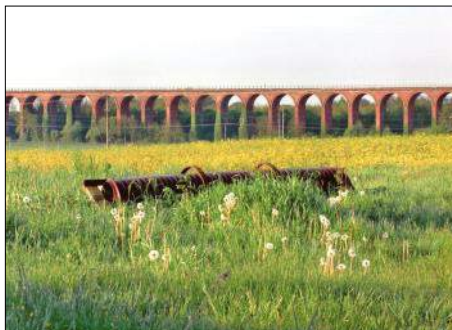


Rail & Bus for Herefordshire Newsletter Autumn 2017



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West Midlands Railway - our new train operator

The Great Western Franchise and CLPG

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Our Railways: Confusion & Incoherence

The Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group

The Falklands Railway - something different

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Newsletter Editor & Chairman: Gareth Calan Davies

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Published & printed by GHAL Productions, Ledbury

Progress on the Wales & Borders Franchise?

Yes it's got a little closer. For the moment the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Welsh Government have buried the hatchet. On the 29 September the Welsh Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, confirmed that final tenders have been invited for the next Wales & Borders Rail Service. The minister stated:

'I'm delighted to confirm that Abellio Rail Cymru, Arriva Rail Wales, Keolis Amey and MTR Corporation (Cymru) Ltd have all been invited to submit final tenders for the next Wales & Borders Rail Service. From rolling stock to frequency of services, Metros to profit thresholds, this final tender will provide the blueprint for what these four giants of the rail industry are bidding to provide Wales.'

Detailed discussions with all four of the shortlisted potential operators have only served to reinforce our optimism that the next service will see big improvements. I look forward to seeing how the detailed tenders tackle our ambitious requirements for the next 15 years before making a decision on the successful operator in early 2018.

We intend to create a rail service that benefits the whole of Wales, communities along the border and in England. One with passengers at its heart and today's announcement is another important step towards that.'

In inviting the final tender for the franchise, the Economy Secretary provided an update on progress with the UK Government on fair funding. He said:

'There is will on both our sides to ensure that the settlement works for Wales and the Border and, following positive talks, a resolution is near. It's great news for rail users that this ensures the services modern Wales expects and have been promised, will be fully delivered.'

However, the much awaited Invitation to Tender (ITT) remains a closed document which no one outside of the Welsh Government, the DfT and the four bidders have so far been allowed to see. This is despite requests under the Freedom of Information Act. The reasons for not disclosing the detail of the tender are based on confidentiality and sensitive information in a competitive exercise. However, such secrecy fosters the feeling that possibly the anticipated service levels fall short of expectations, particularly with

regard to the Marches Line service which operates mostly in England. Some hope of a greater involvement in our future train services is given by communication received from both Ken Skates at Cardiff and Paul Maynard, Minister for Railways at the DfT. Paul Maynard states in his letter to the Marches Rail Users Alliance.

'The Department has worked closely with the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to reach agreement on the respective responsibilities during this procurement, especially in regard to framing the specification as it relates to services and stations in England. The Department expects to make this agreement publicly available on its website in the near future.

In addition to this, it is proposed that a meeting is held, jointly hosted by the Department's officials and Welsh Government/Transport for Wales and to which all the local authorities and user groups with an interest in cross border services will be invited. The intention of the meeting would be:

To explain the agreement reached between the two governments;

To explain the specification and how the procurement process works;

To outline the plans for how the franchise will be managed in life;

To discuss with yourselves (MRUA) and other groups how stakeholder engagement is best arranged in future, replacing the existing Cross Border Forum.'

We at the MRUA wait with baited breath!! Rail & Bus for Herefordshire is a lead member of the MRUA to which I am chairman. At least both governments give some recognition to the fact that rail user groups in the Borders exist and that the cross border issue is of importance. What will transpire as a result of the meeting is far less clear, but at least we have been promised an invitation!

For a full report on the way the Welsh Government sees the future of rail services go to;

<http://gov.wales/transport-for-wales/procurement/rail-services-for-the-future>

A New Operator on our Birmingham Service

The Department of Transport announced its decision on the new West Midlands franchise in September. The successful bidder was the Dutch railway company Abellio who have teamed with a Japanese consortium to secure the bid. The new company, named West Midlands Railway, will take over operation from the beginning of January 2018. Do not expect anything drastic to happen overnight. It takes quite a while for a new rail company to change things to their way of working etc. However, they have given us an insight into the new livery as displayed at Stourbridge Junction station on a Class 172 diesel multiple unit.



