Rail & Bus for Herefordshire Newsletter Spring 2018





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Hon. President: Professor John Whitelegg Newsletter Editor & Chairman: Gareth Calan Davies

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The RBFH Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place on

Tuesday 17 April 2018

1300: The Old Brewery Function Room Rear of The Barrels, 69 St Owen Street, Hereford

Chairman's Address
Membership Report
Presentation of Accounts
Rail Franchise Report
Buses Sub Group Report
Election of 2018/2019 Committee
Any Other Business

Existing committee members have all agreed to continue. Further nominations are invited and should be forwarded to the Chairman by March 30 2018



The meeting will be followed by a showing of the 1960's Ealing Studios comedy film 'The Titfield Thunderbolt' about the saving of a country branch line from closure.

The Old Brewery Function Room and Projecting Equipment are being provided free of charge by RBfH member, Wye Valley Brewery

And Then There Were Two

The plans for the new Wales & Borders franchise, which includes the Marches line through Hereford and Leominster appears dogged with difficulties. As if it was not enough to sort out the tangle between the Welsh government and Westminster over finance and who does what in the franchise process, the number of train companies bidding is decreasing. Invitations to tender were given to four preferred bidders, a healthy start in a competitive process. As reported previously on our website, Arriva Trains pulled out of the franchise process at the end of October. The latest casualty is Abellio Rail whose decision is given in a news release to stakeholders which includes the Marches Rail Users Alliance with Rail & Bus for Herefordshire.

ARC withdrawal from the Contract Letting Process for the Wales and Borders Rail Service and South Wales Metro

It is with great sadness that I am writing to you, as one of the key stakeholders in the Wales and Borders region, who has kindly engaged with us during the consultation process for the above rail contract.

Following the liquidation of Carillion PLC on Monday 15 January, Abellio Rail Cymru (ARC) has taken the decision to withdraw from the Contract Letting Process for the Wales and Borders Rail Service and South Wales Metro competition.

We were aware that Carillion Rail was being sold by the official receiver and hopeful that our partner AECOM would have secured the purchase. Yesterday's announcement that Carillion Rail contracts were being awarded to other purchasers meant that our bid could no longer be considered by TfW

ARC has taken this decision against a background of a bid to which we remain very committed for both Core Valley Lines and the wider Wales and Cross Border services. We believe that it meets the needs of the Welsh Government, customers and stakeholders across the wider Wales and Borders network. We also believe that it would have given the people of Wales and Borders a rail service that it deserves and been a driver of economic growth.

We are naturally very disappointed to be leaving the competition but would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your input and support during the bidding process. Your comments, suggestions and advice, have at all times, been invaluable. Enabling us to understand in greater detail the hopes and aspirations of those represented by you and your organisations.

I know that Sian and Alex have enjoyed working with you during this process and are happy to respond to any further queries or questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact them and they will help in whatever way they can.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and those you represent every success in the future.

Many thanks,

Julian Edwards
Deputy Managing Director and Business Development Director, Abellio UK

Ken Skates, the Welsh Government cabinet member for transport and infrastructure remains optimistic that the franchise process is on line with a choice between the two remaining bidders Keolis Amey and MTR to be announced in the spring and the target start date is still set as autumn 2018. Keolis Amey have strengthened their bid with the recent announcement that Amey had successfully purchased the Carillion rail business from the receiver. MTR remain a strong contender with their world wide experience of metro systems, a metro for south east Wales being a key part of the new franchise specification. However, Transport for Wales, the company set up by the Welsh Government to negotiate and administer the franchise continues to keep things close to the chest, still not generally releasing the franchise service specification as it affects the current rail services in Wales & the Borders.

Station Passenger Statistics

The 2016/17 annual Department for Transport statistics on passenger usage of Leominster, Ledbury and Colwall stations show a drop in numbers: cf 2015/16. Leominster 260,286 (-8.6%), Ledbury 210,098 (-2%), Colwall 60,870 (-8.6%). Hereford slightly increased, Luldow was static whilst Marches line stations Craven Arms and Church Stretton also show a fall.

The Future Shape & Size of the Great Western Franchise

The next Great Western Franchise is due to run from autumn 2020. However, the Department for Transport consider that the specification and award of a new franchise could be delayed for two years until 2022. The Department has entered into a consultation exercise seeking the views of a broad spectrum of organisations on the future size of the franchise. The consultation is contained in a weighty government document of some 56 pages and ended on 21 February 2018. It can be accessed via www.gov.uk/government/consultation/great-western-rail-franchise.

