



PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of Pencombe Group Parish Council
held on

Tuesday 25 February 2025 at 7.30pm in Pencombe & Little Cowarne Parish Hall

Councillors Present;

Cllr. J. Lewis Chairman
Cllr. D. Legge
Cllrs. P. Thomas

Cllr. T. Brazier
Cllr. T. Burge
Cllr C. Hadley

In Attendance: Allan Drew Parish Clerk

Members of the Public: 6 members of the public attended.

15/25 To receive: apologies for absence

All Councillors attended the meeting. Apologies were received from Ward Councillor Bruce Baker

16/25 To receive: Declarations of Interest and written requests for Dispensation

None received

17/25 To receive and approve: draft minutes of the meeting of 26th November 2024

The draft minutes of the meeting on 28 January 2025 were approved and signed by the Chairman

18/25 To receive: matters arising not otherwise covered in the minutes

The Clerk had received the tree inspection report on St. John's Churchyard from Adrian Hope. There were no issues requiring attention to the trees.

Cllr. Hadley raised the matter of any substantive work on the Churchyard requiring permission from the diocese. The Clerk would check the position. (Note: Cllr. Hadley is correct – the Church still owns the closed churchyard, only the responsibility for maintenance has been transferred to the Parish Council. If Council decided to make changes to the churchyard (perhaps constructing the ramp discussed recently) permission should be sought from the diocese.)

19/25 To receive: a verbal update from the Ward Councillor

Cllr. Baker was absent but provided the following information-

- Governments financial grant to rural councils, cut by £3m
- Housebuilding to increase to 1,363 per year. Will be difficult due to phosphate issues and a shortage of construction workers.
- Urban authorities have 40% more spending power and rural households pay on average 20% more in taxes
- Lugg Valley bus services no longer operating. Sergeants have taken up the slack.
- Council tax will increase by 4.99% in April. Council's revenue budget for 2025 will be £231.5m
- We've received £10m for road resurfacing and £3m for road safety schemes.
- The cost of sending our SEN children to school in taxis costs £4.5m per year. The council is considering the purchase of our own vehicles to avoid taxi costs.
- The A49 diversion route (by-pass) is still on track.
- The Warm Homes Local Grant Scheme is in place. To be eligible the total household income must be below £36k pa
- A devolution briefing had been provided to unitary Councillors which states there no immediate urgency for Herefordshire. The full paper is at appendix 1



20/25 Queries from residents to Ward Councillor & Council

Mr & Mrs Prince raised the matter of possible VE Day celebrations. They ran the Thursday coffee morning sessions and a poll of residents attending these sessions had indicated that a village event to mark the date would be welcomed and supported. Mr Prince stated that event planning was at an early stage but a "street party" was a possibility. Mr Prince would like to know if-

The Council would support such an event

it might be possible for Council to make a financial contribution

After some discussion it was agreed that Council would be pleased to see the event held and in principle a contribution could be made to costs.

Cllr. Brazier raised the point about diversions around the villages. The sign posting was very poor in that often the diversions signed were extremely circuitous routes. This often led to drivers (eg. white van) with no knowledge of the area becoming frustrated and sometimes speeding. Council was interested in erecting its own signs to provide better advice to drivers. The Clerk would check with Highways about the legality of such a scheme.

21/25 To receive: a planning report from Cllr. Colin Hadley

New applications to be determined by Herefordshire Council

250118 Foxholes Pencombe, HR7 4SL. Proposal to remove an existing conservatory and replace with a 2-storey extension incorporating a garden room. **Undecided**

Council discussed this application and had no concerns about the proposals with the proviso that sympathetic and appropriate materials are used. The Clerk submitted the following comments- The Parish Council discussed this application at its meeting on 25 February 2025. Council considered that the development was suitably in keeping with the current dwelling and presented a well-integrated and pleasing design. The Foxholes property is in an isolated location set well away from neighbouring properties so there are not likely to be any issues of overlooking. Council assumes the planning officer, if minded to approve the application, will insert suitable conditions requiring the use of materials sympathetic to the current construction.