The operational and management structure of the new company has yet to be announced. For Rail & Bus this means establishing new contacts with the company in order to emphasise that Herefordshire has a voice and expects a decent train service based on a distinct improvement from that previously operated by London Midland. In particular the two issues of overcrowding and cancellations, with trains being turned at Malvern, remain two serious defects of the Birmingham service. With their eyes on the lucrative West

Midlands suburban and London services we must not let West Midlands Trains forget that Hereford, Ledbury and Colwall exist and have a loud voice. In this respect we are looking for assistance in this liaison role, especially in the Ledbury and Colwall. The formation of a sub-group for this area is a distinct possibility. Do please consider active assistance to the RBfH committee. I would be very pleased to hear from you.

Keeping an Eye on the Great Western Franchise

In addition to a new operator on the Birmingham service, RBfH needs to keep an eye on developments in the Great Western Franchise, which is due for renewal in 2019. Committee member Michael Sullivan has been in contact with John Ellis, Chairman of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, our rail user neighbours. Such contact stems from concern that the Worcestershire County Council Rail Strategy Report fails to mention the Hereford end of the line in the development of London services.

RBfH made strong representation on this omission in the consultation to the report but at the same time noticed that in the CLPG submission there was also little reference to Hereford. John Ellis, in communication with Michael Sullivan, sought to reassure us that the CLPG actively supports the service through to Hereford and its development as part of the franchise.

It is important that liaison with the CLPG is strengthened in order to present a coherent and cooperative view to both government and train operator that the future of the through Hereford - London service via the Cotswold Line is vital. This is especially the case for not only Hereford but also Ledbury which is to experience an unprecedented level of growth over the next twenty years. Good communication with both London and Birmingham are vital to the economic and social development of this eastern part of Herefordshire.

Michael Sullivan reports that the new Great Western trains have been seen at Hereford. They have been seen all over the Great Western Railway system undertaking clearance tests. Such visits do not necessarily mean we shall see them on the London service as it is operational practice to clear them for use on most routes in the advent of diversions through engineering works.

Michael and your chairman will be keeping a watching brief on developments at the same time as strengthening liaison with the CLPG.

From the Buses Sub Group

Will Frecknall, our committee member who now heads this group, reports:

Herefordshire Council implemented another round of cuts to bus services in September. These were largely limited to the ‘thinning’ of daytime non-core services and were not as draconian as some feared. Although there was no pre-consultation, the Council did respond to some cases of hardship. For example, all 33 services between Ross and Gloucester now run via Mitcheldean, excluding those living along the A40 between The Lea and Huntley. However school children are now covered by a new 746 service which runs once daily in each direction.

RBfH has recently had discussions with Herefordshire Council officers over the delivery of the proposed Bus Hub that will be located adjacent to Hereford railway station. We are assured that these plans will progress once the Link Road is opened this autumn. We will maintain a dialogue with the Council and press for a state of the art facility. However temporary arrangements will remain in place for some time yet.

Some bus users will have noticed the introduction of real-time bus displays at principal bus stops. We are not clear on the full capability of these displays, which currently seems limited. We are making enquiries and will report further on this and the extent of their distribution in due course.

The Bus Group would welcome additional members located in Hereford and the Market Towns. We need to build a case for retention of non-core bus services. Community representation is a vital part of this campaign.

The Return of First Bus

From the beginning of September, FirstWorcester took over a network of country services in eastern Herefordshire centred on Ledbury and Bromyard. This company, which operates from Worcester garage, was successful in securing a batch of Herefordshire Council contracts. FirstBus pulled out of Hereford over two years ago when it closed Hereford Garage. It now returns to the county as FirstWorcester and runs the following services:

405 Cradley - Hereford (Wed only) taken from Astons Coaches
417 Ledbury - Worcester via Cradley (daily) taken from Astons Coaches
482 Bromyard - Leominster (Fri only) taken from DRMBus
672/674 Bromyard - Ledbury (Sch/Wed and Fri) taken from DRMBus
675/676 Ledbury - Malvern via Wellington Heath (daily) taken from Astons Coaches.

Journeys on the 400 (Bromyard town service) and 600 (Ledbury town service) are integrated into the above as is a school contract journeys to/from Much Marcle school.



Midland Red S14 at Ledbury Market House on a service to Cradley

The 417 service in particular is interesting. The service was first introduced by the Birmingham Midland Motor Omnibus Company (BMMO) in 1925. This company was to become the famous Midland Red which itself was a predecessor to First Group. In 1929 the Worcester-Ledbury service was extended to Hereford via Tarrington and Bartestree. In 1961 the 417 was shortened back to Worcester-Ledbury only and Ledbury-Hereford was replaced by an extension of the Great Malvern-Ledbury service (which First

Worcester also now run). So watch out DRMBus, history might repeat itself on the Ledbury-Hereford route!

