

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire Newsletter Autumn 2018



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Inauspicious Start for new Welsh Train Service in England

On Sunday October 14 2018 the Marches Line through Herefordshire and Shropshire changed ownership. This important train service serves the two counties and is a key transport link for both. From this date the train service became the responsibility of the Welsh Government administered through its agency, Transport for Wales Ltd. The new train operator and development partner (ODP) is a consortium of Keolis which is French railway owned and Amey plc, whose parent company is Spanish. The Marches Line, as our railway is known, looks set to take on a truly Welsh continental flavour with trains being branded Transport for Wales and sporting a new livery.

The promises from Transport for Wales of major improvements, with a £5 billion investment looks impressive*. New trains, more services, station modernisation, better ticketing and a metro system for South East Wales are all part of the vision. How far the £5 billion will stretch to achieving all this remains to be seen whilst this side of the Border there is more than one sceptic wondering how much of this money will come to improve the English train services and stations that will be under Welsh control. As the sceptics point out *'the Welsh will control our railway but we have no representation and no say on what the Welsh Government does'*.

Meanwhile the hand-over has taken place and with it comes an inauspicious start for on the first day of Welsh/French/Spanish operation, there were no trains between Newport and Shrewsbury (because of good old English Network Rail engineering works)!

*A full list of the improvements can be found on the Rail & Bus for Herefordshire website under the title The Welsh Government's Brave New Railway www.rbfh.org.uk

RBfH 18-10-2018



A new Transport for Wales livery for the Class 175 trains which operate the Marches Line

Developments at Ledbury Station

In September the Department for Transport issued a guideline as to nominations for the Access for All Fund for improvements to disabled access at local stations. The Department minister stated:

'I have asked Local Delivery Groups (LDGs) to nominate stations for the new funding by 16 November this year. Each part of the network is covered by a LDG, which usually consists of Network Rail and the Train Operating Company or companies. It is these LDGs who will submit final nominations for Access for All funding and I have asked them to consult local authorities, MPs and other stakeholders when drawing up their nomination lists.'

Rail & Bus was then in contact with West Midlands Trains with regard to the desperate situation at Ledbury where there is no disabled access to the up platform in the direction of Worcester. This meant that any wheelchair disabled person had to travel to Hereford and return on the same train in order to get to Worcester, Birmingham, Oxford or

London. The request for nomination of Ledbury was also quickly taken up by Herefordshire Council via a local councillor and letters of support have been forwarded to West Midlands Trains. This has been followed by an email giving full support and assistance to the bid from Mr Bill Wiggin, MP for North Herefordshire.

The result is that West Midlands Trains confirm that Ledbury is included in the nomination list. We hope it makes the grade.



Access for disabled wheelchairs and pushchairs to the Worcester side platform has not changed since this photo was taken in the early 1980's. In fact it has got worse because then, at least there was a barrow crossing at the end of the platform ramps below the signal box. This was later taken away as being unsafe and not conforming to health and safety standards for crossing running lines.

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Cross City Electrics arrive at Bromsgrove

At long last the extension of the West Midlands cross city line electric service is now operational to Bromsgrove providing two electric trains per hour to/from Birmingham New Street. This is a much needed development given Bromsgrove's expansion. The Hereford-Birmingham service continues to call at Bromsgrove but it is to be hoped that the new electrics will dramatically reduce the overcrowding that occurred on Hereford trains when they provided the only service for Bromsgrove. Members that travel this line are asked to report their findings as to any continued overcrowding, especially on afternoon departures from Birmingham when some Bromsgrove residents may still find it more convenient to take up space on a Hereford train rather than use the electrics which call at all stations.



West Midlands Trains cross-city electric unit arrives at Bromsgrove

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Leaves on the Line



'Four specialist trains are working 24 hours a day to blast leaves off the line and keep passengers and freight moving. Up and down the West Coast and Chiltern main lines and across the West Midlands the four leaf-buster trains will cover 25,000 miles this autumn as they tackle the widely-mocked problem of leaves on the line.'