The document hints that the Department is somewhat concerned at the size of the franchise and hence this consultation on splitting the franchise. The report states one of the major disadvantages of the franchise size is:

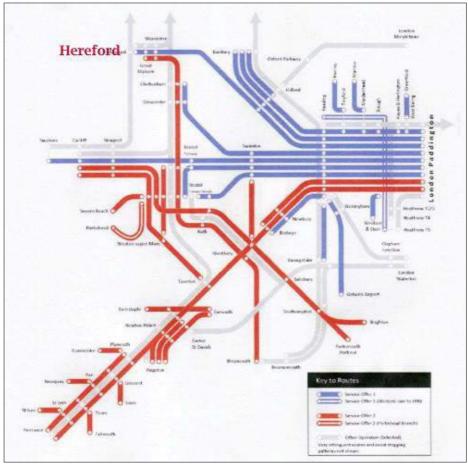
'Scale of financial risk: Annual Great Western franchise revenues will soon be over £1 billion, meaning an increased risk that the scale of financial risk and exposure may be unattractive to prospective franchise bidders, which could reduce the number of potential bidders, resulting in it being more difficult to achieve the best outcomes for passengers and value for money for taxpayers from a franchise competition'

The Department's view on the franchise is that it could be split into two, these being:

- 1. The inter-city network to Bristol, South Wales and the Cotswolds which includes the service to Hereford
- 2. Long distance services to and within a West of England network.

A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of both a single and a split franchise are given on pages 23/24 with the accompanying map on page 26 of the consultation document.

The principal response from interested parties in Herefordshire will undoubtedly be to emphasise the importance of the Hereford-London service, especially in respect of the economic and social development of the County and towns such as Ledbury. Further emphasis should be given to the development of the service and the requirement for urgent Network Rail infrastructure works to double the existing line to improve service reliability.



Map of proposed split with the Inter-city network in blue (which includes Hereford) and long distance services to and within the West of England in red

The RBfH response takes into account the pros and cons of a split or single franchise and in particular the fact that Hereford stands a better chance of service improvements as part of the Inter city business rather than as a small element in a large geographical and diverse franchise as at present.

At the same time as the consultation, the government was presented with the decision by the consortium of Virgin Trains and Stagecoach to hand back the East Coast Main Line franchise. The reason given was that the consortium was losing money on the franchise and basically saw no prospect of increasing profits to an acceptable level that would satisfy their business.

This is the second time that this franchise has been handed back. National Express previously tried and failed. If Virgin/Stagecoach, paragon companies of private enterprise, cannot make money out of our railways, then who can? Surely this is telling indictment of the franchise system. Not a bit of wonder the alarm bells started ringing at the Department of Transport. Also, what with Brexit and the unsure nature of European rail companies and their governments' future involvement in Britain's railways, the DfT must be thinking the unthinkable....a franchise system whereby no one bids for the franchise!!

The House of Commons Select Committee on railways has already stated that the current franchise system is no longer fit for purpose. So is the DfT answer to break the franchises up into smaller units geographically and by business sector whilst at the same time attempt an informal remarriage of track and trains in franchise terms. Clearly a great deal of hard thinking has to go into the future structure of our railways if they are to satisfy a growing transport demand in a modern 'civilised' country.

RBfH - G C Davies Jan 4 2018

West Midlands Railway: What is it?



Operated by West Midlands Trains

It's all a matter of railways and trains. The new operator of the West Midlands franchise is West Midlands Trains, a branch of the Netherlands Rail subsidiary Abellio Rail UK. Thus the business and management structure the new outfit has adopted is to split the franchise into two railways; 1. London North Western Railway which as it says serves London and the North West via Birmingham and 2. West Midlands Railway serving the West Midlands Metropolitan area and services to Hereford via Worcester and Shrewsbury via Wolverhapton and Telford. Is this any clearer?

Then of course West Midlands Trains is a partner in West Midlands Rail. The Abellio publicity blurb says 'We are partners in West Midlands

<u>Rail</u> (WMR) a partnership of 16 Metropolitan District, Shire and Unitary local transport authorities who took greater influence and control over local rail services in a fully devolved franchise that started in December 2017.