Existing applications

243068 Pencombe Court, Pencombe, HR7 4SH. Listed building consent. Proposed replacement of conservatory roof with insulated slate roof **Undecided**

Proposed development at Reddenbach, Little Cowarne.

Council has received a letter from planning consultants TTPlanning. It concerns the one-time residence at Reddenbach near Shortwood in Little Cowarne and has been sent on behalf of Mr & Mrs Gibbs who are keen to renovate the property in some way. The letter is at appendix 2.

The letter requests that Council consider including Reddenbach in a list of sites for renovation to create additional dwellings. Council discussed this request and concluded the following- The location of Reddenbach places it outside the settlement of Pencombe but inside the Neighbourhood Plan area

Almost invariably new development is only possible within a settlement. However, redundant buildings may be brought back into use outside settlement areas under some circumstances. These circumstances, for re-use of redundant buildings are contained in the Herefordshire Core Strategy (Local Plan) where the applicable policies are RA3 and RA5. RA4 may apply if the use of the building is connected with a rural enterprise.



Council also noted that the letter pointed to a policy in the Longtown GPC NDP. Policy LGPC4 acknowledged the work of the Herefordshire Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project carried out by Historic England since 2008 and used the findings to create policy LGPC4 to enable housing development to build on historic farmstead sites.

(Note: for information LGPC4 follows-

Policy LGPC4: Residential Use Associated with Historic Farmsteads

Sensitively-designed housing development of buildings comprising historic farmsteads in Craswall, Llanveynoe, the rural parts of Longtown and Walterstone will be supported where proposals respect historic character and are:

- a) single or multiple dwellings to meet a local need for affordable housing, such as for key workers.**
- b) 'enabling development' to ensure the retention or repair of any heritage asset.**
- c) live and work units of appropriate scale for the existing farmstead.**
- d) reinstating the form and layout of a historic building complex identified by Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project where the design of the proposal is of exceptional quality or innovation.**

Research into Herefordshire Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project has not yet revealed whether there are any historic farmsteads in either Pencombe or Little Cowarne. As a first step the Clerk has sent the TT Planning letter to Louise Kirkup, Council's NDP planning consultant asking her view on how or if a similar policy could be incorporated into Council's NDP).

The Clerk has also written to the Planning Officer (Jack Dyer) who provided the pre-application advice to Mr & Mrs Gibbs. The relevant part of Mr Dyer's response states-

policy LGPC4 of the Longtown Group NDP does have a policy specifically dedicated to residential use associated with historic farmsteads.

What I would stress heavily though is that the development of an NDP should be predicated on the local context and need – Longtown for example has many disused historic farmsteads and the policy was informed by the Herefordshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project.

See link to Longtown NDP: [longtown group neighbourhood development plan november 2019](#)

Building on all the above information Council concluded that a worthwhile way forward would be to ask the residents of Little Cowarne their views on incorporating a similar policy to LGPC4 into the Pencombe NDP. The Clerk would continue research to try and establish how many such ruined historic farm buildings that might be covered by such a policy.

22/25 To receive: an update on the Parish Hall.

Mrs. Drew, in Mrs Legge's absence, reported that-

- The problem with the Hall's new boiler installation appears now to be resolved.
- Plans to adapt some attic space into a storeroom are progressing. The need for a powered lifting ladder is being considered given the height of the entry hatch.



- The Friday bar evenings are very successful and between October and February have realised £2,500 profit

To receive: any update to fit solar PV to the Hall roof.

There was no further update on this project. However, Council remained of the view that the project is worthwhile and in principle worthy of support.

23/25 Finance To receive: a finance report from Cllr. Paul Thomas

Bank balance on 22/02/2025-Unity Trust current account £14,480.31 (Arkwright £1650.00)

Net Council= £12,830.31)

Payments

The following payments were made as authorised at the January 2025 meeting (minute 9/25)

Payments made since last meeting.