The reality of leaves on the line is no joke: they get flattened onto the rails by trains creating a Teflon-like, slippery coating which limits trains' ability to accelerate or brake rather like cars driving on black ice. The outcome is a disrupted timetable as trains, which can weigh several hundred tonnes, need more time to start and stop and must travel more slowly through affected areas.

That's why Network Rail, working with train operators, has developed an ever-improving autumnal plan to regularly treat the rails to help keep passenger and freight trains moving.

The four trains use powerful jets of water to blast squashed leaves off

the rails . The water jets are so powerful that if they sprayed one spot on the track continuously, they would cut straight through the steel rail.

Across the West Midlands and on the West Coast main line and Chiltern main line, more than 10 million litres of leaf-busting water will be used over the next 10 weeks.

Martin Colmey, current operations manager for Network Rail's London North Western route, said "Leaves on the line is no joke. If we didn't work to remove them, their impact on train passengers wouldn't be funny either. They have the same impact on the railway as black ice does on roads, making it impossible to drive a train normally. Our leaf-busting trains will cover more than 25,000 miles this autumn - vital to help keep customers and freight safely and swiftly on the move."

Let us hope there is no such thing as the wrong sort of leaves

09-10-2018 Article Extract courtesy of West Midlands Trains

With new arrangements and operators on the West Midlands and Wales & Borders rail network, it is to be hoped that events will settle down to a period of development of our rail services. Both West Midlands Trains (Hereford-Birmingham service) and Transport for Wales (Marches Line Service) are making bold promises of new rolling stock, increased capacity and potentially more trains on our services. Both make great play of the importance of user groups as stakeholders in the services. There is much continuing work for Rail & Bus for Herefordshire in assisting the rail organisations to attain their aspirations. This requires an eclectic mix of vision, cooperation, and even at times constructive criticism but never confrontation.

In order to keep the good work up Rail & Bus for Herefordshire welcome new members. Please spread the word and help us recruit. Application form at the back of this newsletter.

Village Link

First Worcester gained a number of Herefordshire contracted services in the Ledbury and Bromyard area earlier in the year. September 2018 saw some adjustments to the timetables and also the addition of some new ventures including a Mondays only Ledbury-Cheltenham service via Malvern, Upton-upon-Severn and Tewkesbury.

Overloading of Saturday journeys on the 417 Ledbury-Worcester service caused problems which led to an additional summer only journey at 1715 from Worcester. Interestingly this journey was often worked by a double deck vehicle but did not include the narrow lanes section via Cradley Buryfields.



First Worcester double deck bus in Midland Red colours passes through the Deer Park estate, Ledbury on the 1805 Summer Saturdays return 417 journey to Worcester.

RBfH 18-10-2018

The Welsh are coming

September saw Hereford brought into the Traws-Cymru long distance bus network. The long standing Stagecoach South Wales service 39 between Hereford and Brecon via Hay-on-Wye was renumbered T14 in the Traws-Cymru network.

For those who are really adventurous the through journey to Cardiff is a mammoth whilst changing at Brecon can give you onward transit northwards to Newtown or south westwards to Swansea.

Fares are competitive with a £10 unlimited days travel. Of interest is the fact that Traws-Cymru also advertise a weekend return saver for the same £10 as well as free travel for all every Saturday and Sunday across the network. This therefore includes journeys on the T14.



Left Above: Traws-Cymru T14 on layover at Hereford Barrs Court Station. Above Right: Western Welsh small Albion Nimbus used on rural routes out of Brecon depot in the 1960's.

Interestingly Service 39 was originally a rail replacement service started when the Hereford-Brecon railway was closed in the 1960's. The replacement bus service was then operated by the Western Welsh Omnibus company from its garage in Brecon. It was often operated with one of Western Welsh's fleet of small Albion Nimbus buses. The

service was passed to Red & White Services and then became part of the Stagecoach Empire. Stagecoach South Wales operate the T14 as a franchise type arrangement with the Welsh Government.



