



West Midlands Branch eNews

Issue 3 - August 2014

Local Growth Funding

Among the Local Growth Funding Schemes announced by the Government on July 7th, the following are in our area:

WORCESTERSHIRE PARKWAY STATION: Located on the Cotswold and X Country lines at NORTON, near Worcester, a £7.5 million grant secured, the rest of funding for the £17.1 million station expected from a loan to be repaid from car park charges. **NUCKLE:** Increase in train service and bay platform at Coventry. **CHASE LINE:** A new rail/road freight interchange at "mid-Cannock". **TRAM:** Tram line extended to Five Ways (referred to as Edgbaston in other reports). We understand that CENTRO already have powers to build this.

Local member Colin Major has contributed more information about Local Growth Funding in Worcestershire.

He has looked into the monies in Worcestershire from this fund and there is £7.1 million for the Worcestershire Parkway station and £5 million for revamping Kidderminster station as a rail and bus interchange.

The media has been full of speculation as whether the money is for Phase 1 of the Parkway or for both lines and other than saying that the County Council will submit a planning application early in 2015 they haven't issued any clarification on the details whether both phases covering Birmingham-Cheltenham and Cotswold Line and if the original concept of closing one of the two stations within Worcester City is still on. However there is a head of steam building up with 82 comments on the Worcester News website re this lack of clarity.

Colin will be speaking to contacts at Worcs. County Hall and will prepare a report on both the Parkway and Kidderminster scheme for your Committee.

Baschurch Station (contributed by Steve Boulding)

Firstly, let me emphasise that neither we, nor any other members of Baschurch Station Group (a voluntary community initiative), have any financial or other material interest in any of these matters, our only objective since formation in 2007 has been to see Baschurch Station (closed 1960) re-opened to trains. Currently, there is no station open between Shrewsbury and Gobowen (18 miles). This is ludicrous in view of the size and travel-to-work/education/leisure patterns of the local population. In fact, there have been various similar campaigns by local residents since the 1970s.

An outline planning application has been made to Shropshire Council by Shropshire Stone & Granite Ltd in respect of a small part of the land adjacent to Baschurch Station, for mixed use residential/commercial development with community parking facilities - ref. no. 14/02286/OUT.

It should be pointed out that the owners of Shropshire Stone and Granite Ltd., which has occupied the old station yard for many years, have not solicited the interest of developers for their land - it's the developers who have been approaching them on many occasions in recent years. If they do ultimately decide to sell the whole yard, a substantial part of the proceeds will in any case be swallowed up by the cost of purchasing a new site for their business, and re-locating a lot of heavy machinery, etc.

As a local family, they want what's best for Baschurch, and have submitted this smallish application as much as anything to try to establish exactly what the Council's attitude is towards this part of Baschurch, and the potential for getting the station re-opened sooner rather than later. They have made it clear that they want any increase in the area's land values as a result of development potential to help with assembling the funding package for the station's re-opening.

They are also, as indeed are many of us locally, very concerned about the current owner of the Station House, who although in very reasonable health for a man of his age (87), is in no position to give this historic listed building the routine maintenance it urgently requires, let alone begin the process of full restoration. They would be willing to relieve him of the burden by offering him a fair price for it (allowing for the amounts needing to be spent on it), so that he can move to more suitable accommodation, but are unable to commit to this unless they have some positive indication from the Council about the future of the whole area.

Suggested uses for the refurbished building have included any or all of the following: gourmet restaurant, booking office/waiting room/cafe for railway passengers and others, antique shop, community meeting room, flats or apartments, small offices or craft workshops for start-up businesses, and so on. The crucial thing is to ensure financial stability for its future maintenance.

We would therefore ask you to consider taking a few minutes to write to or e-mail Shropshire Council, Planning Dept., Shirehall, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND (planning@shropshire.gov.uk) in support of the application, quoting 14/02286/OUT. There's no need to go into any great detail, just indicate that you feel it would be appropriate to the site and good for the economic well-being of the area, or helpful to the objective of station re-opening, or whatever you think appropriate. All comments, supportive or otherwise, must be taken into account by the Council. There is a log-in procedure via Shropshire Council's Planning Portal website for making comments, but it shouldn't be necessary to go through all that rigmarole unless you really want to. They can't ignore ordinary letters or e-mails sent to them about planning applications.

Coventry Railway Station master-plan

Here is a link to a report on developing Coventry Station

http://www.cwlep.com/userFiles/coventry_station_report_20.3.14_low_res.pdf

Comments from Les Fawcett (31 July 2014):

While it's encouraging that NetRail are involved in a major plan, some aspects realise our fears. True, the station needs more capacity but does that need to be by splitting it in two, needing 3 ticket barriers in place of 1? Do they have to cut the taxi space when the streets leading to the station are regularly blocked with them. Do we want to make people, especially disabled, walk further? Is retail space so precious that we have to have one underground? Do we want a bus station as remote as the Nuneaton line platform? Despite all the work proposed, the Nuneaton platform will still be accessible without passing barriers.

I think it will become more common for people to book a specific seat as congestion increases, so they will want to get on the train where their seat is rather than get on at the end and find the nearest available one.