No.	Name	Ex-VAT £	VAT £	Total £	Details
1	A M Drew	428.61	0.00	428.61	Clerk's December 2024 salary
2	Kirkwells	529.00	105.80	634.80	Kirkwells support at Design Codes exhibition
3	A M Drew	428.61	0.00	428.61	Clerk's January 2025 salary
4	HMRC	107.20	0.00	107.20	PAYE December 2024
5	HMRC	107.20	0.00	107.20	PAYE January 2025
6	Mr F Nicholson	66.63	13.33	79.96	Refund for solar lights
	TOTAL	1667.25	119.13	1786.38	

Note: the payment to Mr Nicholson was made under delegated authority after discussion with the Chairman & Cllr. Brazier.

Income received since last meeting –

No.	Name	Amount £	Details
1		None	

Payments for Authorisation

No.	Name	Total £	VAT £	Ex-VAT £	Details
1	A M Drew	428.61	0.00	428.61	Clerk's Feb 2025 salary
2	HMRC	107.20	0.00	107.20	PAYE for February 2025
3	A M Drew	15.59	2.60	12.99	Refund for mpurchase of domain name pandlc.org.uk
4	HALC	630.97	105.16	525.81	Annual subscription
5	A M Drew	1101.41	183.57	917.84	Refund to Clerk for Hereford Times adverts
	TOTAL	2283.78	291.33	1992.45	

Total for payment £1992.45+VAT as appropriate.

Council is invited to agree these payments.



24/25 Lengthsman Scheme: To receive: a report on Lengthsman work from Cllr. Tony Brazier
Appointment of Mr Sam Walsh of M A Walsh & Son to be the Parish Lengthsman until a new contract is let from 1 April 2025

Following the resignation of DC Garden Services Mr Sam Walsh has offered his services to carry out the now pressing grant aided works on the public realm and the drainage system. In the time available (grant monies must be spent by end of March for public realm) it has not been possible to obtain competitive quotes for this work.

The RFO recommends that Council –

- Suspends by resolution para 11.1.8 of the Council's financial regulations for this activity only until the end of this financial year.
- Appoint M A Walsh & Son to carry out the currently planned work on the public realm (annual maintenance plan and nominated task).

Para 11.1.8 of Council's financial regulations states-

When it is to enter into a contract for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph 11.1.1. the Clerk or RFO shall obtain two quotations for values between £500 and £2000; where the value is above £2000 the Clerk or RFO shall strive to obtain three quotations. Contracts exceeding £50,000 require additional safeguards and will follow Proper Practice. Otherwise, Regulation 9.3 above shall apply.

Council resolved to accept the recommendation of the RFO and suspend para 11.1.8 until the end of FY 2024-25. It was further resolved that M A Walsh & Son will carry out the Lengthsman tasks for the remainder of 2024-25.

Grass cutting and Lengthsman contract renewals.

The notices seeking expressions of interest have been placed on the Parish website and noticeboards. Adverts have also been placed in two consecutive editions (27 February & 6 March 2025) of the Hereford Times-

ADVERT 1 – cost £584.08+VAT

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council is inviting expressions of interest for the role of Parish Lengthsman. The duties of the Parish Lengthsman include-

- Verge cutting as required
- Clearing around salt boxes and monitoring salt levels
- Hedge and Fence Management -
- Drainage – Minor drainage works on drains and ditches. Clearing leaves and other debris
- Clearing Minor Storm Debris & Litter - Clear minor storm debris discharged onto the highway and keep tidy all specified roads.
- Maintenance of Non-Mains Powered Traffic Signs
-

The contracted Lengthsman will use his own equipment and have public liability insurance and necessary qualifications to work on the public realm and minor works on C and U class roads

More details can be obtained by email from clerk@pencombegrouppc.org.uk



ADVERT 2 – Cost £333.76+VAT

PENCOMBE GROUP PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council is inviting expressions of interest for the contract to cut grass around the public areas of the Parishes. The contract scope is for 6 cuts per year (April - September) at 6 locations of various sizes in the Parishes. Contractors may bid to cut all or some of these locations.

