

# Public Transport research for Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Plan

## 12 October 2016

### Background

The situation regarding provision of public transportation in Ross-on-Wye and the surrounding area over the past decade is one of steady and ongoing cuts to bus services.

According to the 'Bus Cuts Map' shown on [www.bettertransport.org.uk/rail\\_for\\_herefordshire](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/rail_for_herefordshire), Herefordshire Council has made a 44 per cent cut in bus funding since 2010. In 2015/16 the council has made a 31 per cent cut in bus funding and is currently looking at proposals to make even greater reductions.

Data collected by the **Campaign for Better Transport's** Save Our Buses campaign (from public sources and and Freedom of Information requests) shows that since 2010 the budget for bus services in Herefordshire has reduced as follows:

2010/11: £1,980,000	2013/14: £1,640,000
2011/12: £1,610,000	2014/15: £1,600,000
2012/13: £1,710,000	2015/16: £1,100,000

These funding cuts have led to reductions in the number, frequency and coverage of buses across the county. A picture of the effects of the more recent cuts can be obtained from the following articles:

1. <http://newsroom.herefordshire.gov.uk/2014/july/bus-service-changes.aspx>
2. [www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/news/11385622.Changes\\_to\\_Herefordshire\\_bus\\_services/](http://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/news/11385622.Changes_to_Herefordshire_bus_services/)
3. [www.ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk/Article/Detail.aspx?ArticleUid=5DD08D97-6E3B-4977-954F-62CF8465DD56](http://www.ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk/Article/Detail.aspx?ArticleUid=5DD08D97-6E3B-4977-954F-62CF8465DD56)
4. [www.herefordtimes.com/news/11453890.Sunday\\_service\\_cut\\_on\\_many\\_county\\_bus\\_routes/](http://www.herefordtimes.com/news/11453890.Sunday_service_cut_on_many_county_bus_routes/)
5. [www.herefordtimes.com/news/11385622.Changes\\_to\\_Herefordshire\\_bus\\_services/](http://www.herefordtimes.com/news/11385622.Changes_to_Herefordshire_bus_services/)
6. [www.herefordvoice.co.uk/topic/1407-changes-to-hereford-city-bus-services-from-31-august-2014/](http://www.herefordvoice.co.uk/topic/1407-changes-to-hereford-city-bus-services-from-31-august-2014/)

Herefordshire Council is currently (October 2016) in the process of carrying out a Consultation Review into Bus and Community Transport, stating that, "We are consulting on spending for passenger transport services over the next three years due to the significant financial pressures on local authority funding from central government." (source: [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/public-transport/travelling-by-bus/bus-review-2016](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/public-transport/travelling-by-bus/bus-review-2016)).

They are appealing for members of the public to take part in the consultation. Councillor Paul Rone, cabinet member transport and roads, said: "We would like to seek the views of users and communities prior to making any further decisions. It is likely that further savings will only be achieved by withdrawing subsidies from services, which may lead to services being withdrawn. We hope that this consultation will allow us to ascertain opportunities for parish and town councils to identify what support they can provide for local transport."

The consultation has drawn criticism from some user groups, who argue that it is biased; others have pointed out that Councillor Rone should declare a conflict of interests as he owns a taxi firm in Hereford. (source: [www.herefordshirenewleaf.org.uk/node/6810](http://www.herefordshirenewleaf.org.uk/node/6810))

## Core Bus Network, bus subsidies and data on passenger numbers

According to their Local Transport Plan Strategy Consultation document, one of the priorities set out by Herefordshire Council is "continuing with our approach to support a Core Bus Network":