The Traws-Cymru national network now including Hereford

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Gloucester's New Bus Station

Gloucester's new bus station is open providing a vast improvement for passengers and a smoother interchange between buses, town and country and the link to the railway station. A re-development of this part of the city was much needed and Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire Council have succeeded in providing the city with a modern clean public transport interchange.

Meanwhile in Hereford we have a no man's land where we were promised over ten years ago a new transport interchange, sympathetically integrated with the classical grade II listed Barrs Court Station. The Edgar Street Grid of which the proposed interchange was an integral part has now been all but forgotten. We have a wide super highway segregating the station from the city and a landscape like something out of a terrorist attack where you have to search amongst the rubble, temporary bollards and forests of traffic lights to find a bus, let alone the right bus.

To add insult to injury Herefordshire Council have now granted planning permission for a new building straight out of the 1970's to occupy part of the designated site and totally destroying an area described in the glossy ESG redevelopment blurb of 2006 as

'Providing a sense of arrival for visitors and a central connectivity point for all modes of transport, the hub will provide transfer opportunities for trains, buses, taxis, private cars, hire cars, cyclists and mobility vehicles. The safety of pedestrian is a priority and people on foot will benefit from wide and well drained pavements, with benches and other rest and shelter facilities readily available'.

It would appear the only answer to be got out of Herefordshire Council and their contractors as to why Herefordshire has not got its

promised transport interchange is that all effort is being put into the Herefordshire bypass. Taking a phrase out of the author Tom Sharpe I can truly say that Herefordshire Council is really professional at creating ‘blots on the landscape’ not only within the city but even more dramatically in the peaceful, valuable and unique Herefordshire countryside at Breinton to the west of the city.



Gloucester Bus Station

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End of award winning Timetable Booklet

It was a glib statement from Herefordshire Council that put paid to a well-produced and well used timetable book that in the past has won accolades for its clarity and usefulness.

A Herefordshire Council spokesman said that an officer decided to cease the booklet’s publication following a member briefing - there was no public consultation prior to this.

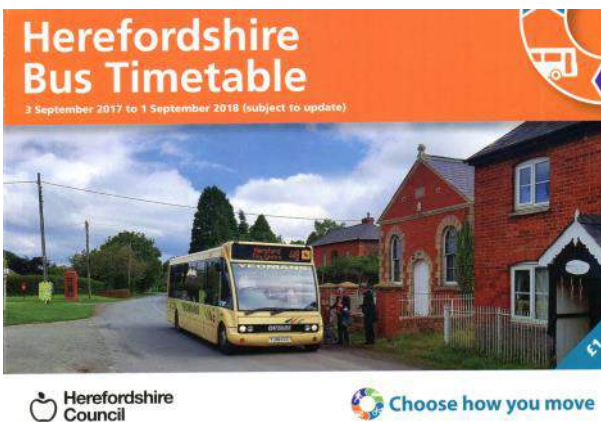
‘Following careful consideration, Herefordshire Council has taken the decision to cease publishing the comprehensive Herefordshire bus timetable book’ he said. *‘We would like to thank our loyal customers*

throughout the county and apologise for any inconvenience. The authority will continue to provide bus timetables and information through various channels, including online and social media, as well as via both printed and electronic displays in cases across the county.

“This decision has been made to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources and value for money for Herefordshire taxpayers. We would like to reassure our service users that this decision will in no way affect the quality of bus service provision”.

As usual with Herefordshire Council there was no consultation with the public or Rail & Bus for Herefordshire and no information as to costings and the saving to be made from ceasing publication. Irrational decisions to cut out valuable services to the public for a minimal cost saving appears to be council policy. The cost savings from withdrawal of support from rural services is minimal in the financial scheme of things. The ongoing saga of the county’s libraries is yet another example where the impact on the community far outweighs the cost saving.

