

MEETING:	ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	26 NOVEMBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	RAILWAYS – UPDATE REPORT
REPORT BY:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT & COMMUNITY SERVICES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To provide an update to the committee on planned improvements for rail services and facilities in Herefordshire.

Recommendation

THAT: the contents of the report are noted.

Key Points Summary

- The responsibility for rail services and facilities in Herefordshire lies with a number of train operating companies and network rail.
- Arriva Trains Wales is developing measures to address overcrowding problems on the Hereford–Ludlow line.
- Networks Rail's planned improvements to enable better access for users of Hereford and Leominster rail stations are now programmed and works are due to commence at Leominster in January 2011. A scheme to provide lifts at Hereford rail station is due to be completed by 2013.

Alternative Options

1 Not applicable.

Reasons for Recommendations

2 Not applicable

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Steve Burgess, Transportation Manager (01432) 260968

Introduction and Background

- 3 At the Committee meeting held on 7th June 2010, Members criticised the rail operators for overcrowding of passengers on trains in particular between Ludlow – Leominster – Hereford. Members also raised concerns about lack of access facilities in accordance with Disability Discrimination at stations. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation agreed to pursue these matters and report back on progress to this Committee.
- 4 A series of meetings have now taken place between Council officers and rail industry representatives and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation. This report summarises the key areas of progress in terms of ongoing and planned improvements to rail facilities and services in the County.

Key Considerations

Provision of rail services and facilities

- 5 Herefordshire's passenger rail network is limited to four stations which are served by two lines, one providing north / south linkages between Cardiff and Manchester (Welsh Marches Line) via Hereford and Leominster, the other providing east / west linkages to Birmingham and London (Cotswold Line) via Hereford, Ledbury and Colwall.
- 6 The key providers of rail services and facilities in the County are:
 - a) Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) – Wales and Border Railway Franchise – from 2003, 15 year franchise with 5 and 10 year review periods. Provides north/south services on the Welsh marches line. Manages Hereford and Leominster rail stations.
 - b) London Midland – West Midlands Rail Franchise – from 2007 to 2015. Provides west/east services on the Cotswold line. Manages Ledbury and Colwall rail stations.
 - c) Network Rail – owns and is responsible for railway track, signals, bridges, tunnels and level crossings and most stations.

Passenger overcrowding

- 7 The overcrowding on trains through the County is most pronounced at peak times on the line between Ludlow and Hereford and is at its worst between Leominster and Hereford. This is due to the large numbers of college students travelling between these centres. At a positive meeting with ATW (8 November) it was confirmed that the Company is aware of the situation and has been exploring opportunities to provide relief from the overcrowding. Whilst the details are not yet available, ATW confirmed that overcrowding was worse in the afternoon when there are fewer services to spread passenger loading. It is likely that they will propose timetable changes to spread out the student passengers across the available services. These proposals will need to be considered and agreed by the Welsh Assembly which subsidises the service. Additionally, ATW are investigating whether it is possible to increase the capacity of the train service concerned.

Planned Station and Access Improvements

- 8 Currently, improvements are being implemented by ATW to provide better access to ticketing and information for passengers at Hereford Station. This work, funded through the National Station Improvement Programme, will provide DDA compliant toilets and dual height counters to improve access for wheelchair users.

- 9 Additional access improvements to platforms via the provision of lifts are planned for completion in 2013. Officers are seeking to make contact with Network Rail to clarify if the completion of this scheme can be brought forward. This project will be funded through the Government's Access for All programme.
- 10 ATW confirmed that the Network Rail led project to improve access to north and southbound platforms at Leominster rail station is progressing well and that implementation of the scheme will commence January 2011 with completion due October 2011. The scheme will comprise of ramps enabling disabled passengers to access both platforms.
- 11 The capacity of the parking provided at Ledbury station has been identified as an issue in recent discussions with the town council and local ward member. A proposal has been put forward by the Cotswold Line Promotion Group which might enable increased parking to be provided at the station. The proposal, based on a similar scheme at Pershore rail station which involved utilisation of land on the periphery of the station, will be pursued at a meeting with London Midland representatives in December.

General Rail Matters

- 12 Network Rail are progressing large scale signalling works on the Cotswold Line which should be complete by summer 2011. Although this work is outside Herefordshire it will be beneficial as trains entering the County will not be subject to delays and consequently will improve reliability.
- 13 Representation will continue to be made to Network Rail regarding track improvements between Hereford and Ledbury although in the current climate these costs are likely to be prohibitive. Whilst this issue has been acknowledged by Network Rail in its Route Plan for the West Midlands as a capacity and operational constraint it has not included a scheme to introduce doubling or passing loops for the line in its planned control periods 5 and 6 (which cover 2009 – 2019).

Community Impact

- 14 The community impact will be to reduce the problems of overcrowding on rail services between Hereford – Ludlow and improve access for disabled passengers.

Financial Implications

- 15 None as a result of this report

Legal Implications

- 16 None as a result of this report.

Risk Management

- 17 Engagement with rail industry partners by officers and the Cabinet Member seek to influence the industry to better the needs of Herefordshire.

Background Papers

- None identified