

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire Autumn 2022 Newsletter



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From the Editor

A new Prime Minister, a new government cabinet and yet transport continues to muddle along in a state of confusion. Does the government have a transport policy? The answer continues to be a resounding NO. As Stuart Thomson, Head of Public Affairs at BDB Pitmans, so aptly puts it:

To listen to the Government, it would be easy to think that transport policy needs little attention and is operating efficiently and effectively. However, the reality is that transport policy is confused. But why is that the case and how have we got here?

There has been no shortage of big, set piece transport announcements – Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), the National Bus Strategy and the Jet Zero Strategy – not forgetting of course the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail.

But the common thread is that these big announcements steadily unravel, with the much-needed details never taking shape.

However, some signs of direction are beginning to emerge from government, albeit these can be read as rather alarming. This new government is showing positive signs of being roads orientated. Boris Johnson's upbeat National Bus Strategy appears to be in the process of being moved out of the charts. Great British Railways may yet turn into a lost government quango searching for a place to locate itself before tackling a multitude of important rail issues. Stuart Thomson sums it up:

This lack of clarity is not only apparent in the transport policy but in the lack of integration between modes and the failure to work out finances. With the addition of some Liz Truss "full-fat freeports" the level of confusion increases still further.

There is an opportunity for the new Prime Minister, and presumably the new Secretary of State for Transport, to bring clarity to the sector but only if they address some of the big underlying challenges. If not, then the confusion is set to continue.

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Cover image: Archive photo of the opening of the independently run Ledbury Station ticket office in 1988. The cabin is set for a new lease of life as a community and transport gallery.

Post Pandemic Rail Passenger Figures

The following information has been released by the Office of Rail & Road.

Rail passenger numbers are continuing to rise, but remain well below pre-pandemic levels.

According to the latest figures from the **Office of Rail and Road**, rail passenger journeys are now at 56.9% of the 1.739 billion journeys made pre-pandemic.

Figures show 990 million rail passenger journeys were made in the UK between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. This was more than double the 388 million recorded in the previous year.

However the ORR said, excluding the 12 months during the Covid-10 outbreak (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021), this figure was still the lowest number recorded since April 2002 to March 2003 when 980 million journeys were made.

The total UK passenger revenue was £5.9bn between April 2021 and March 2022, nearly three times the £2bn generated the previous year and equating to 54% of the £11bn generated before the pandemic.

There were 275m rail passenger journeys made in the first quarter of 2022 - more than three times the 80m made in Q1 2021.

This made up 62.1% of the 443 million journeys made in Q1 2019, which was the last equivalent quarter before the pandemic.

Although passenger rail journeys are slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels, the number of journeys made in Q1 2022 was 10m less than the previous quarter, when 285m rail passenger journeys were made in Q4 of 2021.

This may be due to the spread of the Omicron variant which saw England reintroduce work from home guidance from 13 December 2021 until 19 January 2022.

Guidance on home working was relaxed in Scotland from 31 January while in Wales it was 28 January.

London North Eastern Railway recorded the highest relative usage for passenger kilometres this year at 79.8%.

Chiltern Railways recorded the lowest relative usage of the franchised operators at 47.5% of the passenger kilometres travelled pre-pandemic.

Ten franchised operators recorded a longer average journey length this year compared to pre-pandemic levels including Transport for Wales which recorded the largest increase at 13.3%.

Great Western Railway (up 12.2%) and Northern Trains (up 10.6%) also recorded increases in average journey length of more than 10%.

By contrast, the average length of a journey on c2c this year was 12.7% shorter than that recorded two years ago.

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Clearly Great British Railways, once it gets going, has a huge task in front of it. With an government unsympathetic to rail and a fundamental change in its passenger revenue base, one wonders what the future is to be for our rail industry, especially in those areas at the fringe of the network.

Improved Connections to the Cotswold Line

Julian Palfrey of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group provides the following welcome news.

Small timetable changes can often reap important benefits for Herefordshire rail users.

With the number of through trains between Hereford and London Paddington limited to five “up” trains and six in the “down” direction (compared with 13 each way to and from Great Malvern) good connections take on an even greater significance.

