

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

Buses Supplement Spring 2018



**Keeping you informed about your
bus and train services**

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Bus Group report March 2018

The bus group has been active over the winter, although more active members would allow us to extend our influence still further. We have had regular meetings with Herefordshire Council at which the following matters were discussed:

Hereford Bus Hub

Plans for Hereford's new bus hub are slowly moving forward. This strategy is being developed in three phases by consultant WSP in its Basingstoke office. Phase I, development of Brief, is complete. Phase II, analysis and network proposals, should be available in draft by the end of March. Phase III, recommendations on the hub itself, is expected in December 2018.

RBfH is hoping to have an opportunity to comment on the Phase II draft document which is expected in March 2018. The group has also been invited to put forward its own ideas for inclusion in the review.

Hereford's term contractor BBLP is preparing a design for the temporary bus hub on the site of the permanent facility. The intention is that the temporary facility will be in use no later than the start of Hay Festival on 25 May. It will include surfacing, islands and shelters. The intention is to minimise the amount of abortive work overall.

Information Boards

An additional information board in Broad St is expected to be in place by the end of March. We have suggested that where two services depart the same stop at the same time, the detail panel should alternate between the two services every 15 seconds. This alternation could usefully be extended to include any service scheduled to depart within 5 minutes of another.

Real time information: HC had loaned the equipment necessary to operate a real time system to all but the smallest operators. It is hoped that real time information will be available on the boards by June. It was noted that Traveline offer an app covering all bus services, and

Google maps show bus stop locations, services and times (although neither were real time)

Contactless Payment

Although only the bus operators were privy to detailed information on the take-up of contactless payment, it was believed to be encouraging

Services at risk

It is confirmed that services 405 (Hereford-Bromyard-Cradley) and 498 (Bucknell-Kingsland-Canon Pyon-Hereford) have been put on notice due to their high subsidy per passenger. Members of the bus group have conducted counts on both services and ridership is healthy. However the number of concessions is known to be high and this, together with the length of these routes, may be influencing the figures. Any decision to suspend either service will need to be referred to a senior officer

Buses Bill

The Bus Services Act 2017 (the 'Bus Bill') became law on 27 April 2017. However we understand that it is unlikely to have any significant effect on the running of bus services in Herefordshire

In the light of the Hereford Transport Package this information is unfortunate as the Buses Bill does provide the mechanism for local authorities and operators to work together on partnership schemes to improve bus services as part of a balanced transport plan (see following article on Hereford City bus services).

The Bus Group would welcome new members located in Hereford and the Market Towns. We need to build a case for retention of non-core bus services which are important to communities and individuals, both young and senior. Community representation and reporting are a vital part of this campaign.

Response to Hereford Transport Package (HTP) Consultation

The planned Hereford bypass has appeared frequently in the news of late. This new road to the west of the city is part of the Hereford Transport Package. The package is also meant to include active measures to enhance public transport, encourage walking and cycling and help improve the poor environment of the city. However, during public exhibitions and consultation very little mention is made of these vital improvements to the internal transport system of the city. The emphasis is totally and firmly on building the bypass as part of the strategic West Midlands road network and not as a relief to Hereford's transport problems. As a result, Rail and Bus for Hereford has made a firm response to the Hereford Transport Package Consultation, the thrust of which is given here.

‘The HTP is considered a flawed and unbalanced plan because:

A. There is an over emphasis on the bypass which is contrary to Local Transport Plan visions and policies:

- 1. To enable economic growth.*
- 2. To provide a good quality transport network for all.*
- 3. To promote healthy lifestyles.*
- 4. To make journeys safer, easier and healthier.*
- 5. To ensure access to all services for those living in rural areas.*

B. There is a lack of information and detail on how Hereford's internal transport network is to be improved upon completion of the bypass.

C. The dismissal of public transport as an integral part of Hereford city's economic and social development is unacceptable. The Hereford Council and Balfour Beatty argument that improvements to public transport cannot be made until a bypass is built is considered spurious,

misleading and opposite to the Council's LTP. A plan for improvement to the city bus network should be included now in the Hereford Transport Package

D. There is no information on how the Hereford City bus network is to be improved with better frequencies, bus priority, passenger information and waiting facilities and the introduction of low emission and/or electric buses in line with central government policy.

E. There is total disregard of rail services as an integral part of the need to improve connectivity for Hereford within the West Midlands region.'

In addition a summary paper was prepared by Rail & Bus on the City bus network which is reported below:

Hereford City Bus Services Summary Paper

Between 2002 and 2017 the number of bus journeys operated on city services per weekday declined by over 50%. A similar trend took place on Saturdays whilst Sunday services have all but disappeared.