The timetable booklet, which also provided information on school term dates and schooldays only buses, concessionary travel and helpful maps of Hereford and the market towns was valuable to both residents and visitors alike. It will be sadly missed, all for the savings



of a few shillings when the council can spend millions on new roads, but ignores the needs of the public transport user.

Choose How You Move it says. And you once could choose with the handy timetable book to consult.

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Meeting the needs of rural communities (DfT extract)

'Rural bus services - the challenges

4.40 Local buses help commuters get to work, students to school and ensure people can access a wide range of services and leisure opportunities. The loss of a local bus service, particularly in rural areas, can leave people isolated or dependent on friends and family to help them travel. But it can also be in rural areas that commercial services are the most difficult to provide, because the critical mass of passengers required for a regular service can be difficult to achieve.

4.41 Where bus services are not provided commercially by bus operators, local authorities are able to step in and subsidise additional services. Local authorities are best placed to decide which services are needed in their local areas, reflecting local needs and the available budget. In England, local authorities have spent an average of £330 million a year over the past three years supporting bus services.

4.42 The Department is aware of the many challenges facing local authorities in ensuring rural communities have access to regular bus services - including the concentration of amenities in town and cities and ongoing financial pressures – and it is important that authorities are able to get the most out of the funding that is available to ensure the needs of local communities can be met.

4.43 Through the provisions in the Bus Services Act, the Total Transport initiative and its support for community transport, the Department provides a range of tools and options to help local authorities deliver better local bus services, particularly in rural areas. More details on these tools are set out in this section as well as the methods that local authorities can use to consider and take account of the impacts of their policy choices on rural areas.

Rural Proofing

4.44 Rural proofing of new policies has been applied across central government for over a decade. It requires policy-makers to consider impacts of their policies and programmes on rural areas and, where necessary, to make adjustments to achieve equally effective and successful outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses.

4.45 During the development of the provisions of the Bus Services Act, consideration was given to the impact on rural areas. We therefore strongly recommend that local authorities undertake a rural proofing exercise when they are reviewing their transport provisions or considering using the new powers available to them under the provisions of the Bus Services Act. Following the exercise, local authorities should adapt their policies as necessary to ensure their approach achieves equally effective and successful outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses in rural areas.

4.46 In deciding how to support rural bus services, or when considering the impact of potential policy choices on rural areas, local authorities should undertake a rural proofing exercise. The Department recommends this is done not only when 26 authorities are considering implementing franchising or the partnership provisions in the Act, but for any authority reviewing its transport provisions. Where franchising or partnership approaches are considered, rural proofing should be undertaken both at an early stage, to shape the proposals, and before the final arrangements are implemented.

4.47 Rural proofing does not require exactly the same outcome, or the provision of exactly the same level of service, in rural as in urban locations. This would not be practical in many cases, as the costs would be prohibitive. Rural communities should expect government policies and programmes to be sufficiently flexible to apply fairly in their areas and to deliver quality services that meet their needs.

4.48 Further information on rural proofing can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rural-proofing-guidance>

How can the Bus Services Act improve rural bus services?

4.49 *The Bus Services Act provides a wide range of tools for local authorities to use to help improve bus journeys for local passengers in a way that meets the needs of their local communities. These powers include the ability to work more effectively with bus operators through advanced quality partnerships or enhanced partnership schemes, and the potential to establish a system of franchising.* 4.50 *The powers contained in the Act have been designed for use across England – in both rural and urban areas. It is up to local authorities to decide whether and how to use the powers in the Act. However, when considering the most appropriate approach, we recommend that local authorities give full consideration to the needs of rural areas.’*

I make no apologies for quoting verbatim this extract from the Department of Transport document ‘The Bus Services Act 2017: New Powers and Opportunities.’ The document provides valuable advice as to the new powers available to local authorities for the development and improvement of bus services within their areas. Of note is the section on serving rural communities and the use of the mechanism termed ‘rural proofing’. The inclusion of a section on rural bus services is interesting and important as up to now most emphasis from government has been concentrated on urban and metropolitan areas.

