

# Whitecastle Community Council

## Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

### Annual Report 2025-26

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of Whitecastle Community Council for the year ending March 2026.

Whitecastle Community Council is a non-political Council and comprises of six Community Councillors who all live locally with five vacancies.

The community includes the six wards of:

Whitecastle, Penrhos, Llanvihangel-Ystern-Llewern, Llangattock Vibon Avel, Newcastle and Rockfield and St Maughans.

#### **Councillors:**

Cllr. Debbie Astill-Parsons (Chair and ward member for Llangattock Vibon Avel)

Cllr Chris Lewis (Whitecastle ward)

Cllr. Rhiannon Metters (Whitecastle ward)

Cllr John Biggs (Penrhos ward)

Cllr. Nigel Graham (Newcastle ward)

Cllr. Chris Duncan (Llanvihangel-Ystern-Llewern)

#### **The Clerk to the Council and Financial Responsible Officer:**

Mr Les Taylor,

2 Firs Road, Llanvapley, Abergavenny, NP7 8SL

Tel: 01600 780376 Email: [whitecastlecommunitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:whitecastlecommunitycouncil@gmail.com)

We do not have any sub-groups or sub-committees.

#### **Budget**

The main income of the Council is the precept (community charge). The precept for 2025-26 was £27,462. The precept is collected by the county council as part of council tax bills. Total expenditure for 25/26 was £22,32.51

The Council's budget covers the following areas:

- Community services and maintenance
- Council insurance
- Employee costs
- Grants and donations to community groups
- Member costs
- Office services
- Premises costs
- Services and subscriptions
- Training of councillors and staff.
- Upkeep of WCC churchyards
- Website and IT

A full breakdown of the expenditure incurred for this financial year will be available in the annual accounts once approved.

#### **Achievements for 2025-26**

The Community Council have several notable achievements this year:

- New road safety signage and speed awareness added in Newcastle.
- Decorative village gates added to entry points of either end of Newcastle.
- Road speed reduction successfully implemented at The Henre
- Boundary walls and encroaching vegetation repaired, and management program introduced in, Llanvihangel-Ystern-Llewern Churchyard.

- At Llangattock Vibon Avel Churchyard, where headstones have been identified as unsafe, a repair programme has been put in place, with financial support made available from outside the community council.
- Closed footbridges and footpaths within the Ward, have been raised with MCC and an opportunity to meet directly with MCC was completed and plans are being made, with the CC in communication.
- Numerous potholes have been identified and raised with MCC. Some repair work has been seen, specifically surrounding the Penrhos area, where road conditions have seriously deteriorated.
- A member of the MCC Highways team attended a meeting and provided information regarding the challenges of pothole repair. They have also agreed to a public meeting, after a large group of residents from Penrhos attended a Community meeting to share their concerns.
- Continued support was provided to a range of community groups, helping them to sustain and further develop their valuable work within the community.
- A successful Community Open Evening was held, giving local groups the opportunity to showcase their activities, exchange ideas, and strengthen community connections.
- A new Community Council noticeboard was installed in Penrhos to improve communication and access to local information.
- Council meetings were held across a wider variety of venues, improving accessibility and engagement with different parts of the community.
- The councillor vacancy in the Whitecastle ward was successfully filled, ensuring continued representation for residents.
- The council has started to build closer working relationships with neighbouring communities to encourage greater collaboration and shared initiatives.

### **Relationship With Monmouthshire County Council**

The Council works closely with the County Councillor Ian Chandler who represents Llantilio Crossenny ward which includes the communities of Whitecastle and Skenfrith. Cllr. Chandler attends community council meetings and is supportive in dealing with queries from the residents in relation to services, road conditions and any issues affecting residents.

### **Training Plan**

The Council is a member of One Voice Wales and most training will be undertaken via them. An up-to-date training plan is in place.

### **Audit**

Accounts ending 31 March 2026 will be subject to an Internal Audit by an appointed professional person and also an external audit by the Auditor General for Wales. The outcome of all Audits will be published on the Council's website.

### **Key Objectives For 2026-27**

- To identify and support community groups which provide activities and services that benefit the community.
- To increase representation on the council, enabling a full working set of ward representatives.
- Continue to implement the maintenance plan for its churchyards, including major structural work to walled boundaries and encroaching vegetation.
- Develop a Biodiversity Action Plan
- Progress and improve the effectiveness and public awareness of the Community Council.

### **Assets**

- The closed part of the Llangattock Vibon Avel Churchyard NP25 5NQ
- The War Memorial at St Cadoc's Church, Llangattock-Vibon-Avel
- The Churchyard of Church of St Michael and All Angels, Llanvihangel-Ystern-Llewern
- Newcastle Village Green
- Llanfaenor Village Green

- The water fountain at Maypole.
- A set of Antique Handbells
- Notice Boards at Llantilio Crossenny, Penrhos, Hendre, Newcastle, Maypole, Rockfield.
- Various current and historical documents.
- IT equipment.

### **Activities**

- Regular council meetings.
- Regular updates of the council website to provide information for residents.
- Ongoing location meetings with MMC to improve and sustain footpaths & footbridges with WCC remit.
- Proactive approach of interaction and communication between residents and councillors of WCC.

### **Priorities**

Engage with the communities of Penrhos, Newcastle and Rockfield and St Maughans to fulfil the quota of council members and ensure full coverage for each community.

Summary By Chair

Debbie Astill-Parsons

Chair, Whitecastle Community Council.