

Rail & Bus for Herefordshire

Summer 2022 Newsletter



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From the Editor

Transport, like a lot else, appears to be in a state of chaotic change. We have a Department for Transport and its ministers still clinging onto the premise of new roads being the way forward. We have a bus industry trying to cope with conflicting messages from government as to its future role in an invisible national transport policy. We have the creation of Great British Railways and the government's dilemma as to what to do with it. Sadly, we have the passenger who perhaps is the most confused of all.

In this edition we brush upon a few items related to such confusion as it affects Herefordshire. But equally we offer some insight as to how the move towards localism, in the light of 'centric confusion' is perhaps the way forward, especially for the forgotten rural areas of our country.

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Herefordshire is a beautiful rural county. Help us make the most of its unspoilt nature by encouraging the development of bus and train services instead of putting more traffic on our rural roads.

Spread the word. Get a friend, colleague, family member to join Rail and Bus for Herefordshire.

Details on Back page of this newsletter.

Minutes of Rail and Bus for Herefordshire AGM 26 April 2022

Present Will Frecknall Chairman, Andrew Pearson Secretary and 15 members.

Apologies for Absence

John Thorne, Andy Scott, Victoria Wegg-Prosser, Margret Lewis, Ian and Jenny Mackie, Pat Strauss, David Fowler, Mike Hughes, John Cutcliffe and Sue Warren.

Minutes of the AGM held on 26 October 2021 were agreed as a true record.

Chairman's Report - Bus

The Chairman reported that Herefordshire Council's 'Bus It' initiative giving free weekend travel to all within Herefordshire was an excellent use of Government Covid Recovery money and had encouraged many non-bus users to try the bus and also enabled young people to travel from villages to town. Sunday services were also introduced on 13 routes and despite the lack of Council publicity some of these had been very successful. The scheme will run for 12 months until the end of August. Rail and Bus had taken up the gauntlet and produced leaflets extolling the services.

A significant loss was Stagecoach West's complete withdrawal of 132 Ledbury – Gloucester and the majority of 32 Ross – Gloucester. Both were commercial services and Stagecoach claimed they had been uneconomic for some time. Both were cross-border services and it was disappointing that Herefordshire had been unable to join with Gloucestershire who had started a service from Tillers Green (adjacent to the Herefordshire border) to Newent using Newent Community Transport and extend this service through to Ledbury.

To date six Hereford services had not returned to their pre-pandemic levels: Ledbury, Madley, Leominster, Bredwardine, Brecon and Worcester. Yeomans had surrendered many of their commercial Hereford city services at the end of December and these were replaced by Sergeants on a subsidised basis with reduced frequency.

Herefordshire's Bus Service Improvement Plan failed to win funding along with many other rural counties. The lion's share went to urban authorities.

The Stronger Towns Fund Electric Zipper service is still on track, with a detailed business plan produced by the City Council and RBfH being submitted to Government in April.

Herefordshire Council recently brought in David Ubaka to produce a transport strategy for Herefordshire. Bus travel will form a vital part of that strategy and we look forward to contributing, based on the 'Vision of Passenger Transport' document we produced last year.

Finally the recent hike in fuel prices is impacting the cost of running most cars. The Government reduction in fuel duty is a mere gesture. As fuel is a relatively small part of the cost of running a bus this ought to be prompting modal shift, but without an adequate bus service that shift cannot occur.

Chairman's Report - Rail

Transport for Wales still has some poor rolling stock on the Marches Line and numerous complaints of overcrowding had been received. There is a prospect of new stock next year. Some loco-hauled trains will run on the Cardiff – Manchester route from December this year.

West Midlands Trains is still suffering from cancellations due to a shortage of drivers but the situation is gradually improving. We wrote to Francis Thomas, Chief Executive, regarding passengers being left stranded by cancellations or stopping short. We received assurances that no-one would not reach their destination at the end of the day. Michael Sullivan and the Chairman had had a virtual meeting with Jesse Norman MP on this topic in December and were quietly pleased that he too had been a victim of a WMT cancellation!

GWR Nothing to report.

Gareth Davies has led on the delivery of a notice board at Ledbury Station through the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, a Government Fund administered by WMT. We have now signed up to a Community Stations Partnership embracing Ledbury and Colwall stations. This will attract further funding through the same mechanism for station improvements and these could include us taking on the now disused station cabin at Ledbury.