West Midlands Trains Ltd (a joint venture between Abellio, East Japan Railway Company and Mitsui & Co Ltd) is the company that run the region's passenger services under the new franchise. Local train services have the operational name <u>West Midlands Railway</u>. <u>London Northwestern</u> run West Coast Main Line services between London and Liverpool, which pass through the West Midlands. The franchise runs until March 2026.

A package of improvements is built into the franchise agreement to support further economic growth and jobs across the region. It is the first time that West Midlands authorities have had such a level of influence in setting out what a train company needs to deliver for local passengers. The franchise will see:

- 20,000 extra seats for rush hour passengers in Birmingham
- 100 new carriages on the Cross City line
- 80 new carriages for the Snow Hill lines, replacing the entire fleet currently running to and from Worcester/Hereford and Shrewsbury
- Compensation if services are delayed by more than 15 minutes
- Free WiFi on all main line services
- A roll out of smart ticketing and live passenger information
- Trains and stations branded in the locally specified West Midlands Railway livery.

Rail devolution passes control for the specification, management, and in some cases the procurement of certain rail franchises to local bodies. This model has been successfully used for some time elsewhere in the UK in Scotland, Wales, Merseyside and London. Trains running only in the West Midlands area are jointly managed by the Department for Transport (DfT) and WMR.'

Herefordshire Council is also a partner in West Midlands Rail. Let us hope that it will have a loud and forceful voice on the West Midlands Rail Board when it comes to securing significant improvements of both the infrastructure and train service between Hereford, Ledbury, Colwall, Worcester and Birmingham.

The Rural Bus Service The Work to Keep and Develop them continues

The Omnibus Society Bulletin for South Wales and the West recently carried this sad heading for dramatic bus service withdrawals....24th July 2017 This date will no doubt go down in history as the day the rural bus was withdrawn from Dorset.

Herefordshire survives far better than Dorset, it would seem. This is in no small part due to the work of the small Herefordshire public transport team whose efforts to economise without too drastic an impact on service levels have, to date, maintained a creditable network within the county. The willingness of operators to critically examine their operations and implement savings, together with the continuance of their commercial operations is also significant.

However, the amount of savings that can be made without drastic service withdrawals is reaching exhaustion levels. This is evident when an operator starts pruning the commercial operations, as is happening with DRMBus on 420 Hereford-Bromyard-Worcester service. This is the thin edge of the wedge. What happens when the core commercial network begins to creak is any ones guess but it definitely points to the need for some measure of special aid for rural counties and rural bus services before the phrase 'public transport deserts' becomes a reality.

It was the 1968 Transport Act which gave powers to the local authorities to subsidise rural bus services. The rural services then came most under threat as the large bus companies concentrated on the profitable urban networks. Deregulation of bus services under the 1985 Transport Act tended to accelerate this by categorising services as commercial or those requiring financial support through competitive tendering for local authority contracts. The large companies abandoned most forms of cross subsidy whereby some profit from the urban networks was used to subsidise marginal rural and semi-rural services. Most rural services were then thrown at the mercy of the local authority. This has remained the case except the pot of money available to the local authority to support such services has dwindled to a mere trickle.

In such circumstances what is to be done? Some will maintain that in a car borne society the rural bus is redundant. That is all very well if you have access to a car, but there are still a fair proportion of people especially at both ends of the age bracket, who are increasingly subject to rural isolation. 2016 surveys on bus services in eastern Herefordshire indicated that 74% of passengers did not have access to a car but surprisingly 26% of passengers did have access to a car but preferred to use the bus. Reasons given for this included expense (the effect of a national travel pass scheme for senior citizens), problems of parking and meeting neighbours and friends on the bus.

Undoubtedly raising the profile of the country bus can help, positive marketing, fares schemes and links with other rural services, retail outlets and public houses can all go some way to getting more people aboard. Let us support the Herefordshire Council public transport team in their official efforts. Rail & Bus give thanks to Alan Lewis and the team for including a reference to us in the county timetable booklet. RBfH is here to help in a proactive ways as best we can.

The message remains loud and clear. Rural public transport services, bus and train are in a state of threat and uncertainty for the future. Make your voice known. Use the services and question your councillors & MPs about their future.

Meanwhile in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council has scrapped plans to make sweeping cuts to bus subsidies, in a move welcomed by passenger body Bus Users UK.

