

# **Rail & Bus for Herefordshire Newsletter Autumn 2016**



## **Latest News (see inside)**

**Local Bus Services decimated by 2017**

**Welsh Government makes strong bid to retain Marches line in new Wales & Borders Franchise**

**Network Rail (West Midlands) leave Hereford Line out of development investment plans**

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

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# Council to Decimate Bus Services by 2017

Herefordshire Council plans to cut the bus network down to the bone in September 2017 unless we say otherwise.



## Only Four Rural Priority Routes

For some time now Rail & Bus for Herefordshire has expressed deep concern regarding the continued threat to the buses in the county. Now there are plans to reduce the rural network down to four main routes which are currently commercial; there will also be cutbacks to town services as bus companies lose necessary financial support to keep them on the road. This will all happen in one year's time unless we say enough is enough and right now.

## Consultation Survey...don't be fooled

Herefordshire Council has issued an invitation to take part in a survey over the coming weeks but this survey is closed in approach with the tick box technique; it leads you into a position where you have to say yes to the cuts. The survey refers to major cuts in the budget but you should be given the option to say no to further cuts. This is what happened in the previous survey of 2011 and we lost most of our evening buses. In Question 8 surely we should have an option for a seven day service on most routes and some evening services. Question 17...there should be an option to say '**no cuts**' and that is why Question 20 is the most important one...here you can say **that enough is enough....no cuts!**

## Limited Savings...major impacts

In summary, the Council seeks to save £1 million in its medium term budget

by cutting financial support to buses, but in return we will lose most rural buses including all market day services, and services to villages large and small including Bosbury, Eardisley, Ewyas Harold, Pembridge, and Staunton-on-Wye. It really does not make sense.

**Check it out!** If you don't believe it, take a look at the map provided by the Council at [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/busreview2016](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/busreview2016).

Paper copies of the survey are available and like last time they should be on buses. If you'd like to help the bus sub-group in getting the message out to passengers then email Les Lumsdon at [leslumsdon@hotmail.com](mailto:leslumsdon@hotmail.com)

**This is, literally, our last chance to tell Herefordshire Council that this isn't the solution.**  
**Les Lumsdon** (Buses sub committee)

## Rail Franchises



The Boundary Marker pictured left is a good reminder that Herefordshire has been disputed territory ever since the arrival of competing railway companies. The marker represents the terminal point of the Shrewsbury & Hereford line which arrived in 1853. South of this point was the terminus of the Hereford, Ross & Gloucester Railway which had been acquired by the Great Western Railway. The line to Shrewsbury became the focus of a great boardroom battle between the Great Western and the London & North Western Railway Companies. The dispute was finally settled in 1863 when a Joint Board was set up to run the line. This accounts for the distinctive architectural style of the stations and signal boxes along the line.

The Newport Abergavenny & Hereford Railway had arrived in 1854 with their own station at Barton on the west of the city. The railway picture was

completed by the opening of the Hereford, Hay and Brecon Railway in 1859 which was then acquired by the Midland Railway and the Worcester & Hereford which had passed into Great Western hands. It was not until later in the century that all services ran into Barrs Court Station.

Hereford yet again is disputed territory, this time in the modern context of rail franchising and in particular whether or not the Marches Line should stay in the Wales and Borders Franchise when powers for rail franchising are fully devolved to the Welsh Government. Rail & Bus for Herefordshire has had recent correspondence with both the Minister for Rail at the Department for Transport and with Ken Skates AM, the minister responsible for railways at the Welsh Government. From the tone of both their letters, the matter is not yet fully resolved. A recent Stakeholder meeting at Shrewsbury, arranged by Transport for Wales, confirmed that a decision has yet to be made by the Department for Transport as to whether or not the Marches Line stays in the Welsh Franchise. With a 2018 target for the new franchise, time is running short on this issue. The bureaucratic wheels of government turn very slowly!

Under the banner of the Marches Rail Users Alliance (MRUA) both government ministers have been reminded that any franchise arrangement should take vital account of the needs of the passengers and communities in determining the level and quality of the train service provided.