There has been a positive rail freight development. Pontrilas Sawmills has trialled the movement of logs from Newton Abbot.

Election of Committee

There being no other nominations the following were re-elected en-bloc: Will Frecknall, Andrew Pearson, Gareth Davies, Les Lumsdon, Michael Sullivan, Philip Bauer, John Eden and John Thorne.

There being no further business the meeting proceeded to the talk by Councillor John Harrington.

Talk by Councillor John Harrington to RBfH AGM

Councillor John Harrington, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport, gave an interesting talk on the Council's plans for transport in Herefordshire.

Their priority was to get more people walking, cycling and using public transport. They would like a second river crossing but he stressed that it would not be a by-pass infilled with houses causing more congestion but a crossing to the East. The current bridge is now 60 years old and has reached its life span. Plans for the Eastern bridge would be available for comment by mid-summer 2022.

Baroness De Vere, Under Secretary of State at the Department of Transport has stated that she wants more roads built in future despite issues relating to increased carbon emissions. Councillor Harrington has asked Hereford MP Jesse Norman to advise her that is not what the current administration in Herefordshire wants.

A draft case has been proposed for the reinstatement of a station at Pontrilas. This is being considered in light of cross border interest.

Herefordshire Council were very disappointed not to receive any money from The Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan. Across England councils had bid a total of £10bn and the original figure on offer was £3bn but because of Covid support that had reduced to just over £1bn. Almost half the funding allocated went to 5 city areas and many rural shire counties failed to attract any funding but the Government has said there may be more money to come in the Autumn for those who failed in April. The county is currently spending £800,000pa on bus subsidies and this will rise to £1.5 million next year.

In the meantime £150m of Bus Recovery Grant is being provided by Government to maintain service levels until 1 October 2022 and Herefordshire will work with operators to maintain a sustainable network. Operators are also able to claim Bus Service Operators Grant to help them recover some of their fuel costs. The Council has also initiated a campaign to encourage post Covid recovery through BUS IT , free travel on buses at weekends.

Councillor Harrington said he was pleased with the success of Sargeants under their new ownership and announced that there would be a design for the new Transport Hub at Hereford by the end of 2022 incorporating a separate entry and exit design.

The proposal to extend the Cornish granite from Widemarsh St to High Town had been scrapped and instead the existing surface would be repaired.

Will Frecknall thanked Councillor Harrington for attending and giving us the present position on transport in Herefordshire.

A New Community Station Partnership for Ledbury & Colwall

What is a Community Station Partnership? It is about people, communities, innovation and railways. The objectives of Community Station Partnerships are:

- ◆ To encourage people to connect with the railways and adopt local railway stations.
- ◆ To work with neighbours, friends, local businesses and the Train Operating Company to develop their stations as community assets.
- ◆ To help develop 'reasons to travel' and increase train usage with local promotions and publicity.
- ◆ To bring people together to enhance their neighbourhoods and make new friends.
- ◆ To enhance the passenger experience by making the station more welcoming with a sense of localism and community.

The above is why the user group Rail & Bus for Herefordshire has joined forces with West Midlands Railway to

establish and develop a CSP for Ledbury and Colwall. As a start, a small steering group has been formed and a number of interesting and exciting community projects identified. These include:

- A bus and train times booklet for Ledbury which has already been produced.
- Developing the close liaison with Ledbury in Bloom for tending, re-stocking and extending the planters at Ledbury station.
- Developing a close liaison with Colwall Parish Council to assist in the tending of the station borders and the station environment.
- The use of the vacant ticket office cabin at Ledbury Station as a community and sustainable transport gallery.
- A schools art competition with railway themes for both Ledbury and Colwall.
- Production of a book *History of Colwall Station* book in partnership with Colwall Village Society.
- Cycle hire at both stations.
- The possibilities for a link bus from Ledbury Station to the Big Apple Cider Festival at Putley and Much Marcle in the Autumn.

There is also the exciting prospect, in conjunction with the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership, of producing a book of essays on the line which will include the history of the Worcester-Hereford Line, the scenery and geology, the flora and fauna, the origins of placenames, myth, legend, folklore and more. Such a book will be aimed at increasing an awareness of the attractiveness and history of the line and this lovely area it serves. It will be a vehicle for encouraging people to use the train to experience a journey through and *Beyond the Hills*.