The Cotswold Line Promotion Group – working with West Midlands Trains timetable planners – has now achieved a restoration of the Worcester Shrub Hill stop in the **0713 Hereford to Birmingham New Street** service, lost during Covid cutbacks, to the December 2022 timetable. This not only secures an additional peak hour service between Shrub Hill and New Street but also restores an important peak time connection into the **0813 Worcester Shrub Hill to London Paddington**.

One of the few timetable improvements achieved during Covid cutbacks is an additional morning train to Hereford which the CLPG has been pursuing with train operators for over 20 years since the days of Central Trains!

An empty stock train previously left Worcester Shrub Hill at 0530 to form one of the early morning Hereford to Birmingham New Street services but for various operational reasons it ran as an empty stock service to Hereford. That train now departs in service at **0625 from Worcester Shrub Hill (0631 from Foregate Street)** helping to plug a long two hour gap in Worcester-Hereford services between 0556 and 0742. What’s more this new train arriving in Hereford at 0714 offers Malvern, Colwall and Ledbury users excellent connections into no less than three trains at Hereford – the **0748 to Cardiff, Swansea and Carmarthen, the 0739 to Ludlow, Shrewsbury and Manchester and the 0754 North Wales Coast train to Chester, Llandudno and Holyhead**.

The new 0625 Hereford service also now connects with the first train of the day from the Cotswold Line -0510 from Oxford – offering the earliest ever connection and arrival into

Malvern and Hereford for Cotswold Line users.

More recently the CLPG has turned its attention to the lack of Hereford line connections with two services which currently terminate or start at Worcester Shrub Hill – the 1050 London Paddington to Worcester Shrub Hill and the 1316 Worcester Shrub Hill to London Paddington. The group has been pressing Great Western Railway to speed up lethargic timings on the 1050 from Paddington to improve turnaround times at Worcester so that both services can be extended to/from Worcester Foregate Street and offer new lunchtime connections with West Midlands Trains services for the benefit of Malvern, Ledbury and Hereford users.

Members of Rail and Bus for Herefordshire may well be aware of other “missed” connections with Cotswold Line services and if so please let CLPG know and we will see what we can achieve!

Julian Palfrey (CLPG)

Update on the Marches Line

RBfH committee member and rail monitor Michael Sullivan reports that train services are running reasonably well although there continues to be a problem with overcrowding on the Marches Line, especially during college times.

Transport for Wales has stated it remains committed to operating five car new class 197s on the Manchester-south Wales route alongside five Mk 4 loco hauled sets which will also have five passenger coaches. However, rumours have started to circulate about the 197s being spread more thinly across the network with the Borderlands route between Wrexham and Bidston set to receive some. The additional routes appear to place bigger demands on the 77 class 197's (51 x 2 car and 26 x 3 car) than originally envisaged at least during 2023 and 2024. The prospect of the Marches Line allocation being reduced to two and three car seems to be in the wind despite TfW assurances.

Such rumours do nothing to allay the fears of Herefordshire and Shropshire passengers in the Border. Undoubtedly a close eye will need to be kept on developments.

Moving from Recovery to Resilience

West Midlands Railway reports on its recovery plan for the Snow Hill and Hereford lines services.

A key theme over the last year has been to explore the **challenges of rebuilding our traincrew teams** following years of disrupted training during the pandemic. Thanks to the co-ordinated efforts of our academy trainers, practical instructors, driver managers, rostering and control teams, and not forgetting the new drivers themselves and many other support functions, we have seen **an unprecedented near 25% increase in crew availability** in just under 12 months.

This progress means we have enough drivers available to operate our current 4 trains per hour timetable. Pre pandemic, we operated a 6 train per hour base timetable which required

even more drivers. As we shared in previous updates, we remain on track to recover this establishment by the end of the year. Moving forward, this additional headroom means our Worcester-based drivers can start training on our brand-new class 196 trains without significant impact on day-to-day delivery of the timetable.

Balancing the complex and often competing demands of our driver training programme, testing and entry into service of our new trains, as well as the planned transfer of our legacy fleets to other operators means we often have to make imperfect decisions. The honest truth is there has been **no easy solution** to the problem, and we know this has damaged faith with some of our customers on the Snow Hill lines. As we move from pandemic recovery towards a more resilient position and begin introducing our new trains to regional services, we will see additional carriages on the Snow Hill lines, in turn hopefully restoring some of this lost faith.

