

Rail Planning Manager
West Midland RUS
Planning Department
Strategic Rail Authority
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Who We Are

Rail for Herefordshire is a train user group based in Herefordshire. We have 60 paid up members, and sent minutes out to about 100. We produce four newsletters per annum of a print run of 1,500. We are affiliated to the Cotswold Line Group, Rail Future, Pontrilas Station Group and Leominster Station Group.

COMMENTS

Consultation Process

Appendix D gives the list of formal consultees. There seem to be no *passengers* in this list. Aren't they the most important group of all? TOCs are going to want very different things from passengers. Our group have often expressed the opinion that trains are run for the train timetable, **not** for people's needs. This consultation process is yet another manifestation of this attitude.

In Herefordshire the only consultee is Herefordshire Council, who we believe did not respond, and the RPC. The RPC is to be disbanded shortly. In Herefordshire we are represented by three RPCs, Midlands, Wales and Western England, and fall between all three. It is unlikely that any comments have been received from Herefordshire at all regarding this RUS. The comments below are likely to be the only ones this exercise receives as regards the Herefordshire situation.

Hereford to Birmingham Route

Track use is at capacity due to the single line stretch Hereford to Malvern. Delays, cancellations at the rate of one a day and high prices act to suppress demand. Despite this on commuter trains, those arrive at Birmingham between 8.00 and 9.30 and leaving between 16.00 and 18.00, there can be extreme crowding, on some trains to fainting levels. **Recommendation 1: Commuter trains should be a minimum of three carriages long.**

Hereford trains going east suffer due to the single line stretch Hereford-Malvern. Delays east of Malvern mean TOCs try to make up time by turning trains back at Ledbury without completing their journey subjecting passengers to an hour wait on an unmanned station with no facilities. Cancellations and dumping at Ledbury happen on average once a day. **Recommendation 2: The fining system of trains should change to ensure completion of journey.**

When trains are cancelled and passengers dumped at Ledbury no taxis are laid on.

Recommendation 3: Taxis should be laid on for delays of longer than 30 minutes

Occasionally a coach is arranged for the waiting passengers at Hereford whose train has been cancelled due to turn back at Ledbury. There is always a long delay before the coach is organised. The coach has a driver who carries no information for customers and plays the radio loudly. There is no reduction in the ticket price to take into account the lower service. **Recommendation 4: A coach service should provide the equivalent of a rail service, i.e. a conductor, no music, no smoking.**

Malvern has a greater choice of trains to London and Bristol than Hereford and is a changeover station for Herefordshire passengers. In addition sometimes Central Trains are stopped short at Malvern not even completing their journey as far as Ledbury. Hereford people spend a lot of time on Malvern station but there is no real time information on the Hereford down platform. Out of ticket office hours there is no toilet or waiting room. **Recommendation 5: Real time timetable on the Hereford down platform to be installed plus improved waiting facilities.**

At the moment Ledbury trains follow mainline northbound (Arriva Trains Wales Manchester-Newport) trains to Hereford and then reverse back into northbound platform. As Ledbury trains follow southbound trains it means all connections are missed. At the moment trains are timed thus:

xx.40-42 ATW arrival from Shrewsbury etc
xx.42-43 CT departure to Birmingham/Nottingham
xx.47 ATW arrival from Abergavenny etc.

Recommendation 6: Timetabling should make it possible for people to change from a North-South route to a West-East route without having to wait a whole hour.

The single track Hereford-Malvern was only removed in 1980 to save on one signalman's wage. This short sighted action has resulted in deterioration of service for Herefordshire passengers, with many delays and cancellations. Moreover there is less scope to increase the frequency of service and cope with present and potential demand. The RUS should recognise this limitation. **Recommendation 7: A plan to reinstate the twin track Hereford-Ledbury should be drawn up.**

As an interim measure a passing loop should be built at Withington with spring-loaded points radio locked in the facing direction by Hereford. This should be combined with bringing the old Hereford back platform into use and making the Shelwick Junction bi-directional (two signals required), thus allowing Ledbury trains to reverse. **Recommendation 8: A passing loop at Withington, plus alterations to signals and platforms at Hereford should be built.**

In order to minimise delays further and speed turn around times to Birmingham a larger track curve at Shelwick should be built. This would allow Birmingham (and

London) trains to go through faster. **Recommendation 9: Widen the curve at Shelwick.**