All this needs support, not just from the railway company and user group but also from the communities that the railway serves. Such support can manifest itself in devoted volunteer work together with financial assistance from local authorities and local businesses.

We hope you will agree that at a time of addressing climate change and the need to reduce carbon emissions we need to encourage more use of sustainable transport services such as the train and bus. Of equal importance is the need to sustain our communities in these quickly changing economic times, to develop more localism and build on the natural and community assets that we have. The railway forms a vital part of these needs.

We hope you will join us as supporters, volunteers and partners in the development of this new Community Station Partnership.



Transport for Wales launch project to encourage more sustainable travel

Transport for Wales (TfW) has launched the new ‘Wales on Rails’ project encouraging more people to travel around Wales by rail. The new project is jointly funded by TfW’s Community Rail Partnerships and Visit Wales to encourage people to use more sustainable modes of travel.

The new initiative promotes the use of public transport as a way of travelling sustainably around Wales. Passengers can use the Wales on Rails website to plan their trip around Wales and choose from various tourist attractions.

Minister of the Economy, Vaughan Gething spoke on the benefits of the new initiative from TfW. Mr Gething said: *“This is an excellent partnership which encourages safe, sustainable, and scenic adventures around Wales. [The*

initiative] showcases the wealth of experiences that are accessible by public transport. This new initiative makes it easier for people to plan their trips – while also using sustainable modes of transport.”

The new sustainable travel project is set to be managed by the Great Little Trains of Wales partnership. Great Little Trains of Wales is a partnership which promotes the 12 heritage railways in Wales and is supported by five Community Rail Partnerships.

James Price, TfW CEO commented on the social and economic benefits the initiative will bring. Mr Price said: *“Wales on Rails brings together our Wales and Borders rail network [and] 12 heritage and steam railways. It offers people the chance to use this sustainable transport network to travel around the country to a range of tourist attractions. It’s not only a safe and sustainable way to travel around Wales but the journeys themselves are a major part of the attraction. Some of our rail routes are the most scenic in the world. This project is another example of the importance of our Community Rail Partnerships at TfW. The project shows how they are working collaboratively to bring social and economic benefits to the communities we serve.”*

RBfH comments that we want such an initiative to include the Welsh Marches, the Borders which are a part of the TfW network and responsibility. A first positive step would be the establishment of a Marches Community Rail Partnership. The Marches Line has much to offer, superb scenery and a line that includes and connects the historic towns and communities of Hereford, Leominster, Ludlow, Craven Arms and Church Stretton.

West Midlands Railway Provides an Update on Recovery

The Hereford - Birmingham service is operated by Worcester depot, part of that grouping of services called the Snow Hill Lines. It has been badly affected by the pandemic, especially with regard to the interruption in driver training leading to a chronic shortage. The result has been an abnormally large amount of train cancellations. In this article West Midland Railway gives us an insight as to how recovery is progressing.

With the first quarter of 2022 behind us now, we’ve taken the opportunity to pause and take stock of how the latest phase of the pandemic response is affecting our daily operation, patronage on our services and progress with our recovery plan.

There are many reasons to be positive and optimistic about the short to medium term future for the route with passenger numbers recovering largely in line with predictions and even exceeding industry expectations at times, meaning there is a strong future for the line as a key transport corridor for the region.

The latest data suggests that approximately three quarters of pre-pandemic customer demand had returned by the last week of March, although with new commuting patterns this has spread to see significant changes to the traditionally busiest peak times.

We are seeing stronger recovery in leisure as opposed to business-related travel, including healthy weekend demand where the railway has traditionally offered scaled back timetables vs weekdays. This is a key focus for our timetable strategy team, who are looking for ways to open up new capacity and journey opportunities on the route, taking account of the changing travel patterns.

Due to the complexity and interwoven nature of the railway network, we cannot change a timetable unilaterally, even on an apparently ‘closed’ route such as the Snow Hill Lines. This is because we share track paths and access to key stations with other operators such as Great Western Railway in Worcester, as well as Chiltern Railways & CrossCountry through the Birmingham core.

Along with freight trains, these services are knitted together between our own, on their journey through the region. As such, our ability to adapt and change our timetable can be limited by the availability of paths, which in turn could be determined by the further availability of paths for CrossCountry trains as far away as Newcastle, Chiltern Railways trains where they share tracks with tube trains in north London or even a freight train being loaded at an east coast seaport.