The Act and its provisions have been in effect for over a year and has Herefordshire Council taken any notice of them. Not one bit. Is there any move to seriously address the matter of rural public transport provision. The answer is no. All emphasis is on covering the valuable Herefordshire countryside with tarmac whilst the Council’s own Local Transport Plan policy: ***To ensure access to all services for those in rural areas***, is conveniently buried.

It is full credit to Jesse Norman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the DfT that the 2017 provisions include a valuable section on rural transport. As Jesse says in his foreword

‘Powers in legislation do not help anyone unless they are put into practice. We would ask every local authority to consider how bus services can help achieve their economic, environmental and social objectives and whether the powers in the Act will help to do this. The guidance the Department has produced here is the starting point for local authorities. In 2019, we will be looking to see what has been achieved and how the bus industry stands two years after the Act received Royal Assent. The potential for change is there’.

Is it too much to ask Herefordshire Council to treat public transport fairly and take full advantage of Jesse Norman’s *‘potential for change’*



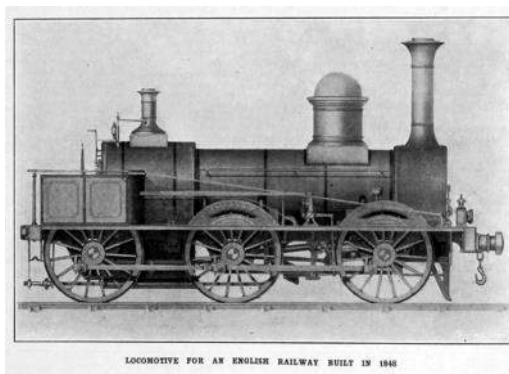
There is much of low cost that can be done to assist rural bus services and partnership between operator and local authority is a key.

RBfH 18-10-2018 and extract from Bus Services Act 2017

From The Archives: Big Bang at Leominster

British railways remain one of the safest forms of land travel. But it was not always the case, especially in the early days of railway development. The Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway was opened in 1853. These early railways relied on a motley collection of locomotives, carriages and wagons, track and signalling equipment from various manufacturers around the country. The Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway Company was no exception and had either purchased or leased a small number of little engines from the locomotive engineers Hicks of Bolton Ltd.

In May 1874 one of these small engines was standing in the station at Leominster at the head a short freight train. The driver, luckily for himself had walked back down the platform to converse with the points man and signaller about when to start on the ponderous journey along the main line. Suddenly, there was one almighty bang as the boiler exploded, demolishing a small goods shed and subjecting the station house to a heavy bombardment of flying shrapnel. Luckily the stationmaster and his family lived at the back of the house and the station was deserted of passengers.



Subsequent investigation found that a recent overhaul of the engine carried out by the Vulcan foundry of Newton Le Willows, Lancashire had included a defective and most peculiar piece of boiler repair work. The barrel had been patched and strengthened by means of a circular hoop of

wrought iron as though it were a leaky beer cask!

RBfH 18-10-2018

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RBfH Connections

RBfH is a member of the Marches Rail Users Alliance which includes user groups from Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Ludlow, Leominster and the Heart of Wales Line Travellers Association. MRUA is very active in Liaison with Transport for Wales as well as forging positive links with the new train operator.

RBfH is a member of Rail Future: members can access Rail Future publication 'Railwatch' on www.railwatch.org.uk and newsletter 'Rail User Express' on ruglink@railfuture.org.uk

RBfH is a member of Bus Users UK: members can access Bus Users and its newsletters/publications on www.bususers.org/england

RBfH is a founder member of the Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

Membership Application Form

Name.....

Address.....

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Tel:.....

Email:.....

Date.....

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