settlement
Tuesday 25 March
Matter 10: Urban Extensions x4
Matter 12: Worcester City Allocations
Wednesday 26 March
(Matter 12: Worcester City Allocations continued as necessary)
Matter 13: Malvern Hills Allocations
Matter 14: Wychavon Allocations



The Avon at Lower End – three different moods
Week beginning 6th January

(Photos: Peter Luff)

Letters to the Editors

We welcome brief letters to the Editors on any subject relating to Birlingham. The Editors reserve the right to shorten letters and we cannot guarantee that all letters will be printed.

Please send letters to:

news@birlingham.org

Planning Applications

The following planning application has been received by Wychavon District Council:

The Bungalow, Upper End: Certificate of lawfulness for the existing operational development and use of the single dwellinghouse known as The Bungalow, specifically not subject to any agricultural occupancy conditions (Case No. W/25/00056/CLE). Awaiting decision by Wychavon District Council. (Consultation period ends on 7th February.) Full details can be viewed on the Wychavon DC website at:

https://plan.wychavon.gov.uk/Planning/Display/W/25/00056/CLE

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For more information visit: www.prosserknowles.co.uk

Dates for your diary

February

Sat 1/Sun 2	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Wed 5	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 8/Sun 9	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Sun 9	Bulb Sunday service, 3.00pm, St James' Church
Sat 15/Sun 16	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Thu 20	Birlingham IW, 7.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 22/Sun 23	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm

March

Wed 5	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Wed 19	Birlingham Parish Council, 7.00pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Thu 20	Birlingham IW, 7.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall

Birlingham News online is available at www.birlingham.org. Details of future editions will be emailed to subscribers of *Birlingham News*. These emails are available to residents of Birlingham, their families and friends. If you know anyone who would like to receive these emails, or have any comments or items for inclusion in either the email or online edition of *Birlingham News*, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please write to news@birlingham.org.

Birlingham News online is open to any organisation or business within the parish to promote events. Inclusion of an event does not imply that Birlingham Jubilee Committee supports either the event or the views of the organisation promoting it.

The copy date for the next edition is Monday 10th February (for publication on Wednesday 12th February). We regret that we cannot guarantee to include any items submitted after that date.

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