We are working collaboratively with the other train operators on the route, as well as Transport for West Midlands and other key stakeholders to design our post-pandemic timetables. We are hoping to start unlocking some of these developments, as our team numbers become more stable again, across the next planned industry wide timetable recasts in May and December this year, and ahead in May 2023.

On a less positive note, in the short term we are seeing covid infection numbers rise again within our workforce. While statutory isolation rules have been removed, official health guidance still states people should avoid mixing in

groups or attending busy workplaces if they have symptoms of respiratory infection or indeed test positive for Covid-19.

Since the end of January when the impact of the Omicron variant had apparently waned, we had a period of relative stability with infection levels staying relatively low and manageable across our teams. However, just two months on the numbers of train drivers now absent due to Covid-19 has trebled again throughout March. With growing numbers of key operational colleagues including drivers, conductors and controllers absent from work, for on average of a week at a time, it is starting to impact our ability to deliver the service day-to-day.

It is worth noting though that thanks to the progress our teams have made catching up with delayed training and fleet maintenance, the real terms impact of the increased workforce absence levels is not yet as great as it was late last year when we had similar numbers of colleagues unable to attend work. As with all the previous phases of the pandemic, we just don't know for certain how it will play out in the medium term. However, we will continue to closely monitor and mitigate for any impacts that we can as we move forward into the late spring and early summer months.

Passenger Centric - The New Buzz Words

The editor observes locally some simple shortcomings in being passenger centric and exactly what do these words really mean!

At the end of May I was at Ledbury station to meet a colleague off the 1059 arrival from Birmingham to Hereford. The monitor showed trains as on time. The 1058 to Birmingham arrived and was held awaiting the Hereford train. The train to Birmingham was held for some ten minutes and then departed. As it is single line between Ledbury and Malvern Wells, this meant the Hereford train was going to be late. About 10 passengers were waiting for this train. The monitor still showed it as on time and there was no station announcement. Apparently the delay was caused by the need to inspect the line between Worcester and Malvern Link after an incident had been reported.

The Hereford train duly arrived at approximately 11.30. It stopped at the signal box and received some instructions from the signalman. When it arrived at the platform passengers alighted. As the passengers for Hereford tried to get on they were told by passengers alighting that the train was terminating at Ledbury. There was still no announcement.

At this point most passengers were confused. One of those who alighted said there had been announcements on the train but they were difficult to interpret as the on-train announcement system was faulty and the messages were broken.

Passengers were now casting around looking for further information. The monitor showed the following trains for Hereford as being on time but was it to be trusted? Some passengers tried the white coloured help line. It was out of use.!

The reason for relating this incident at Ledbury is to emphasise the fact that for any incident, attention to detail and provision of information is important. Perhaps not just important but essential if the railways are to regain trust from the erstwhile train user.

At the present time the buzz words in railway and professional transport circles are 'passenger centric'. Giles Fearnley, senior consultant with Tracsis Transport Constancy recently highlighted the need and importance of the bus industry to become passenger centric. With 50-years' experience in the bus and rail industry he is well placed to comment on changes that must take place in the industry. In his recent article for Transport Times, one of his key points is the need to realign the bus business towards the customer; in his words. *We mustn't allow the promise of funding to make us complacent; it must be used as a catalyst for enhancing customer experience further.*

If the bus industry grasps the nettle in respect of customer centric then what about the rail industry. In February 2022 Transport Focus published an important report entitled Transforming Rail Travel – What do Passengers Want. It says: *The result is essential reading for anyone who wants a better feel for a new customer-proposition for rail and identifies the key themes and potential areas of focus for Great British Railways to consider.* One of these themes is building and growing passenger confidence and use. The report goes on to say: *Accurate timely information about trains in general and specifically about delays is one of passengers' top priorities.*

After years where the principal alignment of both bus and rail operators has been the profit motive the light may well be dawning that the passenger really matters. The bus industry already has first line ambassadors in the bus industry and the larger firms at least are now realising this as an asset. Perhaps the current post pandemic shortage of drivers is instrumental in promoting their worth and potential.