The group has been working extensively with passengers in the area to ensure their concerns were raised during the Council's consultation on the issue. The result was an unprecedented level of responses, leading the Environment, Transport and Development Committee to propose the plans be dropped in favour of an increase in Council tax. Jeff Anderson, acting Chair of Bus Users England and member of Norfolk Bus Forum, was delighted with the Council's decision: "Buses provide a lifeline to thousands of people in Norfolk, ensuring they can access work, education and vital

services. "Cuts to subsidies of the magnitude proposed would have left many people, particularly older people and people with disabilities, completely isolated."

The response that the RBfH had to its bus campaign of last year was important in moderating Herefordshire Council's approach to wholesales bus service subsidy cuts. However, another round of budget squeezes is due shortly so it may well be back to the campaigning again!

The Hay Ho Bus Working Group

The Hay Ho Working Group which includes several RBfH members made a visit to Snodhill Castle on 25 February. The castle is currently managed by the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust. Members of the public joined the 1015 39A bus from Hereford to Peterchurch and walked along ancient tracks to the castle ruins where a superb tour was given by Garry Crook from the



SCPT before the group returned to Dorstone for the return trip at 1509. Les Lumsdon of the RBfH Buses sub group commented 'The Hay Ho bus is a great way to discover the castles of the golden Valley and Hay-on-Wye. When Snodhill opens to the public in May 2018, we hope to arrange a short walk (2 miles) to the castle and back from Dorstone, with time for a picnic, following in the footsteps of the Reverend Kilvert in 1870'

Use the Bus to see Herefordshire this Summer.

THE VICISSITUDES OF TRAVEL ON A COUNTRY RAILWAY

On Saturday March 26th 2011, it was my intention to take a scenic trip on the **Heart of Wales** line from **Knighton** to **Llandeilo**, the former county town of Carmarthenshire, for an excellent luncheon at the Cawdor Arms. This is normally a 2hr journey through rural mid-Wales. Unfortunately the reality did not quite equal the expectations, but notwithstanding the mechanical deficiencies of the trains used on that line it turned out to be a pleasant day and I met some most interesting people on the train.

When patronising country railways, especially this one where you is taken back in time some 50 years, you must remember that such travel is always slow, and it is more than possible that one might not reach their destination.

The day dawned overcast, cool with low cloud, but that was not a barrier. I duly set off on the 30 mile drive to Knighton. Arriving at that quaint little town nestling in the folds of the Radnorshire Hills, I was a little early so visited the weekly Country Market which I found most extensive and of a high standard. I came away with a homemade Smoked Game Casserole in red wine (frozen of course), comprising venison, pheasant and wood pigeon with various vegetables and a pot of lime marmalade.

The 2 car train arrived on time and we set off at 0954, along the single line Although it was a fairly ancient Class 150, it had been refurbished and reupholstered with the seating high enough so that I could see out of the windows which I had never been able to do previously. The train was very clean as well! Two walkers joined the train with me at Knighton, alighting at **Dolan** and walking back to Knighton although not all in the one day. Proceeding westwards and southwards the day suddenly changed for the better when we got to **Pen-y-Bont**, the sun was beaming down out of a blue sky.

We duly arrived at the principal, and only staffed station, **Llandrindod Wells**, at 1030. This is a small Victorian town now slumbering (some might also add decaying) away peacefully. I always say - "a very nice place to come from". Then 1100 found us at **Llanwrtydd Wells** where we crossed with the northbound train, or were supposed to, and the crews changed trains. However, on this occasion, it had broken down at **Llangadog**, a wayside halt near **Llandeilo**, and a considerable distance from where we

were. What to do? The driver was only cleared to take the train as far as Llanwrtydd, so he was not allowed to proceed. Alight and await a **possible** bus for onward travel? Or remain with the train and return whence we came? Naturally I chose the latter and persuaded others to do the same. As we pulled out of the halt about 10 or so of our former passengers were standing disconsolately on this remote country road waiting for a bus that may, or indeed may not, have appeared. The trials and tribulations of a Country Railway!

Many were on the train simply for a day out, and were intending to go to Swansea; (in Wales the Welsh people get free travel). Some of them, like my travelling companions detailed below, then decided to have an afternoon out in Shrewsbury, a much nicer town than Swansea!