More details can be obtained by email from clerk@pencombegrouppc.org.uk

Expressions of Interest (EOI) received will be sent an Invitation to Tender (ITT). These ITTs are updates of the versions used previously which have worked well.

- 25/25 Neighbourhood Development Plan. To receive:** update on NDP from Cllr. Tim Burge
At the January meeting it was agreed by Council that, despite the current uncertainties around the status of NDPs, work on the Pencombe NDP would continue.

The Clerk reported that shortly after that meeting advice was received from HALC that work on NDPs should stop at present until the position was clarified by progress on the revised Herefordshire Local Plan. However, two weeks after this advice HALC reversed its position when it was discovered that Herefordshire is the only County in England following such a course. The advice from HALC now is that NDP development should continue. It remains to be seen if the lack of a Local Plan will prevent NDPs being “made” when completed.

The Clerk has asked Louise Kirkwell to press on with tidying up our draft NDP for the final stages to take us to completion. This is probably the quickest way to get a finished document ready for inspection. There is about £3,500 of the grant remaining and it is possible the scheme will not be renewed next year.

One of the outputs is probably a list from Louise of things the NDP group needs to do for a positive result. These final steps will be the key focus.

- 26/25 Provision of a village car park. To receive:** report on the car park from Cllr. Tony Brazier
The Clerk reported he had written to Herefordshire asking for relief from the condition in the planning consent requiring installation of EV charging facilities as part of the construction. As a constructive way forward the possibility of providing EV charging in the small car park below the Parish Hall was suggested.

The benefit of such a change is that a grant may be available for provision to the small car park, whereas there is no grant available for provision required through a planning application. At the very least EV charging provision will be considerably cheaper to install in the small car park since there is a supply pole nearby.



The response from the planning officer, Jack Dyer was quite positive. He understands that the pre-application advice which Council received did not mention provision of EV charge points so the basis on which the Council's decision to proceed was based on incomplete information. This omission has a considerable effect on costs. He also thought that provision in the small car park was a useful suggestion. Hopefully from a planning perspective there is no difference in the two schemes.

Mr Dyer will consult with his colleagues and advise Council on the best way forward.

Once this EV charging issue is resolved the way will be clear to hold the village meeting to finally settle the matter of building the car park.

27/25 Single website for Group Parishes.

The domain name pandlc.org.uk has been purchased.

NextNorth, the developer has been asked to provide the first batch of email addresses needed-
thepencombeshow@pandlc.org.uk
parishcouncil@pandlc.org.uk
parishhall@pandlc.org.uk

These email addresses will work even though the new site is not yet live.

Subject to diaries the working group expects to ZOOM meet with NextNorth sometime in the week commencing 24 February. It is hoped that the new site will be available for the start of the new financial year.