At the end of the nervous civil servant's brief summary Thatcher exclaimed: "Hackney? Hackney! There are no Conservative voters. Who wants to go to Hackney?" I could almost hear Lady Bracknell when I read those words. A fit of pique that demolished a decade of studies, reports and Parliamentary committee sittings. The decision was made. The rest is history.

Another interesting revelation in the book is the regeneration of the old East India docks area into Docklands, master minded by two American developers named Reichman, resulting in the 50- storey office tower One Canada Square (architect Norman Foster further enhanced the area's prestige with a cathedral like portal to its Jubilee Line station). Wholly underestimating public transport links to this new business centre, the brothers conjured up the Docklands Light Railway, a precarious high- level transit system featuring two-carriage driverless trains.

THE CROSSRAIL STORY is a gripping history, well told, of an epic engineering achievement which should be on every rail enthusiast's bookshelf. The colour plates - especially record shots of the tunnelling - are an added bonus. The travelling public has clearly taken the Elizabeth Line to its heart, with queues forming at 4.00am to be the first passengers through the turnstiles on the opening day. Let Christian Wolmar have the final word. "This is game-changing in the same way that the Metropolitan Line was in 1863; its the difference between the M1 and a dual carriageway."

Nick Jones

Our Honorary President Professor John Whitelegg provides just one wry but accurate comment: *Why was Liverpool told it cannot have a new tram system. Why is John Lennon Airport not rail connected. There is no justification for billions of new rail stuff in London and Liverpool is told 'nothing for you'. Levelling up???*

Buses Still in the Doldrums

Campaign for Better Transport research has revealed that more than one in four bus services in England (27 per cent) have been lost in the last decade, with the pandemic having a devastating effect. The transport charity is calling for a national, Government-led campaign to encourage people back on board and turn around the fortune of buses.

Campaign for Better Transport's research shows that more than a quarter (27 per cent) of bus services in England (as measured by vehicle miles) have vanished in the last decade.

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive of Campaign for Better Transport, said: *"Buses are relied upon by millions of people and should play a central role in a green transport future, but they have been struggling for some time, and the pandemic has made things much worse. The Government must recognise the need for a national campaign to attract passengers back to public transport."*

Given the strong Government messaging in the early part of the pandemic to avoid public transport, the charity believes that there is a segment of the public that will not return until the government overtly tells them it is safe to do so. The Government campaign should be accompanied by fare incentives and offers to encourage people back on board.

The charity contrasted last week's 5p cut in fuel duty in the UK with moves to cut public transport fares in countries such as New Zealand and Germany.

Mr Tuohy added: "Last week's Spring Statement included a tax break for car drivers with a 5p cut in fuel duty, but nothing for public transport users, despite fares having risen at a far higher rate than fuel. The Government says it wants people to use public transport more and drive less, but its failure to provide any financial incentives for bus users makes a mockery of its levelling up and carbon reduction ambitions."

At the present bus services in Herefordshire appear static, following the surprise drastic withdrawal of the daily 132 Ledbury - Gloucester service and the 32 Ross-on-Wye - Gloucester services earlier this year. However the termination of government covid support grant in October and the end of Herefordshire Council's support for a number of Sunday services as part of the weekend free bus fares scheme may well impact on this temporary stability.

With Herefordshire having lost out on the Bus Back Better money under the government's Bus Service Improvement Plans scheme we wait with some trepidation as to the future of our county bus services.

But as for the rail industry. What a great start for what is called Great British Railway. Announcements that now the government has taken control, cost savings are required and these will be made by reduced staff levels. The response was expected *Railway workers vote overwhelmingly in favour of national strike. RMT workers at Network Rail and 15 operators back industrial action in coming weeks.*

Transport Focus in its report is correct when it says: *We recognise that the rail industry is considering how it uses front-line staff in future, but any changes to staff deployment must reflect the needs of the end user.* But is this ever likely to take place with Great British Railways and the big hand of government budget squeezing.

The squeeze has already begun, considerable staff reductions in Network Rail who look after the infrastructure, Train companies told to reduce staff costs hence potential booking office closures forcing everybody on line. Train companies told that pocket timetables and train timetable posters at stations should be abandoned as they are too costly to sustain.

I wonder how many of those passengers wandering around at Ledbury station the other day looking for information, staff or even a crystal ball to tell them what is happening when their train has been terminating will use the railways again.