Midland Red West took over the operation of the 417 in 1981 and it was cut back to run Worcester and Cradley only. In the 1990's it was again extended to run Ledbury-Worcester, this time under contract to Herefordshire Council. For some years it was run by Martin Perry's Bromyard Omnibus Company only to be regained by First Midland Red a few years later. In 2009, Astons Coaches of Worcester gained the contract and operated it up until September of this year.

I & S Coaches

In the west of the county, despite help with publicity from RBfH and a small core of regular passengers, I & S Coaches could not sustain commercially their once a week shopping service from St Weonards to Abergavenny via Skenfrith. The service ceased at the end of September. Ian and Sue Phillips are well known to their passengers and RBfH applauds their bold attempts to start and sustain new rural bus services. We hope they will continue to have a go on other routes in their area which it is felt could benefit from a well run and friendly country bus services. RBfH wish to thank them for all the hard work they put into rural public transport.

The Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group

RBfH is a leading member of this group which also comprises the Hereford Transport Alliance. The Group was formed from the realisation that a proposed Herefordshire relief road is not the total solution to Hereford's transport problems. A good, effective and efficient public transport system, plus safe cycle and pedestrian ways are vital if Herefordshire Council is to attain its vision and implement policies for a future low carbon transport system for the city. With this in mind the Group is aware that work on a sustainable internal city wide transport system needs to be started NOW whilst a bypass/relief road is still debated. Therefore, work has begun, with outside professional help, on the design of an electric bus network for the city and the possibility for a light tram route. Early days yet but RBfH is at the forefront of not only helping sustain our current services but ensuring exciting development projects are given a fair hearing. Watch this space.

High Speed 2

Some of our members are less than complimentary about this HS2 business and the vast amount of money involved that could be better spent on upgrading and developing our existing network. In particular they are keen to point out that Britain is degenerating into a two tier railway system...the swish long distance (if there is such a thing as a long distance in our small country) inter city network and the rapidly down at heel, creaking rest. The fringe railway as someone called it. We in Herefordshire see this fringe railway in action, or rather inaction, almost every day with signal and train failures, cancellations, overcrowding etc. It is not the prerogative of any one company. It is indigenous in Arriva Trains Wales, London Midland and Great Western, symptomatic of a general malaise that the fringe railway can struggle on whilst the money is channelled into new super fast trains and London area improvements. One of our members goes even further with contrasting images.



HS2 for the rich



And for the rest of us

Railfuture and the Prospects for electrification on Britain's Railways

The October issue of Railwatch carries an article by Chris Austin on the recent Government announcement of abandonment of certain electrification schemes. It is relevant to the chaotic and confused state our railway system is in. He states in a paragraph headed Confusion and Incoherence:

'The Government announcement leaves the railways in confusion. The

Midland Main Line (north of Kettering), Cardiff -Swansea and Oxenholme - Windermere schemes are cancelled. The transport secretary has warned that Trans Pennine is 'unlikely' but there is no information on Cardiff Valleys. We are left with an incoherent network with gaps like Didcot-Oxford and Manchester-Leeds imposing inefficiencies in rolling stock deployment and reducing the value of investment already undertaken.

There has been a strong political reaction in the areas denied electric services. Perhaps some changes may be announced later in the year, but the picture remains confused.

Railfuture will revise its policy to reflect the new reality, and to help campaigners. We will continue to highlight the reasons for the delays and the implications of the Government decision.'

The strong political reaction has certainly manifested itself in the North of England and South Wales. The incoming chair of the transport select committee said the announcement was bad news for passengers and '*raised serious questions about the government's willingness to invest in the long term future of our railways and the decarbonisation of transport*'. Lianna Etkind of the Campaign for Better Transport said '*It's deeply concerning that when so much money is being poured into concreting over the countryside, rail expansion is in doubt*'

Raifuture can be accessed at: www.raifuture.org.uk

Our honorary President, Professor John Whitelegg of the Stockholm Environment Institute, is far blunter by calling the whole fiasco of franchising and government transport policy a veritable '*dog's dinner*'!

In similar vein the article (page 11) was sent to me by 'anonymous' in the rail industry and gives a further insight into how the franchise system was arrived at. Not a bit of wonder the Commons Select Committee issued a strong criticism of the system with the words ***NO LONGER FIT FOR PURPOSE***.

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.

The Competition Economy

Once there was one big problem with the rail industry. It could not spend what the Government said it could spend. New ideas were not being progressed, the organisations were ‘Gripped’ with inertia. The political thinking was that those internal rail processes prevented swift development. Jobs were not getting done, costs were rising and there was no desire to embrace innovation. The Government was getting the blame.