Observations at Ledbury clearly show a marked improvement in trains service reliability and a considerable reduction in train cancellations which has bedevilled the Hereford and Snow Hill services immediately post pandemic. There has also been a marked improvement in train capacity. Most services are now operated by 4 car or 5 car trains.

Reflections on a European Rail Trip

Our chairman reports on a recent rail trip through central Europe

Earlier this year my daughter and I agreed to embark on a trip through central Europe. As with our trip to India six years ago, our itinerary was based on rail travel. We flew to Budapest on 20 August and spent the next fortnight travelling back to the UK through Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany and Belgium. We wanted to avoid other tourists as far as possible! Here are my reflections on the journey with an emphasis on public transport.

Budapest's public transport network is exceptionally good. Metro, trams, trolley buses and buses are all there. Services are frequent and reliable. Trains on the new metro line out to Kelenfold are driverless and run to an extended daily timetable.

To the west of the city are the cog railway and the childrens' railway. The cogwheel railway ('rack' to us) is electrified, and an integral part of the network well used by locals. The 7-mile childrens' railway was built in 1948 as a focus for local youth and is still run largely by young people. It connects with the wider network at both ends.



Refreshment car on the 'Gradec'

Our train to Zagreb was the 'Gradec' which departs Kelenfold at 06:35 and takes 6 hours to cover 200 odd miles. It benefits from a refreshment car serving freshly-cooked light meals – very welcome after such an early start. At the Croatian border the Hungarian carriages are detached and passport and police checks carried out on those in the three coaches going forward. North of Zagreb a 24Km section of the line is being rebuilt and bus replacement further slowed our progress.

I liked Zagreb. We ventured south of the river to view the Corbusier-inspired Mamutica, the largest of the blocks in a massive 1970's

development with a Soviet feel. The tram network is again excellent. Zagreb trams have only one driving position so each route terminus has a tight turning loop.



Smarje-Sap basic station.

Day 7 and on to Ljubljana. Our best Airbnb flat which overlooked the station. Smaller than Zagreb, we found the centre too touristy. In fine weather we took the local train (a Stadler FLIRT) south to Skofljica and walked through the wooded hills to Smarje-Sap. Everywhere was well kept and there were remarkably few people about. The little stations had recently been rebuilt with none of the fuss and expense required in the UK. These two journeys were the only ones in the whole trip not ‘under the wires’. We had interesting conversations with those in the local bar. The older drinkers had little English but the younger barmaid was happy to translate.



Climbing into the Alps.

The next leg of our journey took us over the Alps to Munich and featured some dramatic scenery. Our last loco-hauled train made light work of the long gradients. Surprisingly, this 09:23 departure was the only through train of the day. We had reserved seats, which was just as well as it was packed.



Munich tram route

The following day we took an early train to Tutzing and walked alongside the Starnberger See to Possenhofen before touring the city in the evening. Munich is a beautiful city with the trams enhancing the street scene rather than imposing upon it.

Moving on to Cologne we’re now in modern ICE stock which is fast but somewhat soulless. We took a secondary route that ran down the Rhine valley to add interest.



Wuppertal suspension rail.

Some 40Km north of the city is the Wuppertal Schwebebahn, a suspension railway dating from 1901 and unique to Cologne. Its 13km route, which straddles a watercourse and main streets, provides a sensation of flying as well as complementing the adequate urban transport network. Our hotel overlooked the Rhine and the intensity of barge traffic was heartening. We were told the water level was 2m below normal due to the exceptionally dry



Sleeper replacement

summer. This was limiting the barges’ draught to 1m and significantly reducing their payloads. I was surprised that sleeper replacement was taking place alongside a live platform at Wesseling.

Our last city stop was Brussels with its fine architecture and excellent pastries. I had used a 7-days-in-a-month Interrail Pass which covered all my inter-city journeys except Eurostar for which a premium was payable. Man in Seat 61 and bahn.de websites were invaluable in planning the trip. I thank my daughter for identifying many of our excursions and her abilities with a smartphone.

Beyond the Hills Community Station Partnership (CSP)

The Editor reports on this exciting development for Ledbury and Colwall stations.

