

A Vision of Passenger Transport in Herefordshire

Executive Summary

Our vision is that residents and visitors have access to a modern, attractive and affordable integrated public transport network extending throughout Herefordshire

Such a network would facilitate a significant reduction in journeys currently made by private car. In a recent National Travel Survey 3 in 4 respondents said they would consider increased use of public transport for the sake of the environment.

In order to optimise the reduction in CO2 emissions public transport must offer

- **An attractive environment before, during and after the journey**
- **Reach, reliability and integration**
- **Clock-face timetables with good coverage every day**
- **Real time information on and off the bus**
- **Value for money fares and multi-operator tickets**
- **Journey planning that is both accessible and easily understandable**
- **Low carbon vehicles powered directly or indirectly by renewable electricity**
- **Demand management driven by reduced car parking in Hereford City**

The Government's Bus Back Better scheme provides Herefordshire Council with a great opportunity to address all of these points in their Bus Services Improvement Plan. Rail and Bus for Herefordshire is making strenuous efforts to encourage them in this endeavour. All Herefordshire's Town and Parish Councils can bring pressure to bear to make the BSIP the best it can be.

If we can support you in your campaign to improve your area's bus service please get in touch using the contacts at the end of this document.

Introduction

In February 2021 Herefordshire Council voted in favour of prioritising the improvement of public transport and active travel and less roadbuilding. This document sets out Rail and Bus for Herefordshire's vision of how a re-invigorated public transport policy could be delivered

- over the guaranteed 2 year tenure of this administration and
- over the following 4 years

The Council's decision to promote sustainable modes of travel is driven by a pressing need to address its declared Climate Emergency through a reduction in CO2 emissions from transport in general and private cars in particular.

The Trends

Several social trends have accelerated during the Covid 19 pandemic:

Commuting continues to decline as a result of increased home working (commuting accounts for only 15% of all car trips)

On-line shopping is impacting heavily on High Street retailing and this affects Hereford and the market towns

The population continues to age in Herefordshire and concessionary travel will remain a major incentive to use buses

The deeper rural areas with low density populations, an agricultural working sector and lack of facilities will continue to be the most difficult to serve

Hereford is widening its arts and cultural appeal so will continue to attract visitors as will our market towns. Leisure and shopping currently account for 45% of all car trips and this is where buses and trains can make a real difference

Educational journeys will grow as Hereford continues to build on higher education and training provision.

Young people are conversant with digital communication so may travel less; they consider fares to be expensive and will need to be encouraged through incentives and low fare strategies

The Covid pandemic has undoubtedly dented perceptions of public transport. As vaccination becomes universal we need to work hard to reverse those perceptions and create a positive post-Covid image for a carbon-conscious world.

How can we attract people back to public transport?

There are useful lessons to be learned from other local authorities. A first and fundamental step is to create a positive vision around sustainable travel. Herefordshire Council, bus and train operators and user groups all need to develop good quality communication with residents around the need to change our transport habits.

This needs to be matched by a shift in resources towards public transport. Herefordshire's next Local Transport Plan (LTP) should advocate a transfer of resources from highways to sustainable public transport and active modes.

This approach has been successfully implemented by the progressive rural authorities of Cornwall LTP: www.cornwall.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/transport-policy/local-transport-plan-connecting-cornwall-2030/

Derbyshire LTP: www.derbyshire.gov.uk/transport-plans/ltp3/local-transport-plan-three.aspx

Lincolnshire LTP: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1924/local-transport-plan-2013-14-2022-23

Wales (including many rural councils): Llwybr Newydd: a new Wales transport strategy. Available at <https://gov.wales//llwybr-newydd>

There are also a number of inspiring plans which cover rural parts of their authorities, for example:

Bath & North-East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Joint LTP: <https://travelwest.info/app/uploads/2020/05/JLTP4-Adopted-Joint-Local-Transport-Plan4.pdf>

Nottinghamshire LTP: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/transport/public-transport/plans-strategies-policies/local-transport-plan

In all of these cases integration is the core principle driving a renewal of the public transport system.

Integration is about planning and delivering a transport system which brings together different modes, sectors, operators and institutions for the benefit of its users and wider society. As a result both congestion and CO2 emissions are reduced. There are different levels of integration but we are concentrating here on short term measures that will promote increased use of public transport.

An integrated network in Herefordshire

The creation of an integrated network will require Herefordshire Council to work in partnership with bus operators and user groups. The core elements of passenger transport integration must be prominent in a bus strategy within the upcoming Local Transport Plan.

The key elements of integration are:

Public transport information

Communication: Development of web-based timetables. The County of Devon provides a map of the network, details of all services, a list of all operators and their contact details, and details of ticketing, prices, and timetables. This used to be incorporated in the excellent timetable book produced by Herefordshire Council. It is considered important for residents and visitors to the county to have one site where they can obtain all information about Herefordshire's public transport.

Provide appropriate printed timetable/information displays at key locations such as railway stations, bus stations and tourist information centres. We advocate continuation of display case timetables across the network.

Staff: operating staff need a good knowledge of the network in order to give passengers advice on how to use it. For example, conductor guards should have information about the principal services from the Hereford Transport Hub. Bus drivers should have information on the bus network as well as the three key rail services from Hereford station.