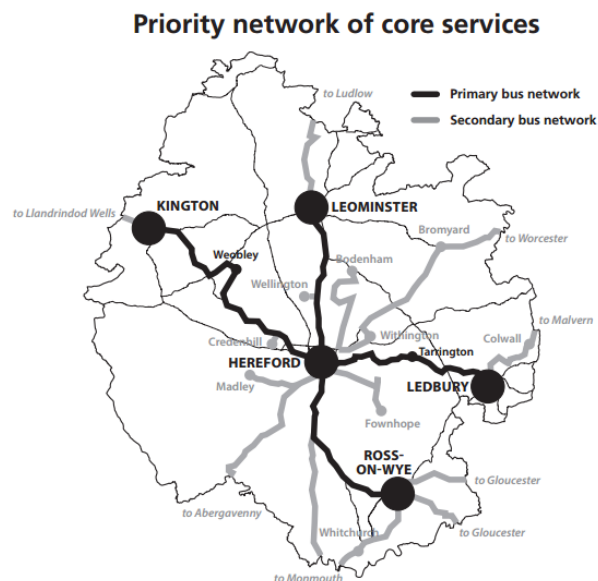
- [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/3850103/pages\\_26-36\\_local-transport-plan\\_2016-2031\\_strategy\\_consultation\\_draft.pdf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/3850103/pages_26-36_local-transport-plan_2016-2031_strategy_consultation_draft.pdf)

It is unclear from reading this document and other material published by the council, however, exactly what a Core Bus Network is and what implications it could have for public transport in the region.

The following PDF document shows the **subsidy per passenger** of various bus routes throughout Herefordshire, the **numbers of passengers using these routes** and also shows which routes are considered by the council to be **Core Bus Services**:

- [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/4835806/route\\_subsidy\\_contracts\\_showing\\_value\\_for\\_money\\_for\\_consultation\\_110716.pdf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/4835806/route_subsidy_contracts_showing_value_for_money_for_consultation_110716.pdf)

The document reveals that 9 bus routes out of the 42 described here are considered to be Core Services; of these, 2 services are to Ross on Wye. (It should be noted that this document does not mention the 32 bus service from Ross on Wye to Gloucester or the 35 service from Ross on Wye to Monmouth via Coleford, so this cannot be considered a complete list. It is possible that bus services not included on this list are those that are predominantly routed through other counties such as Gloucestershire).



(Source: [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/4835800/priority\\_network\\_of\\_core\\_services\\_bw\\_120716.pdf](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/4835800/priority_network_of_core_services_bw_120716.pdf))

Data on bus use and bus subsidies in Herefordshire, as compared to the national data and that of other local authorities, can be found in the following Government collections:

- [www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics)
- [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/485296/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2015.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/485296/annual-bus-statistics-year-ending-march-2015.pdf)

Of note from the latter document is that Herefordshire comes 82nd out of the 88 local authorities outside London in the ranking of bus passenger journeys per head in 2014/15 (Brighton and Hove is in first place with 158 bus passenger journeys per head, the highest number outside London; Herefordshire in comparison had few than 20 bus passenger journeys per head).

## Bus, coach and community transport services for Ross-on-Wye

There follows a summary of:

1. Bus services into and out of Ross-on-Wye (with maps showing town and greater area bus routes)
2. National Express coach services that stop at Ross-on-Wye
3. Journey times from Ross-on-Wye to key destinations
4. Description of Community Transport schemes

### 1a. Summary of bus services into and out of Ross-on-Wye

Service No.	Operator	Route (assume to/from RoW unless otherwise stated)	Via	Frequency (trips are per day in each direction unless otherwise stated)
31	George Youngs	Whitchurch	Glewstone	Thurs only (1 trip)
32	Stagecoach West	from Hereford (1 direc only) Gloucester-----	-- Much Birch/Kings Thorn -- Newent/ Highnam.	Mon-Fri (1 trip), Sat (2 trips) Mon-Sat (7 trips)
33	Stagecoach West	Hereford----- Gloucester-----	-- Much Birch/Kings Thorn. -- A40.	Mon-Fri (13 trips), Sat (11 trips) Mon-Sat (10 trips)
33A	Stagecoach West	Gloucester	Mitcheldean	Mon-Fri (3 trips) Sat (2 trips)
34	Stagecoach in Wye and Dean	Monmouth	Goodrich	Mon-Sat (9 trips)
35	Stagecoach West	Monmouth	English Bicknor and Coleford	Mon-Fri (6 trips), Sat (3 trips)
40	Stagecoach in Wye and Dean	RoW Circular	Greytree and John Kyrle	Mon-Fri (7 trips), Sat (5 trips)
40A	Stagecoach in Wye and Dean	RoW Tudorville Circular	Tudorville	Mon-Fri (7 trips), Sat (6 trips)
44	Stagecoach in Wye and Dean	King's Thorn		Mon-Sat (3 trips per day)
411	H&H coaches	Hereford	Whitchurch and Goodrich	Weds only
458	George	Mordiford to RoW only		Thurs only, one way only