The Beyond the Hills CSP, funded by West Midlands Railway gets into full swing with a number of community projects. These include:

- ◆ The conversion of the ex ticket cabin at Ledbury station into a Community & Transport Gallery & Hub. This project has also secured funding from the Department of Transport Customer & Community Investment fund administered by West Midlands Railway under their Your Community/Your Fund scheme. Work to prepare the cabin for conversion to a gallery is due to begin at the end of October by West Midlands Railway contractors. It is hoped the gallery will be open by February 2023.
- ◆ The new Heritage Display about Ledbury, with artwork commissioned from local artists and installed on the platform at Ledbury in October last year, has received much favourable comment. This was the first move in strengthening links between the town, the station and the train service.
- ◆ The local Ledbury & Area Bus & Train Times booklet has been a tremendous success. The booklet is distributed through the Town Council Office and Tourist Information Centre and the staff here have been extremely helpful in this task. The booklet has also been sent to local hotels, estate agents and parish council clerks. Supplements to the booklet giving changes to bus services are also available and it is hoped to produce a new booklet in April 2023 with assistance from the Town Council and Herefordshire Council.
- ◆ Beyond the Hills CSP is in partnership with Ledbury in Bloom for keeping the flower beds at the station in good and colourful order. The RHS Heart of England Judges have been generous with their praise of the station and also admired the new heritage display board which is located in one of the flower beds.
- ◆ Beyond the Hills CSP supports Sustainable Ledbury with its volunteer biodiversity work on the Town Trail. The Trail is a traffic free route between the railway station and the town centre. It follows the formation of the old Gloucester branch line railway and parts of the old Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal. A 3-fold Town Trail brochure has been funded by Beyond the Hills CSP.
- ◆ The CSP has joined forces with Ledbury Cycle Hire near Ledbury Station to offer those arriving by train the opportunity to discover the beautiful Herefordshire countryside by bicycle. Savour the joys of a leisurely, relaxed and healthy day touring the countryside and villages around Ledbury.
- ◆ In conjunction with the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership, Beyond the Hills CSP has commissioned a 1930s style poster to advertise the Worcester to Hereford Railway Line. The poster is by a local artist and will form the cover to a new book which comprises *'an eclectic collection of writings for the discerning traveller by train through this beautiful and historic part of central England into the Welsh Marches'*. The book will be available from the Worcestershire CRP and the Beyond the Hills CSP as well as selected Tourist Information Offices. Publication is expected in late Autumn 2022. For collectors, the poster is also available as A2 and A4 prints.

- ◆ Embracing the young is an important part of the CSP work and we hope that proposed art and writing competitions with prizes will stimulate and encourage an interest in railways, present and future. As a start, a poster will be circulated for display to primary schools in Ledbury, Ashperton, Much Marcle, Bosbury, Cradley, Colwall, Eastnor and Bromsberrow together with the John Masefield High School in Ledbury. Hopefully we will get a good range of exhibits that will form the first exhibition at the Ledbury Station Community & Transport Gallery in early 2023.

Autumn Bus News

RBfH committee member Les Lumsdon gives us a report on some important bus matters.

Service 420 lifeline

Back in August we heard the news that DRM had advised the Traffic Commissioners that it would be withdrawing the commercial 420 service between Bromyard and Worcester in early September. We pleaded with Herefordshire Council to support the service financially or at least offer one off peak return bus to allow Bromyard and Whitbourne folk to get into Worcester for medical or shopping needs. The reply from Herefordshire Council's Transport Manager was as follows:

Unfortunately I'm not in a position to give you good news on the 420 to Worcester. As a cross border service we need a financial commitment/contribution from WCC and to date they have not been able to give that due to higher priority issues on their network. We are continuing to work on options but they all come at a cost.

Three months on Herefordshire Council has provided the resources to offer a 'cost neutral' solution, their words not ours. This involves the use of the First Worcester bus located in Ledbury which undertakes market day and town services between school runs. It will now operate the Worcester journey on Tuesdays instead of the 671 service between Bromyard and Ledbury. If money really is that tight, then this seems a sensible compromise as the 671 is very unused whereas we consider there to be a far stronger demand for a bus between Bromyard to Worcester.

The result is that on Tuesdays, there's going to be a bus from Pump Street, Bromyard to Worcester at 0945 (with a connection from Ledbury (First) and Hereford (DRM)), and a return from Worcester at 1200 from November 8th onwards. For more details see Herefordshire.gov.uk/public-transport-1/bustravel/3. Thanks go to Councillor Nigel Shaw and other local people who have pursued the matter on behalf of bus users. Not ideal, but a weekly bus is better than no bus at all.