28/25 To consider: Matters for discussion at the next meeting

None raised

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

Date of next meeting Tuesday 26th March 2025



Appendix 1 Solar PV Quotations

Description	5555	5555	5555	5555	5555	5555	5555
Quote including battery excluding VAT Grant based on 10% of net metering PDR/MU/CPH Contribution	£3,792.67 £3,000.00 £792.67	£3,189.00 £4,230.00 £1,040.00	£7,459.38 £5,185.00 £2,274.38	£7,746.00 £3,750.00 £3,996.00			
Quote including Battery excluding VAT Grant assuming 10% net metering savings PDR/MU/CPH Contribution	£3,268.48 £3,000.00 £268.48	£15,656.62 £4,250.00 £11,406.62	£9,656.36 £5,185.00 £4,471.36	£12,446.00 £3,750.00 £8,696.00			
Power Strings System to generate 10kw per year Coc reduced by 1kg CO2 Current system produces 16 CO2	£517.00 7,634.00 Approx. 2,000	£1,075.00 £1,170.00 1,892.00 2,261.00	£346.00 9,127.00 2,054.00	£1,150.00 8,990.00 1,900.00			
Type of MW PV system Mounting System Pay Back period	8.18 MWp - 18 x Alpic Neotec 2S 459W panels - Ground MW 8000 TL X2 Three MPPT lvt inverter Flat/steep roof/soak, silver rail, etc. 5 years	8.50 MWp - 20 x 445W Three Tier 3 + panels - 1 Sunwayk & MW/ECCO Revised pitched roof mounting 7 years	9.43 MWp - 20 Alpic Tiger 440W panels Invoiced for state roof specialist being, including bird etc. 6 years	9.50 MWp - 22 x 435 Alpic Solar with FDX MCS approved state fixing system 6 years			
System Warranty	Workmanship 5 years - Inverter/ Battery 12 years - Panels 25 years	Workmanship 10 years - Inverter 10 years - Panels 25 years	Generally 10 years inko offers 25 years				
Estimate	?	?	?				
Battery Storage Price including VAT Battery Storage Price including VAT Battery Manufacturer	£3,350.76 £4,200.92	£3,592.23	£2,500.00 £3,000.00	£3,616.67 £4,700.00			
Out state time and flash mountings	Yes - Genius Speed Flash	Yes - Genius Speed Flash	Yes - Genius System	Yes - Solar State Plate - Data sheet provided			
DNO Application (under G99+G94)	Included	Included	Included	Included with a consent			

Solar PV Quotations



Appendix 2: Revised salary scales for Local Government Officer w.e.f. 1 April 2024



National Association
of Local Councils

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES PAY AGREEMENT 2024/25

This advice note was last updated on 23 October 2024.

The Local Government Association has informed us that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed the new pay scales for 2024-25 to be implemented from 1 April 2024. Employers are encouraged to implement this pay award as swiftly as possible.

Backpay for employees who have left employment since 1 April 2024. If requested by an ex-employee to do so, we recommend that employers should pay any monies due to that employee from 1 April 2024 to the employee's last day of employment.

The attached Annex lists the new pay scales for clerks and other employees employed under the terms of the model contract including SCPs 50 and above. These should be retrospectively applied from 1 April 2024.

Hourly rates have been calculated using the NJC agreed formula by dividing annual salary by 52.143 weeks (which is 365 days divided by 7) divided by 37 hours (the standard working week).

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SCP	1 April 2024		Scale Ranges
	£ per annum	* £ per hour	Based on SCP
2	£23,656	£12.26	Below LC Scale (for staff other than clerks)
3	£24,027	£12.45	
4	£24,404	£12.65	
5	£24,790	£12.85	
5	£24,790	£12.85	LC1 (5-6) (below substantive range)
6	£25,183	£13.05	
7	£25,584	£13.26	LC1 (7-12) (substantive benchmark range)
8	£25,992	£13.47	
9	£26,409	£13.69	
10	£26,835	£13.91	
11	£27,269	£14.13	
12	£27,711	£14.36	



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13	£28,163	£14.60	LC1 (13-17) (above substantive range)
14	£28,624	£14.84	
15	£29,093	£15.08	
16	£29,572	£15.33	
17	£30,060	£15.58	
18	£30,559	£15.84	LC2 (18-23) (below substantive range)
19	£31,067	£16.10	
20	£31,586	£16.37	
21	£32,115	£16.65	
22	£32,654	£16.93	
23	£33,366	£17.29	
24	£34,314	£17.79	LC2 (24-28) (substantive benchmark range)
25	£35,235	£18.26	
26	£36,124	£18.72	
27	£37,035	£19.20	
28	£37,938	£19.66	
29	£38,626	£20.02	LC2 (29-32) (above substantive benchmark range)
30	£39,513	£20.48	
31	£40,476	£20.98	
32	£41,511	£21.52	
33	£42,708	£22.14	LC3 (33-36) (below substantive range)
34	£43,693	£22.65	
35	£44,711	£23.17	
36	£45,718	£23.70	
37	£46,731	£24.22	LC3 (37-41) (substantive benchmark range)
38	£47,754	£24.75	
39	£48,710	£25.25	
40	£49,764	£25.79	
41	£50,788	£26.32	
42	£51,802	£26.85	LC3 (42-45) (above substantive benchmark range)
43	£52,805	£27.37	
44	£54,071	£28.03	
45	£55,367	£28.70	