The completion of the new Link Road and the planned transport hub at Barrs Court Railway Station, together with the plans for Newmarket Street, Blueschool Street and Commercial Road provide the opportunity for the re-design of the city bus network and arrest its decline. Having invested in a transport hub, its optimum use for bus and rail interchange in the city is paramount.

Experience elsewhere in Britain and Europe indicate that an effective public transport system can do much to aid economic and social development whilst reducing an over dependence on the private car for internal city journeys. A modal shift from car to public transport can assist with campaigns such as Herefordshire Council's 'Choose how you move' and help achieve the visions, aims and policies as announced in the Local Transport Plan.

Therefore the Hereford Council and Balfour Beatty argument that improvements to public transport cannot be made until a bypass is built is considered spurious, misleading and opposite to the Council's LTP. A plan for improvement to the city bus network should be included now in the Hereford Transport Package

Four main elements influence travel by bus: These are 1. frequency of service throughout the day: 2. reliability of the service: 3. improved journey opportunities: 4. cost of travel.

Improved journey opportunities through the provision of good interchange of services can also help to stimulate suppressed travel demand as well as encourage bus usage. Existing means of easing traffic pinch points and low cost bus priority should also be examined.

A good city network can comprise 10 well defined routes centred on the transport hub for maximum interchange and operating at 15/20 minute frequency throughout the day. Route length should be no more than a 60 min round trip hub-outer terminus-hub. Cross city routes are avoided as unreliable and cross city journey opportunity is enhanced by maximum interchange at the hub.

It is recognised that the Local Transport Authority (LTA) is constrained by what influence it has with the city network which is virtually 100% commercial.

The Department for Transport does recognise this limitation and the Bus Services Act 2017 goes some way to providing local authorities with mechanisms to influence the planning and operation of local bus networks.

Section 9 of the Act creates a new Enhanced Partnership option. LTAs are encouraged to develop partnerships where the bus operator (or operators) is an integral part of a collaborative development process. The scheme can set out 1. facilities that the LTA will provide such as the transport hub/passenger waiting areas and passenger timetable information; 2. improved infrastructure measures that the authority will take, including the introduction of electric buses and low cost bus priority and 3. requirements that bus operators in the scheme area

will need to comply with.

Hereford Council should be examining the opportunity for an Enhanced Partnership and application for grants under the Department for Transport Green Bus Initiative and Better Bus Areas schemes .

Both Herefordshire Council and Balfour Beatty acknowledge receipt of these important representations and documents, but there is much more work to be done to raise the profile of public transport, especially bus services in the city.

Additional Journeys to be introduced on DRMBus service 420

What a pleasant surprise to learn that DRMBus is proving positive in its approach to local bus services with the introduction of an additional weekday return journey between Hereford and Worcester. The current Saturdays only 1055 departure from Hereford Bus station now runs Monday to Friday as well. The return journey from Worcester Bus Station is at 12.30.

The revised timetable comes into effect on 16th April and it is to be hoped this will stimulate summer passengers as well as local use on this important service which also serves the market town of Bromyard. The service connects the two cathedral towns of Hereford and Worcester and passes through some scenic countryside as well as the attractive climb over Bromyard Downs and Bringsty Common, with spectacular views of the Malvern Hills.

Leaflets and fliers advertising the route will be produced by DRMBus which is renowned for the quality of its service and vehicles as well as producing all its own timetables and publicity.

Rural Buses in a Civilised Country

The following is the transcript of an email received from Professor John Whitelegg, our Honorary President..

‘I am now one week into using rural buses in Sweden. This is an area about 50 miles south of Stockholm, mainly farms, hamlets and a local service centre, Jarna (population about 7,000).

I use the 784 and 785 buses. The timetable provides for about 20 buses each weekday (0600-2330) and 9 buses on a Saturday/Sunday and holiday. They all connect with the train station and when the bus gets near the station a screen at the front of the bus shows train departures/times/platforms.

I am struck by the dramatic failure of UK rural public transport to get anywhere near this service level. My life in rural Shropshire is blighted by a complete lack of buses to most of the towns and villages within 10 miles of Church Stretton, no buses after 6 pm, no buses on Sundays and holidays (we are a tourist area) and no buses at all that go to the train station. This is a dramatic failure of politicians of various parties national and local to do something to improve things for the last 3-4 decades.’

John Whitelegg is Professor at the Stockholm Environment Institute and a keen advocate of public transport.

Meanwhile in Herefordshire

The Council plans to spend millions on a road through a sensitive and environmentally important area of Herefordshire west of the city and at the same time ignores fundamental and necessary improvements to Hereford’s public transport system, as well as further eroding the meagre support for rural bus services.

Further, it is planned to build thousands of new houses on the west and north west of the city whilst the major employment growth area of the Enterprise Zone is on the east and south east. As Professor Whitelegg says there is a dramatic failure of our system somewhere.