Funding for a real time information system and app for public use which show where buses are on any given route. Real time information should be provided at all key stops.

Integration of Public Transport Services

Four levels of service provision are proposed in Herefordshire:

1. Principal bus network running to a clockface timetable
2. Secondary bus network augmented by flexi-bus operation or DRT
3. Mobility hubs in market towns serving their hinterlands
4. Hereford City Network

1 Principal Bus Network

The level of service on principal routes will need to be improved to encourage wider use. This means re-introducing evening, Sunday and Bank Holiday services at an hourly frequency. The core factors which encourage use of a bus network are well researched:

- frequency
- reliability
- attractive journey times
- value for money fares

Emotional factors are very important in motivating people. A marketing campaign as well as incentives such as trial vouchers, for example, will be required to change habitual behaviour. The Harrogate Bus Company provides an excellent example of how a quality bus service combined with smart marketing can result in a high ridership; 55% of passengers have a car available on the day of travel.

Clockface bus services (also known as a pulse system) are common in northern Europe where passenger transport is designed and operated at a regional level. The aim is to integrate buses and trains in a planned clock-face timetable wherever possible. Connections are planned across the network between inter urban buses and rail. The characteristics of this type of system are:

- Quick and convenient transfers
- Integrated ticketing
- Local people involved in design
- Building customer loyalty
- Easy to understand timetabling
- Permanency, reliability and simplicity

2. Secondary routes

These will incorporate some school/college journeys and offer a two hourly frequency until mid-evening on weekdays and a limited Sunday service. It may well be worthwhile experimenting with a flexi service on the evening journeys, for example, timetabling a route from a starting location such as railway stations but operated only on demand.

Demand responsive transport (DRT) services provide a taxi bus or minibus service within a given area or corridor where demand for public transport is very low. The service has no fixed route and the passenger has to book using phone or app to schedule a point to point journey.

In most cases demand reduces considerably when a DRT service replaces a conventional bus service. Over half of DRT projects set up to date have failed, mainly because per capita costs have proved too high. In the case of Bwcabus in Wales and Shropshire's DRT service the subsidy per passenger journey was around £20.

Lower cost options are therefore advocated, such as those provided by local taxi companies in the market towns. Working in partnership with the council, a bus operator or a DRT operator such as Tandem could be the route to a cost effective solution.

3. Integrating services at Mobility Hubs

The concept of mobility hubs is gaining ground across continental Europe and in the rural areas of Calderdale, Devon, Norfolk, and Staffordshire. Typically, a mobility hub is set up in a public space near a bus stop and offers a range of facilities for onward local travel. These may well include electric bike hire, e-scooters, a car club, taxi stand, secure parking for bikes and lockers for parcels. It will also include travel information and in some cases a small café.

Principal bus services would serve hubs at Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury and Ross-on-Wye. From these hubs it may well be feasible to offer a shared taxi bus or demand responsive service into each market town's hinterland. In Ledbury and Leominster it is envisaged that the hubs would be located at the railway stations.

4. Hereford City Network

Herefordshire Council has already indicated that it aims to provide a network of high frequency buses in Hereford. This ambition could deliver a seven day a week service throughout the city, including cross city journeys where possible. It is envisaged that these services will operate from 0700 in the morning until 2300 at night on weekdays with a later start on Sunday mornings.

There is a pressing argument for the rejuvenation of the city bus operation, probably through a partnership with a key bus operator. This will require the design of strong brand,

improved street infrastructure and bus priority measures to meet passenger expectations of improved journey times and reliability.

It is also vital to link the bus and rail network to the current bus terminals in town by way of a frequent town circular. Rail and Bus for Herefordshire has prepared a bid with Hereford City Council to deliver such a project as part of the Stronger Towns bid process. This seven day a week electric bus service, the Hereford Zipper, will link transport hubs with medical centres, arts and cultural venues and retail areas.

Integration of fares and ticketing

There is substantial evidence pointing to the sensitivity of passengers to fare levels.

Affordable fares are important, especially for short distances. The National Travel Survey of Attitudes (2019) asked respondents about the level of fares and 58% indicated that if there was a standardised bus fare of between £1 and £2 (in an urban context) this would encourage them to use the bus in the future.

A county-wide multi operator ticket, available on-line, at shops or on the bus, is important in developing longer journey-to-work trips and tourist revenue. It may be the case that more advanced smart tickets can be developed for city and county use of a wide range of other facilities

Investment in Infrastructure

A 2018 Greener Journeys report on Bus Infrastructure Development reported that at least 20% of car users could be enticed to switch to buses provided the service was quick and reliable.

In order to provide faster journeys and improved bus reliability in Hereford City it is important that Herefordshire Council upgrades its traffic light synchronisation software to give buses priority at key signalised junctions.

It is essential to upgrade roadside infrastructure such as raised curbs at bus stops to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. Improved waiting facilities at busier stops are critical to attracting more passengers. It is also important to assess the case for mini-park and ride facilities at key locations on principal and secondary routes. These locations could include Cycle and Ride facilities in line with Herefordshire Council's current policy of developing Park and Cycle hubs hosted by properties such as public houses.