Appendix 1 Devolution – Next Steps for Herefordshire

Introduction

Following on from the Members briefings held in January 2025, this briefing has been circulated to provide an update on English Devolution at both a National and Regional level, and to set out the next steps for Herefordshire whilst we await further announcement.

Activity post publication of the English Devolution White Paper

Post publication of the English Devolution white paper the Leader of the council, the Chief Executive and key Directors have been proactively engaging with Central Government to understand the potential impact on, and opportunities for, Herefordshire.

The Leader and Chief Executive have been in informal, initial discussions with neighbouring authorities to understand their thinking and how this align with and shapes our own.

Running concurrently to these conversations, the Transformation Team has also been undertaking research setting the foundations for an options appraisal to support our thinking and decision making in relation to a devolution partnership for Herefordshire.

We have been clear in our messaging to Central Government from the outset and our position remains that any devolution deal must be in line with our vision of 'Deliver the best for Herefordshire in everything we do.' Any devolution deal must also support and enable us to retain our identity and integrity as a council. We will not be held back by the extended timescales to which we were originally working as a result of Local Government Reorganisation and we will work with the government to get the investment decisions Herefordshire needs in order to deliver against our vision.

The Devolution Priority Programme

As we have been engaging, listening, researching and learning about what devolution means for Herefordshire, the Government's focus has been on appointing councils to its devolution priority programme (DPP) having welcomed applications from those who are ready and willing to move towards devolution at a faster pace.

The DPP has two tracks to it. One of which is for groups of local authorities who have already established (or are on the way to establishing) outlines plans in relation to Strategic Mayoral Authorities. The other track is for unitary councils who need to undergo a programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to enable further devolution opportunities to become available to them. Both Worcestershire County Council and Gloucestershire County Council applied to expedite the process of LGR, but neither application was successful.



Impact of DPP announcements

Both Worcestershire County Council and Gloucestershire County Council will have received a statutory invitation and will need to set out their high-level, interim plans for LGR to Central Government by 21 March.

Whilst no statutory decisions will be made on the basis of the interim plans submitted in March, the impact on our neighbours will also be felt by Herefordshire specifically in relation to the pace at which we move into deeper devolution discussions and research, and in relation to progressing against our strategic ambitions as the Government's attention is on the DPP.

Full proposals for LGR will need to be submitted in the Autumn (2025.)

Next Steps for Herefordshire

We are awaiting further announcements to help shape and inform our planning; however, in the meantime we will continue to proactively engage with key government departments to ensure that we make our position as a council clear.

We will not let external influencing factors inhibit our ability to progress with our ambitions and commitments to deliver the best for Herefordshire in everything that we do. We will set out the funding and strategic support we need to deliver against our growth and wellbeing priorities and will use this time to build our presence and identity at National and Regional levels to ensure we are in the strongest possible position once the opportunity for further discussion and planning with our neighbours opens up.

We will continue to participate in Regional and National working groups and networks to ensure that Herefordshire remains ahead and will continue to share information and developments as we receive them.

Summary

- Devolution presents no immediate urgency for Herefordshire.
- We await further announcements and will continue to proactively engage with Central Government and Devolution Networks.
- We will join further discussions around shaping a Strategic Mayoral Authority when the opportunity opens up to us.
- We will continue to build our relationships with neighbouring authorities.
- We will keep Members updated as things progress.