Elizabeth Line is ‘a gamechanger’

Whilst the national network appears to be falling into chaos, RbFH member Nick Jones has a look at a multi-billion boost for London in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Year detailed in a new book.

THE timing of transport writer Christian Wolmar's latest book THE CROSSRAIL STORY (published by Head of Zeus) could hardly have been better. An epic engineering achievement which eclipses the absurd HS2 vanity project. The gift of a grand opening in The Queen's Jubilee year, with the Monarch's name on the side of every one of the Bombardier r-built Type 345 units, which will make the 73 mile west-to-east journey across and beneath the capital, from Reading to Shenfield. Ten new stations and a further 31 upgraded. When fully operational next May the Elizabeth Line is predicted to carry 200 million passengers annually.

Wolmar doesn't nail precisely when the idea of a cross-London underground route was first muted. London Transport's legendary Commercial Manager Frank Pick certainly proposed it as far back as 1919. And in 1945 it came up again as a potential post-war redevelopment project. Backed by London Mayors Ken Livingstone and Sadiq Khan, it finally achieved Parliamentary approval in 2008 (Wolmar himself twice stood in the Mayoral elections). According to the author (who is good on boardroom gossip) the date of December 9th 2018 had even been inked into the Royal diary for the line's inaugural ribbon-cutting. The jury is still out on the final cost, but once Transport for London's (TfL) bean counters complete their sums next May, it's likely to be north of £19 billion.

Eight state-of-the-art mechanical boring machines were used for the sections beneath central London, removing 6 million tonnes. Much of the line's excavated soil was used to create a wetland bird reserve in Essex. The book says Tottenham Court Road was the navigators' biggest headache, often involving tolerances of less than a metre. In the 1950s I worked as a tunnelling surveyor on a sewer under London. That was when gangs of mining navvies (Irish to a man) hacked out the soil by hand using short-handled mattocks, loaded the spoil into small-narrow-gauge trucks and secured the excavated holes with 50cm pre-cast concrete segments ('rings'). To advance 2m in one shift was good going. Chalk was easy; running gravel was a nightmare. For Crossrail German-built machines were used – all christened with girls' names. Ellie holds the Crossrail record, with a 72m 'drive' in a single shift. At its peak, Crossrail was Europe's largest engineering project, with 14,000 employed.

Where TfL's showcase Elizabeth Line certainly surpasses the Jubilee line is in the new stations' interiors, cleverly tied together by using parts drawn from a 'design catalogue' of fittings, commissioned from Grimshaw Associates (currently overseeing the remodelling of the Euston terminus). For my money, Weston + Williamson's elegantly spacious station beneath Brunel's Paddington terminus takes the biscuit.

Who wants to go to Hackney?

In the chapter entitled 'Megaprojects and Mega-business' the author lays into the pseudo-science of cost-benefit analysis (describing it as "more art than science"), the litmus paper used by all government departments and quangos to vet megaprojects. In the late 1980s two lead contenders for a new cross-London line were emerging: a north-south line from Chelsea to Hackney and the west-east route which would eventually become Crossrail. DoT mandarins had done their homework but sat on the fence. So a middle ranking official was despatched to Downing Street to present the two cases to Margaret Thatcher, who was accompanied by her obsequious Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson.

RBfH Supports the X3

Following on from the sorry saga of the 132 and 32 services, the X3 Hereford-Abergavenny-Pontypool service is considered a possibility as a bus service that would come under threat. Pre-pandemic the X3 ran through to Cardiff, but has been progressively cut back until it became just a local Hereford - Abergavenny service. Following outcry from the Abergavenny population the service to Pontypool was reinstated.

Enjoy a Ride out on the X3 Hereford - Abergavenny - Pontypool



**Sit back, relax and
enjoy the view**

April 2022

In order to raise its profile the RBfH team of Les Lumsdon, Andrew Pearson and Gareth Davies came together to produce an attractive leaflet illustrating the scenic and other attractions of the route. The three-fold brochure continued the timetable and other service information whilst the inside featured short articles about the towns and communities that the bus service links which comprises Hereford, Kilpeck, Ewyas Harold, Llanfihangel Crucorney and Abergavenny.



The brochure was distributed along the route as well as at tourist information centres in Hereford and Abergavenny. It was funded by RBfH and all the work in its compilation and distribution was undertaken voluntarily.