There is a need to modernise bus fleets, preferably upgrading to electric vehicles where feasible, but otherwise to utilise ULEV buses which offer lower fuel consumption with a major reductions in emissions. Whilst buses account for only 3% of all transport emissions it is important to incentivise companies to upgrade to clean buses by taking advantage of

government schemes such as the Bus Services Obligation Grant. Increased passenger loadings contribute directly to a reduction of emissions per passenger journey.

Investment will improve reliability, reduce CO2 emissions and enhance service provision which will all attract new markets.

How will this be delivered?

Government has provided clearer guidance as to quality partnerships, voluntary or formal. Researchers note that this can increase benefits to society, work well for operators and attract new customers. The 2017 Bus Services Act sets out how a local authority can establish an Advanced Quality Partnership or an Enhanced Partnership to progress integrated networks with operators. In either case, the approach to partnership formalises the commitment to deliver better buses, journeys and places. This should be feasible with regard to services in Hereford as there are now so few operators in the county.

In terms of new infrastructure required the necessary funding packages can be transferred from road building and highway improvements as they are high risk carbon intensive projects. For example, Cornwall Council has adopted policy changes and is currently prioritising an integrated public transport network in line with the Local Transport Plan. The Welsh Government has also outlined a complete change of policy in order to meet the challenges of a Climate Emergency.

It is expected that bus operators will continue to invest in their fleets and customer service practices to ensure that a quality service is provided. The local authority, operators and users working together will help to drive improvements across the board.

An outline programme of delivery would be:

Within two years, delivery of:

1. Improved provision of information
2. Revitalised Hereford network
3. Roll out of improved principal networks and
4. Transport hub at Hereford

Within a further four years, delivery of:

5. Infrastructure improvements
6. Revision of secondary networks
7. Community Mobility hubs
8. Improved integration of public transport with other services

What would be the core elements of an integrated transport network in Herefordshire?

An indicative network is provided below:

Principal Towns Network

Hereford-Dinmore-Leominster-Ludlow: 2 hourly	0700-2100
Hereford-Leominster-Kington/Presteigne: 2 hourly	0800-1800
Hereford – Bodenham: hourly	0700-1900
Hereford-Kington-Llandrindod Wells: hourly to Kington	0700-2100
Hereford-Hay-on-Wye-Brecon: 2 hourly to Hay	0700-2100
Hereford-Madley: hourly	0700-2300
Hereford-Abergavenny-Cardiff: 2 hourly	0700- 1900
Hereford-St Weonards – Monmouth: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Hereford-Ross-on-Wye-Gloucester: hourly	0600-2300
Ross-on-Wye to Monmouth via Goodrich: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Ross-on-Wye to Monmouth via Coleford: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Ross-on-Wye to Gloucester via Newent: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Hereford to Ledbury: hourly	0700-2100
Ledbury to Malvern: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Ledbury to Worcester: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Ledbury to Gloucester: 2 hourly	0700-1900
Hereford to Worcester via Bromyard: 2 hourly	0700-2100

These services would be developed as route partnerships with improved infrastructure and strong route branding designed with the help of communities living along the route.

Services into Hereford would terminate at a Transport Hub located beside the Railway Station. We advocate a state of the art hub in keeping with the splendid architecture of the listed railway station, creating a key gateway to the city.

Secondary Services

The following would be revised to offer a 6 day service level of between 4-6 buses per day.

Bromyard-Ledbury

Hereford-Tillington-Canon Pyon

Hereford-Eardisley-Kington

Hereford-Much Dewchurch-Abbeydore-Ewyas Harold

Hereford-Woolhope-Fownhope

Leintwardine-Hereford

Mobility Hubs

Taxi Bus, Community Transport or localised DRT services would be based in Market Town Hubs. Examples include Ross to cover Garway, another located at Pontrilas (at a railway station in the future) serving Longtown, Golden Valley; Kington serving Almeley, Bredwardine, Broxwood; Leominster serving Mortimer Country and east towards Puddleston; Bromyard serving north towards Tenbury and also Bishop's Frome area, Ledbury serving east and south-west towards Ross. These services would link into the principal network at the hubs and other principal bus stops depending on emerging patterns of demand.

However, we envisage a staged approach to the roll out of any form of demand responsive transport. Market day services would be retained in most areas until these services have been trialled and shown to be successful.

The county's market towns are experiencing rapid population growth as a result of major house building programs. These towns need expanded and more frequent town services if the charm of their ancient centres is not to be extinguished by traffic congestion.

Conclusion

Herefordshire's Bus Services Improvement Plan provides Herefordshire Council with a great opportunity to make real progress in creating an integrated transport network throughout the county. Rail and Bus for Herefordshire is making strenuous efforts to encourage them in this endeavour. All Herefordshire's Town and Parish Councils can bring pressure to bear to make the Plan the best it can be.

If we can support you in your campaign to improve your area's bus services please get in touch using the contacts below. Thank you.

Contacts

The following officers within Rail and Bus for Herefordshire would be pleased to receive contact from councils supportive of our vision:

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