Appendix 2 – Letter from TT Planning re. Reddenbach



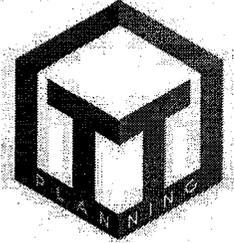
info@ttplanning.co.uk



Ed: 07494218730



Matt: 07494218731



T O M P K I N S T H O M A S

Mr A Drew
Clerk to Pencombe Group Parish Council

clerk@pencombegrouppc.org.uk

Dear Allan,

Our Ref: 24108

Site: Reddenbach

17th February 2025
Site
Reddenbach, Little Cowarne, Herefordshire
Project
Rehabilitation of former cottage to create self-build dwelling
Introduction

We write on behalf of Benjamin and Laura Gibbs, owners of Reddenbach, Little Cowarne, Herefordshire in respect of the proposed rehabilitation of Reddenbach to restore it to residential use as a self-build project. Benjamin and Laura wish to move back to the local area, into a village where the Morris and Gibbs family settled 230 years and nine generations ago.

The land at Reddenbach has been purchased by Benjamin and Laura from the grandchildren of Alfred and Elizabeth Morris, Benjamin's great-great-grandparents in order to restore the residential use over the land, which can be traced back via the Glebe Terrier to at least 1614. This is with the ambition of continuing the family's association with the land and cottage and as a means of completing an affordable self-build project, noting the lack of affordable housing in the parish and wider area in general with properties for sale in the parish typically listed at over c.£700k.

This purpose of this letter, therefore, is to introduce Benjamin and Laura's proposals to rehabilitate Reddenbach to Parish Councillors. Thereafter, we would be grateful for the Parish Council's advice in respect of the progress with the production of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and whether provision might be made for the inclusion of policies within the Neighbourhood Development Plan that act to support self-build opportunities and/or the rehabilitation of former dwellings within the Group Parish where such rehabilitation would enable the resettlement of those with ties to the local area for which there is precedent in Neighbourhood Development Plan-making within Herefordshire.

Reddenbach is an historic cottage situated within 4 acres of orchard and pastoral ground to the northwest of Little Cowarne church. Please see the attached Site Location Plan for reference.

The property has been in Benjamin's family for over a century, being purchased by his great-great grandparents in 1918 after they had first rented it from the early 1900s.

Benjamin and Laura are in receipt of photos of the Morris family from the early/mid C20th at Reddenbach, and census data from 1901 and 1911 confirming occupation by both branches of Benjamin's family – the Gibbs and the Morris's. Some current residents of the parish still recall Benjamin's great-great-grandparents, who lived at Reddenbach into their old age up until the mid1950's.

It is fair to say that the family's ties to the holding and wider area are longstanding.

The site and surrounds

Reddenbach is situated in the parish of Little Cowarne within approximately 4 acres used historically for orcharding and smallholding, including cattle. The 'current' cottage was a traditional two-storey



predominantly brick cottage under slate roof, thought to date from the early 19th century. The plan form and much of the ground floor survive and census data indicates a total of 4 rooms, intimating a two-up, two-down arrangement. Although photographs of the building as a whole have not been recovered, the plan form, coupled with the photographic evidence that does survive would support the conclusion that the building was a modest, vernacular cottage over two-storeys with rectangular plan.

There was an attached cider house and other outbuildings, remnants of which remain on site. One of the photographs, in which Benjamin's great-grandparents are standing, shows the timber clad and tin roofed later workshop attached to the side elevation of the cottage.

Unfortunately, the cottage fell into disrepair as a consequence of financial pressure – not neglect and it was certainly always the intention that residential occupation of the site should endure for future generations. For 30 years prior to Benjamin and Laura acquiring the land, Reddenbach was held by the grandchildren of Alfred and Elizabeth Morris. None of them had the wherewithal or incentive to maintain Reddenbach, but had the cottage been kept in good repair it would certainly have continued to serve as a home in the parish.

A prescriptive right of access to Reddenbach exists from the lane that heads north passing the church which then turns left past the barn conversion before heading along field headlands.