Service X3 Cardiff Bus re-instated

RBfH for Herefordshire has spent the summer campaigning to encourage people on board the X3 Stagecoach bus between Hereford, Abergavenny and Pontypool. This involved a leaflet to attract passengers on board and letters to local parish and community councils along the route.

We are pleased to note that Stagecoach has now advised us that it is re-instating larger buses

on the route, which will certainly help on Tuesday when Abergavenny market attracts many more passengers, and journeys will be extended through to Cardiff as before.

Herefordshire bus pass holders will be able to make cross border journeys into and back from Wales using this service. Bus times on the Hereford end of the service do not change when the X3 is upgraded in November, 2022.

Bus Packing

RBfH has been in dialogue with Visit Herefordshire to encourage the use of local buses by visitors. First up, the VH team designed a bus itinerary to enjoy the best of the Black and White villages last year and now has posted another bus adventure referred to as ‘ bus packing’, that’s short hand for grabbing your overnight bag and visiting some of Herefordshire’s finest attractions by bus. The itinerary includes Leominster, Queenswood, Hereford and Wilton before an overnight stay in Ross-on-Wye. Take a look at visitherefordshire.co.uk for ideas.

The Daffodil Line

You may recall that we reported the withdrawal of the Stagecoach bus from Newent to Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. This came as a bit of a shock as our monitoring showed that people were using the buses on these routes and to cut back from seven buses a day to none was simply not acceptable. After several public meetings, a petition and endless lobbying Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Councils held their hands up and said there were no funds to re-instate a service.



Last day of operation of Stagecoach service 132.

That was back in February, and since then a team of dedicated bus users and local councillors have been busy looking at ways to restore a service between Ledbury-Newent-Ross-on-Wye. The result is that Buses4us.org has been launched and a steering group has undertaken a time trial (thanks go to I&S Coaches), advice from other operators and Gloucestershire Council. Most of all they have kept in touch with local people asking what they would like. They also have an eye to new markets for the route.

The preferred timetable option is a regular two hourly service between the towns and at Ledbury the bus would be extended to turn at Ledbury railway station so as to improve integration between bus and train there. RBfH has been asked to join the steering group and Gareth Calan Davies and Les Lumsdon have been assigned to help this to become a reality as soon as possible.

The main task now is to raise a sum of money to guarantee financial support for the service. To date £120,000 has been raised and this is an amazing feat in only six months. Ledbury and Newent Town Councils have pledged significant sums. Gareth spoke out at the Ledbury Town Council meeting and several commentators have noted that his words had a real impact on councillors. We have recently heard that Ross Town Council has also agreed to contribute

RBfH has donated £1000 to Buses4us as the committee felt that this is one of the most significant bus developments in the Marches in recent times and could be a model for

elsewhere. This is where you can help too. Please visit the website Buses4us.org, and even if you can only spare a small amount, donate so to make this project happen. Your help will be much appreciated by a Steering Group that is working very hard to make this happen. I, for one, can't wait for the launch in 2023.

Bus Timetable News

Our Secretary, Andrew Pearson summarises some bus service changes

7 August 2022

420 Hereford – Worcester now terminates at Bromyard. Bromyard – Worcester section served only by First one journey each way.

476 Ledbury – Hereford 1 extra journey M-F 3 extra journeys S the last one M-S extended to serve Burley Gate and Bromyard.

28 August 2022

Last day of operation of 6 Sunday routes introduced for free weekend travel initiative:

36 Monmouth – Hereford

454 Fownhope – Hereford

401 Leominster – Barons Cross

496 Leominster Eardisland circular

600 Ledbury town service

675 Ledbury – Malvern 4 September

34 Monmouth – Ross and 40 Ross town service timetables altered to coordinate with Ross – Gloucester service and extra journey Monmouth – Ross.

492 Leominster- Hereford diverts via S&A Marden and re-joins route at Moreton on Lugg. On Sundays only terminates at Shire Hall.

5 September

426 Leominster – Bodenham - Hereford major timing changes including M-S 12.00 from Hereford – Bodenham now 11.35 to Marden only return 12.00 Wednesdays and Fridays only.

