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Ashley Grumble  
Passenger Focus  
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July 23rd 2009

Dear Mr Grumble

### **West Midlands and Chilterns Route Utilisation Strategy; Hereford**

I am sorry none of our group was able to attend the I discussion events between Rail User Groups, Community Rail Partnership representatives, Network Rail and Passenger Focus concerning issues relating to rail routes in the West Midlands and Chilterns route areas. In our absence I hope you can take these points set out below into consideration.

I have not seen the plan so far. Passenger concerns in Hereford are

1. Twin tracking the Hereford to Ledbury line (more below)
2. Better connexions between Arriva services and London Midland at Hereford. Some of the connexions involve waiting the maximum time of one hour at Hereford.
3. Later trains from Birmingham to Hereford and a Sunday service
4. More space for bikes on train

#### **1. Twin tracking the Hereford to Ledbury line**

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 the Draft Route Plan HFD Birmingham to Hereford Proposed Strategy that it has been proposed for doubling 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, with frequent Cardiff Manchester

trains stopping at Hereford, allowing passengers to change onto the west-east line. The Cardiff-Manchester line is very busy, many trains 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 S106 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 CO<sub>2</sub> within Government limits and the Climate Change Act targets, 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 the Route Utilisation Strategy 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](http://www.RailForHerefordshire.org.uk) and Our Aims, to see them.

Yours sincerely

Secretary (Rebecca Roseff)  
for  
Rail for Herefordshire