The brochure follows on the work of RBfH in promoting and raising the profile of local bus services. The previous publication 'Explore the Magic' brought to the public the joys of travelling by local bus in the Herefordshire countryside. Les Lumsdon's superb introduction summed it up.

In a county of farmsteads, orchards and characterful villages there's no better way to take in the views than on the bus, views across to the majestic Malvern Hills, or westwards to the high border ridges of Wales. So, why not take a trip out to one of Herefordshire's market towns this weekend... you'll see some of the finest half timbered settlements in the land, churches and castles amid rolling pastures and hills crowned by mixed woodlands.

A Bus & Train Times Book for Ledbury

During public meetings connected with the 132/32 bus service withdrawals a recurrent theme was that timetables about bus services was hard to get and that these bus services had not been adequately advertised. These were valid comments in connection with the fact that getting information on local bus services was getting harder to obtain unless you had the time and the wherewithal to plough through the internet.

It is true that simple timetable information about local bus services has got harder to obtain. The larger companies still produce some but getting information about small companies services is confusing if not downright impossible.

The much valued Herefordshire Bus Timetable Book was axed as a false economy measure some years ago. Its

demise has been lamented upon ever since and as such it was decided to experiment with the production of a Ledbury Bus & Train Times booklet. RBfH committee members took on the compilation and typesetting whilst the printing cost was born by the new Beyond the Hills Community Rail Partnership as part of promoting bus and rail information and integration.

The book was distributed widely around Ledbury Town and into the satellite villages. It has been exceptionally well received with much favourable comment. The report on the book is given below

Report on Ledbury Bus & Train Times Book

Background: The first project funded by the new Beyond the Hills Community Station Partnership has been the production of a local Ledbury Bus & Train Timetable book. This has been undertaken by Rail & Bus for Herefordshire (RBfH). It follows continuous comment from the public about the lack of published information on bus and train services for Ledbury. Herefordshire Council discontinued their county timetable book some years ago. The A5 size book amounted to 24 pages and was ready in early April. It was decided the book would be free of charge. It runs until 28 August when bus times are likely to change.

Distribution: 500 copies of the book were printed and quantities were distributed to the following:

Ledbury Town Council Office, Church Lane

Ledbury Heritage Centre, Church Lane

Ledbury WI Country Market, Burgage Hall

Feathers Hotel, Talbot Hotel, Prince of Wales public houses

Estate Agents

Ledbury Civic Society

Ledbury Poetry Festival

Two copies of the book were also sent to the Parish Clerks at Wellington Heath, Bosbury, Ashperton, Stretton Crandison, Pixley, Putley, Much Marcle, Colwall for information.

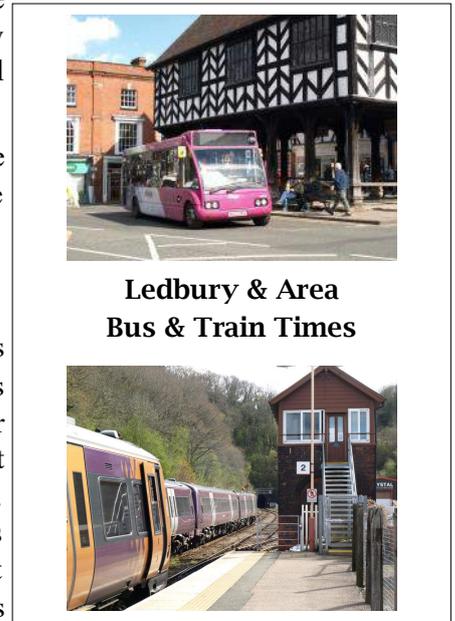
Publicity for the CSP and the book appeared in the magazine West of the Hills and the Ledbury Reporter. Posters were also attached to bus shelters in Ledbury. Sue Stone, RBfH member, also took a supply for personal distribution throughout the town. Gareth Calan Davies of RBfH (CSP Lead) handled email and telephone enquiries and copies collected from him in Ledbury.

A PDF copy of the book was posted on the RBfH website.

Monitoring: The book was well received and welcomed by all the above recipients. The Town Council, Heritage Centre and hotels have all had a second supply of the book. Comments from the public have been very encouraging, many highlighting the difficulties and time spent in getting information online from bus companies, especially local ones.

At present 100 copies of the book remain in stock. Both the Town Council and Herefordshire Council have been contacted with regard to covering the printing cost of future editions and it is hoped an agreement can be reached for continued production.