Therefore the Government ordered a shake-up of the rail industry. There could be a clear out of all those people who were not doing the jobs and were causing costs to rise. A slim line organisation formed of many disparate parts would allow those additional checks and balances that were required. A reorganisation would be good for morale. Decisions could be made. Those staff displaced would be able to find employment as consultants. One problem – who makes the decisions.

Where were all those decision makers hiding? The Department for Transport panicked just in case they were called to account. After all, they were there to protect the minister and to work out his and their policies not to tell others to do things. Backsides needed to be padded. Decisions had to be made elsewhere. The solution, as always, would be to set up a quango or several if the opportunity arose. Give the Quango a budget and give it the power to make decisions. Everyone would be protected especially if plenty of consultation took place. Spend a few quid with the academics and arrive at a ranking scheme. With two or more quangos, even better – they can consult each other just to make sure everyone has their say. One problem – who protects the Quango?

The quango decides that in order to assure accountability it will insist upon a competition for its scarce resources. It can then also acquire the information it lacks on those bright ideas that are out there somewhere. One problem – no one has the expertise within to make judgements on them ‘without’. Ideal solution found – appoint several of those consultants to judge the submissions.

But yet another problem - it appears that the consultants ‘play safe’. Good grief. They were worried about implementing new ideas when they were at the heart of the rail industry and now worried about upsetting the new gravy train. Stick to tried and tested ideas. Much better – one engine in steam, we can all understand that.

Anyway, with much trumpeting the results of the competition are announced. Time for another awards ceremony, after all there is now money left in the budget in order to pay for one. Cheers Anonymous

The Camber Railway - Falklands Islands

Whilst on the railway subject, something a little lighter sent to me by Fred Clarke, the Mayor of Bromyard and an ex Falklands Islands policeman who was there when the Argentinian's invaded.

'In 1915 the Admiralty set up a wireless station at the west end of Stanley Harbour which was powered by coal fired generators. The Royal Navy colliers were to deliver the coal to the deep water jetty at the eastern end of the harbour.

A 2ft gauge single track was run from the jetty to the 'power house' at the wireless station, a distance of three and a half miles. There were two Kerr Stuart 'Wren' class engines and six assorted wagons used to transport workers and the cargo of coal from the bunkers to the power house as required.

The journey from east to west was done under power and used part of the valuable coal that was meant for power generation. To save coal on the return trip, sails were hoisted. A strong prevailing wind drove the empty wagons back to the stockpile of coal. Being a naval bastion, the crew used a standard sail rig, which was the standard balanced lug and lug sails. This mode of sail driven railway ran until the 1920's when the introduction of oil powered generators made the need for coal redundant.'



Interestingly a 'Wren' class locomotive named 'Peter Pan' is at the Alan Keefe Ltd locomotive works at the Lea, Ross-on-Wye.

Website Development

The site can be accessed by typing in: www.rbfb.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 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 hopefully will see an increase in our membership amongst the younger generation. As with all volunteer organisations it is important to look to the future.

In the meantime a huge thank you to everyone for the encouragement you have sent the committee in various emails and comments

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 via the post or electronically via the editor's address or 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.

Changes at your Committee

Our stalwart Les Lumsdon is taking a bit of a back seat with his growing portfolio of work for the Heart of Wales Line and now with the Shropshire Bus Users group. He remains on our committee and we continue to welcome his valuable input. Will Frecknall has taken on the role of Buses Sub-Group

leader as well as getting involved with me in rail franchises.

Peter Gwatkin, our new Treasurer is now well in post and has taken on the membership lists and acceptance of payments. Subscriptions are due on 1st February 2018 so please make a note to send your cheques or hand your cash to Peter Gwatkin at 60 Broomy Hill, Hereford, HR4 0LQ.

We need more people on the committee. If there are any other members out there who feel they can help please let a member of the committee know. One casualty has been lack of time to organise open meetings for the Spring. A volunteer to help me manage this role would be most welcome. I already have a few interesting speakers lined up but whether I will have time to arrange meetings is a different matter.

A further role is to help with educational marketing as explained in the website section on page 13.

The RBfH Committee

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Committee Members:

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Naomi Bell; Andrew Pearson

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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*

From the Archives



The seal of the Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway, incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1846. The railway reached Hereford Barrs Court in 1853. It became the focus of a legal wrangle between the London & North Western Railway and the Great Western Railway, both of whom sought to acquire it. Agreement was reached with the creation of a Joint Line with its own management. It retained the title of GWR and LMS Joint Line until nationalisation in 1948.

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

Membership Application Form

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

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:

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, HR40LQ email: pmgaccountancy@gmail.com