

Rail for Herefordshire

Save Our Buses in 2011

Herefordshire Council is looking at ways in which it can cut its budget in 2011. Buses will be one area on which the Council will focus. We need to make our views known now before the cuts are made; we owe it especially to the young and elderly who are major users.

In 2009, the Council proposed a reduction in the budget to support rural buses by £80,000. It reconsidered this after receiving representations from a wide range of individuals and organisations like Rail for Herefordshire. It is important for users to speak up for buses.

2011 should be the year of the bus and not one where people are fighting to keep their front line rural services. That is why we have launched a campaign to hold on to our existing service network and to build on this in future years. Rail for Herefordshire campaigns for better rail and bus services; these are the core elements of a sustainable transport strategy for the next decade.

Our proposals

The aims of our campaign are as follows:

- 1. To encourage passengers and local communities to tell the Council how important the bus is for them; they are not to be cut.**
- 2. To promote existing services to increase patronage on buses.**
- 3. To encourage the Council to improve services, not necessarily by increasing resources, but by re-thinking some of the existing provision.**

Saving our Buses

The first task is to encourage people to communicate with the Council their views about their local bus service. Otherwise, councillors will not appreciate the strength of feeling about these 'front line' services to college, doctors and shops. We are doing this by speaking to passengers - many of us are bus users too! We are also in contact with parish councils and other organisations, especially those who have an interest in rural areas.

The rural services are a vital lifeline for about 25% of the population who do not have ready access to a car. They need support because they have fewer passengers on board and cover greater distances into town. But that is why they are needed. The longer distances mean that walking, cycling or a taxi trip is not feasible.

Promoting our Buses

We applaud the Council's efforts to promote buses on a very limited budget. There have been noticeable improvements to bus stop information, great timetables and two excellent leaflets promoting buses in the Ledbury and Ross areas for leisure trips. But there's a need for more word of mouth support, i.e. for community groups to get behind their local bus services.

In 2011 we will be organising a monthly bus outing to enjoy sightseeing and wildlife, bus walks and picnics, meeting Herefordshire authors talking about their subject and encouraging other organisations to join us in changing the fortunes of the local bus, many of which have been running continuously for the best part of 100 years. Check out our website for details: www.railforherefordshire.org.uk

Building the Future

We don't want to sit back and be takers of what the Council sees fit with a reduced budget. We want to build a sustainable future for passenger transport in Herefordshire.

The first step is to ensure that Hereford is linked to all of our county towns by bus (and for some by train) seven days a week and with a service that covers evenings too. Our priority is to seek

- the reinstatement of an evening service from Hereford to Bromyard (as all of the other market towns have an evening service) and
- a Sunday service to Kington (as all of the other towns have a Sunday service).

We consider that the upgrades can be done with some adjustments to existing services and without an additional resource commitment. From then onwards we will continue to campaign for:

- An hourly service to all market towns including into the evening
- High intensity services on the main arteries in Hereford
- Improved bus shelter and timetable provision
- Improved integration between rail, bus walking and cycling

There will be an increased cost but even so bus provision would still amount to a small percentage of the overall budget spent on transport. For the price of the little used Rotherwas spur road (which cost £12 million) we could have a bus network for ten years, a network that we could be proud of and which would encourage many more people on board.

Contact: leslumsdon@hotmail.com or Michael Ledlie at