672 Bromyard – Ledbury diverted via Stiffords Bridge and Cradley Buryfields so leaves Bromyard 7.25 and returns 16.20

1 November

420 Bromyard – Worcester new service Tues only Flaggoners Green 9.45 Pump St 9.52 Whitbourne 10.04 Worcester 10.35 Return 12.00 Operated by First using bus from 671. 671 Bromyard – Ashperton – Ledbury service cancelled and Canon Frome no longer served. 600 Ledbury town service 11.50 and 13.50 previously operated by above bus no longer operate on Tuesdays.

Date to be Announced 738/40 Knighton – Ludlow contract awarded to Minsterley Motors.

Hereford Zipper Bus Project funding confirmed

Our Chairman gives us a brief but welcome report.

We haven't reported on Hereford's Electric Zipper bus project since last Autumn's newsletter. During that time the Government has ruminated on which Stronger Towns bids will actually receive the cash. Thankfully the wait was worth it as it's now been confirmed that Hereford Stronger Towns projects will receive the full £22M applied for. Hereford's Electric Zipper will receive £1.7M, of which about half has already been paid.

The buses will be owned by the City Council who will also pay for the 'fuel' using monies drawn from its reserves if necessary. The next step is for tenders to be issued to bus companies for the operation of the service. The detailed specification of the buses also needs to be agreed. It is anticipated that the Zipper will be up and running by summer 2023.

Transport Hub making slow progress

Our Chairman gives us a less than encouraging report.

Our last report on the Transport Hub was in Summer 2021. Since then consultants have been engaged to develop layouts for the Council's consideration. Progress is painfully slow for various reasons, one apparently being the Council having so many other serious and pressing matters to address.

We have seen the consultants' layouts in confidence and made radical and constructive comment. Council elections are due in May 2023 and nothing will happen on the ground before then. We have always been assured that a full public consultation will take place at an appropriate stage. It seems the wasteland that is the setting for our magnificent station façade will endure for some time yet.

Bus Fare Capping

Bus journeys in England will be capped at £2 for three months amid concerns about the cost of living crisis. The Department for Transport said the £60m plan could save passengers more than £3 for a single ticket.

The department said the average fare for a three-mile journey was about £2.80, meaning that passengers would save 30% of the price every time they travelled. The change will come into effect from January 2023.

In the midst of economic confusion and the threat of heavy recession, anything to help the passenger and public transport is welcome. However, this short term assistance yet again misses the vital mark that bus services need constant support to survive, help tackle the cost of living crisis and seriously play out their important role in the move to cut carbon emissions.

Herefordshire Council introduced free fares and a dozen new Sunday services on weekends, in order to boost the local economy and public transport uptake after the pandemic. Almost 170,000 journeys have been taken at weekends but ongoing finance is not available and free fares were discontinued from the end of August. However, six of the more popular new routes will continue on Sundays, but passengers will have to pay.

"We knew we couldn't afford to fund the scheme in the longer term, unfortunately," said councillor John Harrington. We introduced free weekend bus travel to encourage people back onto public transport to visit new places following the pandemic to help support residents and the local economy."

Called the Bus-It scheme, the free weekend travel was funded by a government Covid-19 recovery grant worth £800,000.

Perhaps the Campaign for Better Transport has got closest to the mark when it issued its report *Funding local bus services in England. How to ensure every community gets the bus service it needs*. Its summary plainly stated *To help turn around the fortunes of the local bus and ensure that all communities have the bus services they need and deserve, the Government should:*

- Provide additional capability funding for authorities that do not receive funding for their Bus Service Improvement Plans to recruit experienced professionals or to procure expert support when needed.
- Deliver qualifications and training to boost the supply of new graduates to the sector and to upskill existing team members.
- Provide more detailed guidance and feedback on developing competitive funding bids to authorities that have tended to lose out or not apply in the past
- Move away from the current fragmented, competitive funding pots towards a single pot with long-term allocations for all local authorities conditional on achieving certain objectives
- Allocate a greater proportion of funding to revenue support to boost service provision and frequency and improve affordability
- Make more funding available for local bus services through efficiency savings from large infrastructure projects and reallocating at least a fifth of the roads investment budget to support improvements across all authorities.

David Robert Morris of DRMBus

The Editor has known the late David Morris since the late 1970s as a friend and colleague in the bus industry. He pays tribute to a well known bus character, locally and nationally.