I then got into conversation with a very interesting couple from St Harmans, a small hamlet near Rhayader on the Llanidloes mountain road. They were so interesting that I made copious notes about one of their holidays. This commenced with them telling me that they had travelled on the Trans Siberian Railway from Beijing to Moscow for a mere £300 (1st class). I was agog to know more and here is a potted version which I must relate to you, as, doubtless, you will find it as riveting as I did. The year was 2007, and they were away approx 3 months. They flew with Qatar airlines to Kuala Lumpur and from there took a bus to Penang. Then a bus to Phuket and another one to Bangkok. From there they flew to Xian, the city where the Terracotta Warriors were discovered. In all they spent about 1 month in China which included a 4 day cruise down the Yangtze. Then from Beijing they took the Trans Siberian Railway to Moscow, but alighted for a day at Ulan Bator on Lake Baikal. Briefly they stayed in Moscow for a week and another week in St Petersburg. Then took an overnight bus to Riga the capital of Latvia. From Riga they flew back to Liverpool with Ryan Air for the incredible sum of 87p!! At that time Ryan Air hadn't become the grasping and avaricious company that it is today, so there was no charge for hold baggage and no charge for airport taxes. How very interesting. I was fascinated.

I was considering alighting at Llandrindod on the return and lunching there, indeed The Metropole hotel is quite satisfactory, and also a vintage car rally was taking place there. However I felt that an enforced 4 hour stay in Llandrindod would indeed be a fate almost worse than death itself. What would have happened if the next train didn't turn up and how could I get from Llandrindod to Knighton.? I am sorry to say that I am not as

venturesome as I might have been in my younger days and decided, wisely I think, to return to my starting point and get my car.

I must say that I enjoyed my serendipitous day. I will try this journey again soon, hopefully with greater success.

Michael Sullivan (Committee Member): November 2017

Cardiff-Manchester Trains to be Shunted onto Freight Lines to make way for HS2

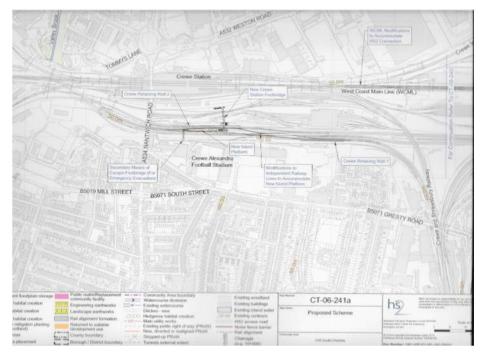
The latest phasing report on HS2 deals with Crewe station where capacity problems are foreseen when HS2 comes whizzing in. The DfT report states:

'The Phase 2a high speed line connects to the WCML south of Crewe via two spur lines. Some modifications will be required to the existing railway infrastructure in the Crewe area to facilitate the proposed service pattern for Phase 2a for 2027.'

Amongst these modifications there is to be 'A new platform at Crewe station on the Manchester Independent lines currently used for freight. This could allow passenger services, such as the current Cardiff-Manchester service, to approach from the west of Crewe and leave to the east without needing to cross all of the existing lines through the station at grade.'

The plan in the report shows the new island platform connected to the main Crewe station by a long footbridge with lifts. Whilst it can be argued that there is some benefit in so far as delays to Marches line trains may be reduced as a result of this move, there is clearly a disadvantage to passengers changing at Crewe as a result of the inclusion of a lengthy perambulation to reach the main platforms.

Is this yet another example of Britain's brave new railway of First Class super trains, Class II Intercity trains and Class III peripheral railway trains!!



The proposed arrangement at Crewe as indicated in the HS2 phasing report. The full view of this plan can be found on www/gov/HS2 crewe-hub-options

RBfH Website Development

The site can be accessed by going to: www.rbfh.org.uk

The website is now running and managed for us by Adam at Lakewood. There is a little bit of fine tweaking to be done but that is most probably in the way I send articles to Adam for insertion! Regular articles appear on the site as well as the PDF versions of the newsletter which can be downloaded. This has helped to reduce our costs at a time when printing costs and postage are rising sharply. The main use of the website is as a marketing tool, especially to make our organisation known to young people in the various educational establishments throughout the county and further afield. An education marketing plan is being evolved which will hopefully see an increase in our membership amongst the younger generation. As with all volunteer organisations it is important to look to the future.

