

Rail for Herefordshire, PO Box 299, Hereford, HR1 2YE
01684 541408 E-mail: railfh@aol.com
www.RailForHerefordshire.org.uk

Peter Sargant
West Midlands Region Rail Development Plan
Centro
Centro House
16 Summer Lane
Birmingham
B19 3SD

March 23rd 2009

Dear Mr Sargant

West Midlands Rail Development Plan; Hereford to Birmingham Line

I very much enjoyed your presentation to the Railway Development Society meeting at Carrs Lane on March 21st 2009. At home, reading through the presentation I would like to add to the West Midlands Region, Rail Development Plan that you are working on.

Our group has been campaigning for over ten years to twin track the Hereford to Ledbury line. The need is great. The double line was only removed in 1982 (it was not a Beeching cut) and ever since, as a single track, it has experienced congestion. Both London and Birmingham bound trains use the track. Both the TOCs, First Great Western (the London trains) and London Midland (the Birmingham trains) would like to run a more frequent and reliable service, but they can't, due to the single line. Because of this we experience frequent delays, cancellations, and a restricted service.

The distance Hereford-Ledbury is 11 miles and it takes 20 minutes. The section has been recognized by Network Rail in their RUS for the West Midlands as having a capacity problem and I note on your Draft Route Plan HFD Birmingham to Hereford Proposed Strategy that you have indeed proposed doubling the track between Ledbury to Hereford in the 2019 to 2029 period. We feel the doubling should be brought forward to the 2014-2019 period for the following reasons.

Hereford is a city of 65,000. Herefordshire has been identified by government as a sub regional focus of development which means at least 19,000 new houses in the next plan period 2011 to 2025, half of these in the city itself. Hereford is an important junction as well, with frequent Cardiff Manchester trains stopping at Hereford, allowing passengers to change onto the west-east line. The Cardiff-Manchester line is very busy, trains I travel on are full with standing room only and in addition, the Welsh Assembly have pin pointed it as a high speed North Wales to South Wales route.

It is possible that some of the £5,000 per house subsidy that the new housing will bring under new government rules, plus additional developer funding may be available to help fund the twin track. First however the need for the twin track has to be recognized by the authorities.

If Hereford does expand in the way that is planned, the twin track will be essential, indeed it is now. People do/will want to travel to Birmingham, London and places in between. If Herefordshire and

the West Midlands are to keep traffic congestion and CO₂ within Government limits, they will have to use public transport. We experience a good train service in Hereford at the moment, but there is congestion and delays. With the extra population this will only get worse. Because of this, we think it is very important that your Regional Development Plan takes into account the need for twin tracking the line between Hereford and Ledbury. Moreover, it should be done before the new houses are built.

Our website lists the other improvements our group is campaigning for, please go to www.RailForHerefordshire.org.uk and Our Aims, to see them.

Yours sincerely

Secretary (Rebecca Roseff)
for
Rail for Herefordshire

cc Jesse Norman, PPC for Hereford, Conservatives
cc Sarah Carr, PPC for Hereford, Liberal Democrats
cc Cllrs R Mills, RV Stockton, ME Cooper, JK Swinburne, PJ Watts, DW Greenow, PM Morgan, M Lloyd-Hayes, MJ Walling, AP Taylor, M Hudson