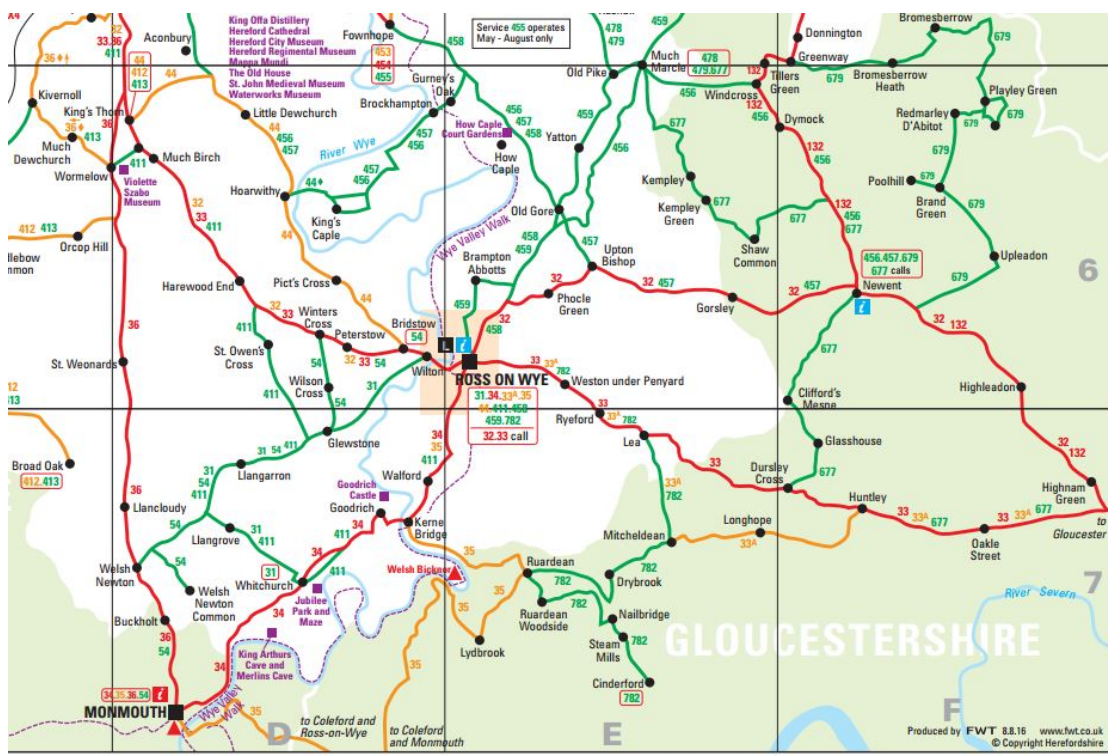
	Youngs	(1 direction only)		
459	George Youngs	Ledbury		Thurs only, one per day
782	Stagecoach West	Cinderford	Ruardean, Mitcheldean	M-F, one per day (each way)

As this table shows, several of Ross-on-Wye's bus services are operated on a skeleton basis, with just one service per day or even per week.