GCD 06-06-2022



News from Herefordshire Sustainable Transport Group (HSTG)

Great British Railways Transition Team

Earlier this year HSTG submitted a response to the call for evidence put out by the Great British Railways Transition Team. The reply is copied here and the original HSTG document can be found on the RBFH website.

I am writing to thank you for your valuable contribution to the call for evidence we held over the winter, to support the development of the long term strategy for rail (currently known as the Whole Industry Strategic Plan). I am very pleased to say that, this afternoon, we have published the report on the responses we received, and a summary version of it, on the Great British Railways Transition Team website.

The report summarises the insights and evidence of the 307 responses we received to the call for evidence. Decarbonisation, accessibility, the need for a strong customer service ethos and financial sustainability, along with the importance of integrating with other transport, were among the areas of focus identified by respondents. Analysis of the responses found that:

Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of those commenting on customer needs highlighted a need for customer expectations, both passenger and freight, to be better understood

Seventy-one per cent commenting on environmental sustainability suggested the railway could play a greater role in decarbonising the entire transport network

Over two thirds (69 per cent) of those commenting on the railway's role in levelling up and connectivity shared their views on the role rail can play in facilitating better access to employment, education, and social opportunities

The evidence respondents provided is being used to help develop the strategy, informing decisions on how the railway can improve and contribute to the country during the next three decades. Ultimately, the strategy will be used by Ministers to ensure the railway responds to public priorities.

Work on the strategy is well underway, and we will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders as it develops. The first version of the strategy will be ready towards the end of the year.

The full length and summary versions of the call for evidence report are available to read now at <https://gbrrt.co.uk/wisp>.

Heavy Rail in Herefordshire - The Future

HSTG has also recently produced a report on Heavy Rail in Herefordshire. The background to the document states:

There has been much talk of a new station at Pontrilas of late. However this is just one aspect of the future of the heavy rail network in Herefordshire and its potential development. In March 2014 the consultants W.S. Atkins completed a Marches Rail Study for the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. The recommendations are interesting as it ranked the Hereford-Birmingham the highest in a prioritised list of schemes. The report stated:

Hereford to Birmingham Route: It is probable that the single track sections of route between Hereford and Worcester, particularly that between Hereford and Great Malvern, will become a major obstacle to increasing capacity. Therefore, it is recommended that a study is undertaken of this section, to understand how it can best be used in the future, and what infrastructure may be required to facilitate this – in particular double tracking the route from Shelwick Junction to Great Malvern. This study should include liaison with the TOCs who currently use the route. This proposal was ranked highest in the prioritised list of schemes.

It is a sad indictment of how badly Herefordshire is treated by organisations such as West Midlands Rail Executive and Network Rail in so far as this important project has consistently slipped in the investment programme and has been relegated to post 2030 with no definite future date. The report can be found on the RBFH website rbfh.ork.uk.

From the Archives



In 1929, John Watts of Lydney formed Red & White Services Ltd to bring together the various bus companies he had formed or acquired. The company extended services throughout the Forest of Dean and Eastern Monmouthshire up to South Herefordshire. The photo (left) shows local Red & White services at Cantilupe Road, Ross-on-Wye. The photo (right) is a line up of half cab double deck vehicles at Abergavenny garage. Red and White favoured Bristol manufactured saloon vehicles whilst double deck vehicles were a mixture of Guy Motors and Bristol. (photos © GHAL Productions)



A 1960s photograph of Craven Arms. The station continues as the junction for the Heart of Wales Line through mid Wales to Swansea. It was a station of importance as seen in the substantial buildings, ridge and furrow awning and elaborate cast iron work. The BR sign indicating its status as a junction is intact and notice the GWR corrugated lamp hut besides it.

There was a large goods yard, just seen in the right distance, which handled considerable quantities of livestock, the town having being an important borders sheep market.

Behind the island platform on the left there was a locomotive depot

and carriage shed. In history, the main line was managed jointly by the Great Western and London & North Western Railways, whilst the Heart of Wales line was entirely London & North Western. (photo © GHAL Productions)

Rail and Bus for Herefordshire

Application for Membership

Name

Address

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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 2929075. Cheques may be posted to the Membership Secretary.

JWHF 30 December 2021

Rail and Bus for Herefordshire

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