The cottage occupies a position at the south of the 4 acres, which is subdivided into three parcels, although now unmanaged. Levels descend to the north towards a permanent watercourse which is a tributary of the River Lodon.

There are numerous orchard trees surviving and which the applicants would like to bring under active management as part of their proposal to rehabilitate Reddenbach and restore the agricultural use of the land as smallholders to ensure the land is brought into productive use. This will require arboricultural work to remove large, fallen trees and planting of replacement specimens.

The residential rehabilitation/conversion of the building

Benjamin and Laura acquired Reddenbach in 2021 with the intent of exploring the opportunity to return to Herefordshire and live and work at Reddenbach, having been married at Little Cowarne church in 2019. This was the latest family wedding at the church, the earliest recorded known to date back to 1788. They live currently in Shavington, Cheshire, more than two hours from Little Cowarne. The couple plans to move back to Herefordshire, where they previously lived in rented accommodation at Ocle Pychard.

They have already approached Herefordshire Council for pre-application planning advice for the project. The Council's advice expressed sympathy for the objective but considered the dwelling to be too derelict to be capable of conversion.

The advice further explained that a Neighbourhood Development Plan would be an appropriate vehicle for a bespoke policy in support of self-build/rehabilitation projects at the parish level, particularly where this would facilitate the retention within the parish of young people with local connections.

Such a policy, particularly where it concerns the rehabilitation of a site with a long-standing record of residential use and/or a building with some historic significance, is not without precedent.

The Longtown Neighbourhood Development Plan, for example, supports the residential reuse/rehabilitation of identified historic farmsteads under Policy LGPC4. These farmsteads are outside the "settlement boundary" for Longtown, but their rehabilitation is supported on the basis of the contribution that such re-use will bring to the local environment and community through the re-use of such sites.

Further justification for a policy that enables the rehabilitation of the residential use of sites like Reddenbach might be found in the duty imposed on Council's by the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. This duty requires planning authorities to ensure that sufficient planning permissions are granted for self-build and Custom build houses to meet the requisite demand.

A Neighbourhood Development Plan policy supportive of self-build proposals, especially those arising from the sensitive rehabilitation of a site that has been occupied historically, would help Herefordshire Council fulfil its statutory duty. As Benjamin and Laura's clear intent it to rebuild and reoccupy Reddenbach for their own family use, they would be very happy to enter into any agreement requiring that the site only be occupied by them.

Summary and next steps

This approach to the Group Parish Council is intended to enable discussion around Benjamin and Laura's specific proposals and a wider conversation around the principles of adopting policies in a Neighbourhood Development Plan that act to support this and similar proposals, whilst also keeping local families in the area.

We acknowledge that the physical condition of the building is such that it cannot be converted within the confines of Herefordshire Council's planning policies, but the proposal is representative



of a selfbuild project, using previously developed land and in the context of an undersupply of self-build and custom build permissions.

It is important for the prospects of success, however, that the proposal has the support of an adopted Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Benjamin and Laura are content that any forthcoming application should be predicated on a legal undertaking that the rehabilitation of Reddenbach is a self-build; their ability to live and work on site and bring Reddenbach into active use and land management being their sole objective. Laura works almost entirely from home; Benjamin splits time between home and London. Their household income would support local shops, services, and schools. Rural schools often struggle with enrolment, so having a family with children helps sustain them. The project would employ local tradespeople and firms, bringing economic benefits to the community.

We are also confident that the proposal would not only create a viable and attractive re-use of the site, but would engender biodiversity benefits across the holding, where Benjamin and Laura are very keen to ensure the sustainability of the build with reliance to as great an extent as possible on renewable forms of energy.

As a next step we would be delighted to host Parish Councillors on site during a weekend to discuss the proposals. Attendance at a Parish Council meeting might be more difficult due to Benjamin and Laura's work commitments, but we can review as appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and we look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

Ed Thomas

Director

Signed..........Chairman

Date.....25/3/25.....