From the Archives: The Leyland National

There was a time when the name of Leyland was known throughout the world, such was the renown of the trucks and buses that bore the famous name. When Great Britain still had an Empire, Leyland vehicles found their way to many countries overseas. The name originates from the town of Leyland in Lancashire where in 1895 a small manufactory was established by a Mr James Sumner producing steam driven vehicles. In 1896 the Lancashire Steam Motor Company was formed and the enterprise turned to manufacturing petrol driven vehicles. By 1907 it had become Leyland Motors Limited and, with valuable contracts obtained from the War Office, the business was quick to expand.



Leyland Nationals in Stagecoach and DRMBus liveries at Hereford

Originally the vehicle chassis were commonly designed for both lorry and bus bodywork but in 1925 Leyland produced their first range of purpose built buses. Their immediate success secured the name of Leyland as a major United Kingdom bus manufacturer, eventually becoming the largest in Britain and fifth largest in the world for commercial vehicle production.

The development of new and innovative bus designs was always a feature of

Leyland. The 'Atlantean' was the first rear engine double deck and in 1970 the Leyland 'National' was unveiled. This was a joint venture between Leyland and the newly formed National Bus Company. It became the first mass produced integrally-engineered single deck bus and was manufactured in its thousands at a new purpose built factory in Cumbria. A total of some 3,500 buses entered service throughout the United Kingdom in the fleets of various National Bus Company operating companies, Passenger Transport Executives and municipal transport undertakings.

The vehicle was highly successful, having an easy maintenance rear engine compartment which then allowed a wide and low floor front entrance. This permitted ease of one man operation, a vital ingredient in the rush to reduce costs when in the 1970's bus services everywhere were experiencing declining passenger numbers and strong competition with the growth in private car travel.

A second generation integrally-engineered bus was developed in the 1980's known as the 'Leyland Lynx'. But by this time the bus industry was significantly changing with the government's deregulation of bus services and the privatisation of the National Bus Company under the 1985 Transport Act. The disappearance of the major purchaser of Leyland buses with this privatisation had a dramatic effect on the company from which it never really survived. The demise of Leyland provided the opportunity for European manufacturers to make inroads into the British market resulting in the fact that today's modern bus fleets are mostly based on Volvo, Mercedes and Scania engineering.

The booklet 'Last of the Leyland buses in Herefordshire' is available from GHAL Productions at £3.50 +pp (ghal@btinternet.com)

Contribute to your Newsletter

Please do contribute to your newsletter and the website. Articles, news, photographs etc with a railway and/or bus content are always welcome for the RBfH Newsletter and website. Articles up to a maximum of 400 words plus illustrations are suggested as a guideline. They can be submitted to your editor either as hard copy post to the editors address or electronically via the editor's email shown in the RBfH Committee list. Articles can be handwritten, typed or sent electronically preferably in word format with any photograph or image as jpegs.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2018/19 were due on 1st February. If you have not already done so please forward £8.00 to our Treasurer Peter Gwatkin at 60 Broomy Hill, Hereford, HR4 0LQ.

Alternatively please consider setting up a standing order which helps us keep admin costs down and releases more funds for publicity, bus and rail campaigns and research.

Please spread the word around about Rail & Bus for Herefordshire (RBfH) and the work that it does to protect and secure the development of our vital public transport services. There is much to be done.

Join Rail & Bus for Herefordshire and help protect and secure the development of our rail and bus services

Herefordshire stations handle in excess of 1.5 million passengers per annum and the number is growing. Herefordshire buses account for in excess of 36,000 passenger journeys per week. RAIL AND BUS SERVICES ARE IMPORTANT.

- Help in the development and future of rail and bus services in Herefordshire
- ♦ Help get improvements at your local station
- Help give rail and bus services a fair chance against an over emphasis on roads
- Help develop new innovative ways of providing rural and urban public transport

The RBfH Committee

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Naomi Bell; Andrew Pearson

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Rail & Bus for Herefordshire Membership Application Form

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Membership is £8.00 for a year payable on 1st February. For those joining after October 1st membership is free until the following February.

Please make a cheque for £8.00 payable to Rail For Herefordshire and send to:

The Treasurer, Rail & Bus for Herefordshire, 60 Broomy Hill, Hereford, HR4 0LQ

You can also pay by Standing Order or Bank Transfer. For details contact the treasurer Peter Gwatkin at 60 Broomy Hill, Hereford, HR4 0LQ email: pmgaccountancy@gmail.com