Reiterating the consultation response to the Welsh Government on this matter, Rail & Bus for Herefordshire, through the MRUA continue to lobby strongly for an hourly service for all stations between Hereford and Shrewsbury together with a regular long distance service calling at principal stations only and as required by the Welsh Government. The need for improved connections at Hereford and Shrewsbury, especially with Birmingham services is also of importance especially in the context of connectivity with the West Midlands.

On top of this ongoing border matter we also have to deal with the West Midlands service. Network Rail have recently published their West Midlands & Chilterns Route Development report for consultation. Alarmingly this report makes little mention of Herefordshire and no mention of any development of the route beyond Worcester. RBfH has quickly responded to this report pointing out the economic benefit of improving the line as detailed in the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership report on rail development (see later section on the LEP) This report identifies, as a priority, the doubling in part of the section of line between Malvern Wells and Shelwick Junction (Hereford).

RBfH is keen to involve our Members of Parliament in these important issues and all correspondence has been copied to both Jesse Norman MP and Bill Wiggin MP. Acknowledgements have been received from both and it is difficult to see how they cannot but get involved in rail matters that are vital to the social and economic fabric of Herefordshire.

**Gareth Calan Davies** (Chairman RBfH)

## **London Midland Trains**

London Midland Trains operate the Hereford-Malvern-Worcester-Birmingham train service under the West Midlands Franchise. This franchise covers local trains in the West Midlands conurbation as well as longer distance routes into the surrounding shire counties and even services to London and Liverpool. The Hereford trains also serve Droitwich Spa, Bromsgrove and Birmingham University (for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital). The service is mostly hourly throughout the day and is operated with two and three carriage diesel trains. The service is the main form of public transport connecting Herefordshire with Birmingham and the West Midlands.

Since the franchise began eight years ago London Midland state ‘we have seen demand for our services grow by 40%’. Whilst this is encouraging news for the rail industry, infrastructure investment has not kept up with the increase in demand. This is noticeable on the Hereford route where there is growing evidence of serious overcrowding now on both peak and off peak services. This is further exacerbated by the recent opening of a multi million pound new station at Bromsgrove complete with a large capacity commuter car park.

*When tackled about overcrowding, the London Midland response was ‘The main way of servicing this growth in demand is to get more trains. Unfortunately this is a non electrified route and currently there are no more diesel trains being built. The only way we could get more diesel trains is through a cascade process when other routes are electrified. Regrettably electrification is not happening as quickly as first predicted resulting in a national shortage of diesel trains’.*

However, this begs the question that if it has been evident that during the term of the franchise traffic has been growing steadily then why has there been no contingency plan, either by the company or the train leasing companies to acquire more rolling stock to cope with demand? The answer must lie in the faulty structure of the franchise system and the franchise

terms that do not put a firm obligation on the train operator to provide for an increase in demand. Understandably, with only a short period of the current franchise left to run, London Midland Trains are unwilling to invest in additional rolling stock. But being owned by a holding company named Keolis (a transport development company whose parent organisation is SNCF French Railways) you would have thought that London Midland could have borrowed some trains from the French!

## **Kilvert's Diary**

If you thought that modern day travel by train is fraught with difficulties then take a look at the latest edition of the Kilvert Society Journal. The Reverend Francis Kilvert of Clyro often had recourse to use the train on the Hereford-Hay-on-Wye-Brecon line. His nineteenth century diaries are full of references to the journeys and these have been brought together by Herefordshire railway historian Mr Gordon Wood in an article for the Journal. The article was kindly pointed out to me by Mo Burns of the Hereford Civic Society. It is well worth a read. (*Unfortunately the current journal is available only to Kilvert Society members.*)

## **Transport Hub**

We await a reply from Mr Geoff Hughes, Herefordshire Council's Director under which this scheme is progressing, or not progressing. We hope the reply will be positive but do not hold our breath! Hereford Civic Society have shown an interest in the scheme from the angle of improving the look of the station forecourt and giving a more welcoming approach to this most imposing of Victorian railway buildings. Network Rail (Wales Division) also show interest in low cost station improvement schemes that make stations more welcoming. The danger with the Hereford situation is that the road will be constructed and opened without any regard to the connectivity between the station and the town that will aid pedestrians, cyclists and bus users. If no reply is forthcoming from Herefordshire Council then RBfH should consider working up its own scheme in conjunction with Network Rail and possibly using local colleges for a design exercise.

