

RAIL FOR HEREFORDSHIRE P O BOX 299 HEREFORD HR1 2YE  
Tel: 01432 343262 (Gerald Dawe, Chair)  
www.RailForHerefordshire.org.uk Email: [Railfh@aol.com](mailto:Railfh@aol.com)

West Midlands Franchise Procurement Consultation Manager  
Department for Transport Rail Group  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DR

July 25 2006

Dear Sir

**West Midlands Franchise Consultation Document; June 2006**

Rail for Herefordshire is a rail group based in Herefordshire formed in 2000. It has about 80 paid up members, produces two newsletters a year with a print run of one thousand which are distributed across the county, and is regularly consulted on planning and transport issues in the county. Our comments concern the Hereford-Birmingham section of the line on the new West Midlands franchise.

With regard to the WMFCD we have the following comments which we would like the DfT to take into account when drawing up the franchise requirements.

Firstly and most importantly: **Ensure the franchisee agrees to finish train journeys through to Hereford** by adjusting the fining procedures. Herefordshire rail travellers have suffered during the Central franchise due to the fining system. Currently Central turn back Hereford bound trains at Ledbury to Birmingham when trains are running 15 minutes or more late, leaving Herefordshire passengers stranded at Ledbury (sometimes at Malvern) station. We assume this is because the fine is less for not finishing the journey than for lateness. Two years ago this was happening on average of one train a day, it could be any train, often the busiest. Passengers had to wait at Ledbury for an unspecified time for the next train through. Cutting the service short at Ledbury means a cancelled train Hereford-Birmingham, doubling the pain. The situation has improved recently, after a huge number of complaints lead to changing the service, and Central have now committed to not 'dumping' passengers at Ledbury for more than a 15 minute wait. The DfT must ensure that the dumping is not resumed, by implementing a fining system that ensures the franchisee completes the timetabled journey and doesn't leave Herefordshire passengers short of their journey.

**Sunday service to be compulsory**, not voluntary as they are at present. If staff do not want to work on Sunday they don't have to, this has led to many cancelled trains and intense frustration for passengers. There should also be more trains from Hereford to Birmingham on a Sunday. It is impossible to get to Birmingham by train before the late afternoon on a Sunday – a ridiculous situation for England's second city and a large city like Hereford only 50 miles away.

One of our campaign goals is to have a returning **evening service from Birmingham to Hereford** sufficiently late to enable people to go out in the evening and come back by public transport. A fast train leaving Birmingham after 10.45 p.m. stopping at main stations would be a huge benefit to the West Midlands area.

In your consultation document you recommend larger car parks at stations. This is actually not consistent with the aim of integrated transport, the overall aim of the Department of Transport. A better way would be to invest money in some re-design of trains which means they would be able to take **more bikes on trains**. Trains in the south for example are able to take up to six bikes by adjusting carriages. Herefordshire is a tourist area with visitors coming to walk and cycle in the countryside. The restriction on bikes limits tourism and bike-train commuting.

The franchise agreement should specify **a minimum of four carriages at peak hours**. The Hereford-Birmingham train is often extremely crowded at rush hours. Crowding has undoubtedly suppressed demand and this maybe why the franchise has grown only at 4% p.a., less than elsewhere in the country. Tickets are expensive, people have a right to expect a reasonably comfortable journey which includes a seat and air conditioning.

The franchisee should negotiate and include **through bus ticketing** to destinations in the county without stations, such as Kington and Hay and improve the provision of bus timetable information at stations.

Timetabling should ensure **good connections with Arriva Wales**.

The **waiting rooms at Malvern** are currently closed, the reason given is vandalism. The franchisee should install CCTV and if necessary roving security guards and open the waiting rooms and toilets at Malvern for train passengers.

Hereford has a population of 65,000 in the city and 175,000 in the county and it is growing fast. Thousands more houses are proposed in the current Unitary Development Plan. There are plans to stage some parts of the Para Olympics in the city. One of the reasons it has been targeted for growth and the Para Olympics is that it has an apparent good rail service, yet the west-east service suffers from severe congestion due to a 14 mile single stretch. The double line was only singled in 1982 to save the wages of signalmen. We believe the franchisee **should plan to relieve the congestion** by investigating ways of improving the congestion, through a passing loop, changes in signalling and platforms.

Yours faithfully

Gerald Dawe  
Chair, Rail for Herefordshire.