The sudden death of David Robert Morris, MD of DRMBus Ltd, has deprived the bus industry of one of its well known flamboyant, colourful and eccentric characters. I first knew David in the 1970s/early 1980s when, as a county council officer, I negotiated for Morris's Coaches to take over the 476 Ledbury-Hereford service when Midland Red West pulled out of Herefordshire rural bus services. The package came with a new Leyland Leopard dual purpose bus. This was just prior to the establishment of the Herefordshire Trial Area as a precursor to bus service deregulation with which I was closely involved.

David went on to form his own company, DRMBus and put a huge amount into the development of bus services in the Ledbury and Bromyard areas. He always prided himself that DRMBus owned all its assets outright and any profit from the company was reinvested

to improve services. This manifested itself in the high standard of the fleet of buses that DRMBus operated.

David could be an obstinate and intractable character. When I went freelance and he sought my advice, many a time on a Saturday morning he would call at home, sit himself down and we would talk about the state of the industry and in particular his part in it. Quite often it would end in heated debate about local bus service development. But David was also first to admit when he had made a mistake and should have listened to advice.

He was always willing to help a member of staff who was having difficulties. He was also fond of a bit of hilarity and a joke or two, even if it was at his expense. His staff Christmas parties and his famous hog roasts at the garage were a treat and very special occasions.

Over the years his reputation and standing in the industry grew. His larger than life appearances nationally and his staunch support for the small rural bus operator earned him much praise. His favourite statement that he was only ‘The Little Country Lad’ and his unstinting work for rural bus operation ensures his place in the annals of British bus service history.



Pride of the Fleet: DRM and the first Scania.



In conversation at the DRM garage hog roast.



Master of ceremonies with bell at the hog roast.



Larger than life with well earned industry accolades.



The 1982 Leyland Leopard



DRM's little bit of fun



British through and through.



A Young DRM at the wheel.

**We need Buses and Trains more than ever.
Support our local services.
Join Rail & Bus for Herefordshire
See back page for application form**

From the Archives



From early days the Worcester and Hereford line was a strategic freight route between the Midlands and South Wales. The climb out of Ledbury station and up through the tunnel was at 1:80 and freight trains needed assistance. For this a powerful banking engine was kept at Ledbury. The photo shows a long train of vans having left the tunnel and being banked up to Ledbury North End signal box. The tunnel became notorious amongst steam engine crews for its narrow bore and poor ventilation. Note the banking engine is running bunker first. This was to avoid the crew suffering two exhausts from both the train and banking engines.

The line between Ledbury North End and Colwall was singled in the 1960s and the signal boxes at North End, Cummings Crossing and Colwall were closed. The current method of operation on the single line section between Ledbury and Malvern Wells is called "Lock & Block". This is a modified form of Tokenless Block with Great Western Railway equipment that uses the bell telegraph to communicate. This method of operation and equipment, unique to this line, was originally used only through the two single line tunnels on this line, Wells. However, with the removal of the second track, the line become singled from Malvern Wells to Ledbury and one long section was created that remains in use today.

Rail and Bus for Herefordshire

Application for Membership

Name

Address

.....

Phone

Email

Date

Membership is £10 pa for those receiving the newsletter electronically and £15 pa for those receiving the newsletter by post. Memberships run from 1 February each year. However first subscriptions paid after 1 October will cover up to sixteen months' membership to the following February.

This form may be printed off completed and posted to Andrew Pearson our Membership Secretary at 4 Northam Field Clehonger HR2 9SR. Alternatively it can be scanned and emailed to the Membership Secretary at pearsondore@yahoo.com. Applications for membership cannot currently be made through our website.

We encourage all members to pay subscriptions either electronically or by Standing Order. Our account details are: sort code 30-94-14 a/c no 02929075. Cheques may be posted to the Membership Secretary.

Rail and Bus for Herefordshire

Committee contacts

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Honorary President Professor John Whitelegg

rbfh.org.uk

We welcome Janette Ward as a new committee member. Janette brings experience and enthusiasm to the committee and is already closely engaged with the moves to reinstate bus services between Newent and Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye as well as campaigning for the return of an hourly frequency on the 476 Ledbury - Hereford service. She is a member of Sustainable Ledbury and active on environmental issues.