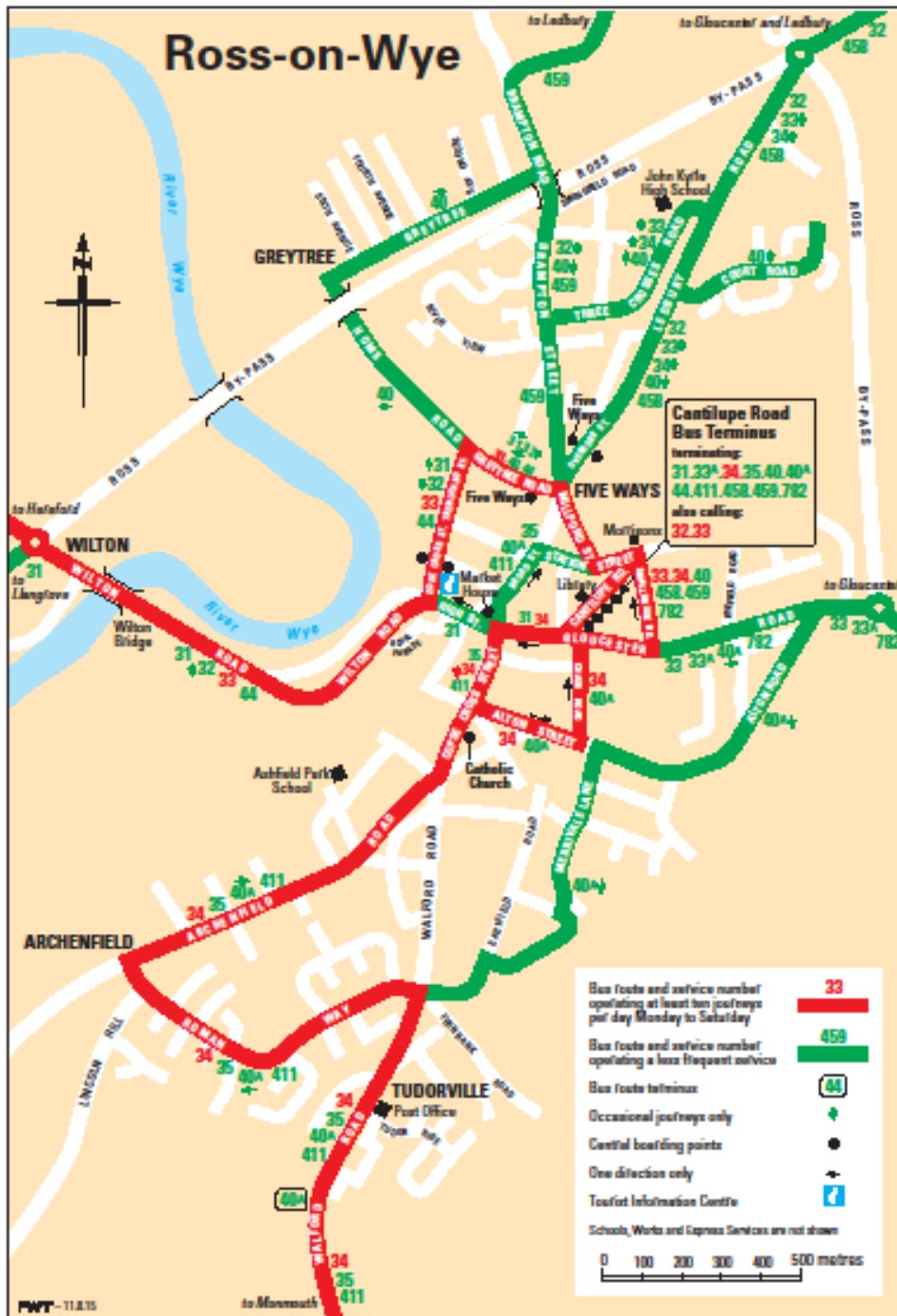
Thus the bus main services for the town are the 32 and 33 buses to/from Gloucester, the 33 bus to/from Hereford, the 34 and 35 buses to/from Monmouth and the 40 and 40A round-town circular bus services. For journey times for these destinations, see section 3.