## **Rail Infrastructure**

The re-signalling at Hereford station is well advanced and looks as if it will be commissioned for operation soon (see May newsletter for details). Across

the border in Worcestershire work is advancing on the new Worcester Parkway Station situated at Norton where the Bristol-Birmingham main line passes under the Worcester-Oxford Cotswold. Details of this project can be found on [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/parkway](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/parkway).

## **The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership**

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership is a consortium of three local authorities, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin whose main function is to examine, administer and finance major capital schemes within its area. Transport is seen as a major investment priority and in May 2016 the LEP published a comprehensive report ‘Investing in Strategic Transport Corridors in the Marches’. The report identifies the importance of good road and rail connections between the Marches and both the West Midlands and Wales as well as Northern England. Rail investment for Herefordshire includes re-signalling and train service upgrading for the Marches Line plus doubling of the line between Shelwick Junction (Hereford) and Malvern Wells on the Birmingham line. The importance of rail for local movements is also emphasised. Much of the report echoes the policy and work of both RBfH and MRUA and with this in mind it is hoped that closer relations between these groups and LEP can be developed.

## **Raising the Profile of RBfH**

The RBfH Newsletter is now distributed to other organisations and public places as part of the scheme to raise its profile and gain new members. RBfH New attractive A5 memberships application leaflets are also available. RBfH is restarting a series of public talks on subjects of transport interest. Three meetings have been arranged for the autumn. These are:

7 September: ‘**Experiences with Light Tram Systems and their Value in Urban Areas**’ by Phil Evans, Managing Director of PreMetro Operations Ltd.

12 October: ‘**Developments in Community Railways**’ by David Edwards, Chairman of the Heart of Wales Line Development Company Ltd.

23 November: ‘**Mobility: A New Urban Design and Transport Planning Philosophy for a Sustainable Future**’ by Professor John Whitelegg of the Stockholm Environment Institute.

All talks take place at 14.00 for 14.30 at the Merton Hotel, Commercial Road, Hereford. The venue has been chosen because of its accessibility by public transport. It is hoped the afternoon time will attract more members and visitors. The autumn series is an experiment and a discussion about future meetings will be on the agenda for the first committee meeting following them.

RBfH is also affiliated to the following organisations: RailFuture and RailFuture Wales: BusUser UK: TransportFocus: Campaign for Better Transport. Any member requiring further details of these organisations can contact Gareth, your chairman, on [ghal@btinternet.com](mailto:ghal@btinternet.com)

## Contribute to your Newsletter

Articles, news, photographs etc. with a railway and/or bus content are always welcome for the RBfH Newsletter. Articles up to a maximum of 400 words plus illustrations are suggested as a guideline. Articles and other items can be submitted to your chairman either in hard copy via the post or electronically via the address or email shown in the RBfH Committee List below.

**We look forward to hearing from you**

### The RBfH Committee

**Chairman:** Gareth Calan Davies, 5 Biddulph Way, Ledbury, HR8 2HP  
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**Vice Chair:** Sue Warren **Treasurer:** Rachel Allum

**Membership Secretary:** Naomi Bell, 100A Green Street, Hereford, HR1 2QW

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Philip Bauer Michael Sullivan John Thorne

*Join Rail & Bus for Herefordshire and  
help protect and secure the development  
of rail and bus services*

**WEBSITE IN PROCESS OF BEING UPDATED**



# Membership Application

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Name.....

Address.....

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.....

Email.....

Tel no.....

Membership is £8.00 for one year and is renewable on February 1st annually. For those joining after July, membership is free until the following February.

Please send cheque payable to Rail for Herefordshire and application form to:

Rail for Herefordshire  
100A Green Street  
Hereford HR1 2QW

Alternatively you can pay by direct debit. For details please contact the Membership Secretary at the above address or email [railfh@aol.com](mailto:railfh@aol.com)

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.

Herefordshire rail and bus services are important.

## **Join Rail & Bus for** **Herefordshire**

- ◆ *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*