Even these main bus services have been affected by cuts in recent years however, with both daytime and evening services being lost - see the list of links in 'Background' for details of some of these cuts. The most accurate method for analysing the bus service cuts would be to compare timetables for each bus service to the equivalent timetable from 3, 5, 10 years ago (for example). This would of course rely on the outdated timetables being stored somewhere; I don't know if this is the case. Speaking to locals is a more informal way to gain a picture of how people have been affected by cuts to bus services over the years. For example, a change that was recently reported to me anecdotally by a local teenager is the loss of a Saturday evening service (around 9pm) from Ross on Wye to Hereford, which apparently used to be very popular with young people travelling to Hereford for a night out. The latest bus service on a Saturday evening now leaves Ross at 18.47. Herefordshire Council state that the results of their current bus consultation will be made available to the public in November 2016.

### 1b. Ross-on-Wye: bus routes serving the surrounding areas



1c. Ross-on-Wye: within town bus routes



## 2. National Express coach services stopping at Ross-on-Wye

Service	To	Via	Number of services
444	London Victoria	Oxford, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Newent	Three coaches per day
445	Hereford	(Service starts in London, calling at RoW before Hereford)	Three coaches per day
343	Birmingham	Worcester	One coach per day
343	Swansea	Monmouth, Newport, Cardiff, Bridgend, Port Talbot	One coach per day

## 3. Journey times to key destinations from Ross-on-Wye (direct services only)

To	National Express	Local bus service	By Car from central RoW (for comparison)
Gloucester	30-40 minutes	33 bus: 45 minutes 32 bus: 60 minutes	35 mins (to bus/train station)
Hereford	25-35 minutes	33 bus: 40-45 minutes	35 mins (to bus station)
Monmouth	-	34 bus: 38 minutes 35 bus: 1h13	20 mins (to bus station)
London	3h30-4h15	-	2h20-3h (to Victoria coach station)
Birmingham	1h25-1h45	-	1h10-1h30 (to Birm coach station)
Cardiff	1h25	-	1h-1h15 (to Central Bus Station)
Swansea	2h35-2h45	-	1h25-1h45 (to Swansea bus station)

For most of the above journeys, the coach/bus option is not significantly slower than taking the car. However, for Monmouth and in particular for London, travelling by bus/coach takes significantly longer than travelling by car.

Anecdotally, there have been complaints that bus services don't (or no longer) link up with rail services to major destinations. For example, there used to be a bus from Ross on Wye to Gloucester that left Ross-on-Wye at 9.45am, connected with the fast train to London (with a 15 min transfer) that arrived in Paddington at 12.35pm, a total journey time of 2h50min. This is similar to the journey time by car. However, this particular bus was axed in a recent round of cuts and there are no longer (any) buses that connect efficiently with the direct London train services - surely a missed opportunity?

## 4. Community transport (CT) schemes

CT schemes provide a pre-booked, door-to-door transport service to help people get to local services, visit friends and take part in leisure activities. According to Herefordshire Council, CT provides transport if you are unable to use public transport services because:

- No public transport service is available
- No alternative transport is available at the time you need to travel
- You have limited mobility, which prevents you from using bus or train services

It can be used by Individuals or groups; able bodied people as well as those with limited mobility and wheelchair users. There are eight main Community Transport schemes within the county which operate through local voluntary organisations (and supported by the council). Schemes use a variety of vehicles including some which are adapted to carry wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. Passengers pay a contribution toward the cost of the journey, which is also subsidised by Herefordshire Council. Most schemes require 48 hours notice of the need for a journey.

(source: [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/community-transport/community-transport/what-community-transport-is-available-in-my-area](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/community-transport/community-transport/what-community-transport-is-available-in-my-area))

The CT services servicing Ross on Wye is called "Ross Area Transport". It can be contacted on 01989 765595 (Monday to Friday 09.30-12.30).

It could be argued that CT might be used to fill the gaps left by cuts to rural bus services. More research would be required before any conclusions could be drawn on this. The following articles look at some of the issues:

- [www.bettertransport.org.uk/blogs/buses/can-community-transport-fill-the-gap](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/blogs/buses/can-community-transport-fill-the-gap)
- [www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/mar/16/next-government-end-bus-cuts-crisis](http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/mar/16/next-government-end-bus-cuts-crisis)

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