The tunnel proposed under Warwick Road is a better option than walking from the car park up steps, across the road then down the other side, as proposed in the Nuckle plan before it stalled. But it seems a bit lavish at 6m wide. It would be less disruptive to close half of Warwick Rd at a time and put the traffic in contraflow, tunnelling conventionally, rather than digging up all of the road as seems to be implied.

I would prefer to keep the existing building, adding escalators and linking the lift bridge to the main pedestrian bridge to collect and disperse passengers from a larger area of the platforms. I agree with the heritage people's wish to restore the newsagent to its original size, making the ticket barriers wider, and to clear out the junk from the lovely big booking hall.

I want to move the proposed car park from the wrong side of Warwick Road to the station side, and to wrap the bus route around it so passengers can be dropped off by the covered way.

CENTRO Car Parking Enforcement

Be warned - Centro is introducing car park enforcement at Park & Ride sites in September 2014. A full briefing note containing all the relevant information that you and your colleagues will require is due to be compiled and distributed over the next couple of weeks.

Leaflets and posters are being produced to be placed at stations and on the counter at ticket offices to inform passengers. Centro will also be leafleting cars prior to the commencement of enforcement (between the 26/08/2014 - 12/09/2014)

Do you foresee any issues with this or have any concerns? As one who has been caught with an unexpected £60 parking charge fee at a local trading area I advise everyone using a car to park at a station I recommend looking very carefully for warning notices.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Erica Pearson (EricaPearson@centro.org.uk).

Let's Bring Back the Lines We Need Today

Have you seen the note from Chris Austin on p.6 of the July 2014 edition of Railwatch?

Our committee member Peter Rowland has had a first go at producing a response covering aspirations for our region:

In no particular order:-

1. Gobowen to Oswestry. The need here is for a shuttle service linking Oswestry with the ATW services at Gobowen. The track is in situ but in poor condition. There is a loop at Gobowen currently used for locomotives to run round freight trains. There is a bay platform there. Work would be needed on the level crossing over the A5. An intermediate station could serve the large Orthopaedic Hospital.

2. Wolverhampton to Walsall. The need here is for a shuttle service of 3-4 trains per hour linking these two large towns. It would be both of use for local passengers and also give access to WCML services at Wolverhampton. The line is in good order, is electrified and is used by freight, empty stock movements etc. There is a need for an intermediate station at Willenhall. The parallel road (A451) is heavily congested and bus routes much used. The rail journey would be up to ½ the time of the bus. There was a 1 tph service until a few years ago.

3. Walsall to Aldridge and the Sutton Park Line. There are two parts to this potential re-opening. The line is in situ throughout:

a) **Aldridge** (a small town also a suburb of Walsall) needs a service into Walsall and then on to Birmingham. This section needs electrification, additional signalling beyond Ryecroft Junction and improved turn back facilities at Aldridge. Also Walsall station is congested, so turning back New Street

services at Aldridge reduces platform dwell times at Walsall. It was hoped to do all this work as part of the Chase Line electrification from Walsall to Rugeley.

b) **Sutton Park Line** (Aldridge to Water Orton / Castle Bromwich and thence to New Street) There is a need for the return of passenger services to this line through Sutton Coldfield. It would provide much needed local services into Birmingham. Additional signalling would be needed to reduce headways. Such services would also serve replaced and new stations such as The Fort along the Derby to Birmingham line from Castle Bromwich into the city, again providing much needed local services given the congested roads and slow bus times in the area.

4. Birmingham Moor Street to King's Norton / Tamworth. (The Camp Hill {or Bordesley} Chords). The core of this proposal is the construction of two new chord lines diverging from the Chiltern main line just to the south east of Moor Street station near the site of the (little used) Bordesley station. These chords would rise to join the Camp Hill line. All other lines are in situ. These proposed services would utilise the currently under-used terminal platforms 3 and 4 at Moor Street which currently are laid as well as platform 5 which would need relaying.

a) **South chord.** This would permit an inner suburban service to be introduced along the Camp Hill line to King's Norton (and potentially beyond towards Barnt Green, Redditch or Bromsgrove). New stations could be provided at Moseley, Hazelwell, King's Heath etc. This line would benefit from electrification, to allow integrated running with the Cross City south service which joins it at King's Norton. Additional signalling would be needed to reduce headways. This route parallels the Alcester Road (A435) out of Birmingham which is one of the most congested routes into the city.

b) **North chord.** This would provide a route into Birmingham from the Nuneaton & Tamworth lines (see 3b) that removes services from the congested New Street station and its approaches from the north east.

5. Stratford-upon-Avon to Honeybourne. This would return trains to the line south of Stratford to join with the Cotswold line near Honeybourne. Currently the southern part of this route, from Long Marston remains laid and open, so what is needed is to relay the final few miles from there to Stratford, as well as relaying the north to east chord at Honeybourne to allow trains to run directly from Stratford to Oxford and Paddington. Current services from London and Stratford are poor, when the tourist pull of that town is considered. The formation has been encroached on in Stratford town, but work has been done to identify appropriate civil engineering solutions. The ex-MOD site at Long Marston is slowly being built on so there will be a demand for an extension of the existing commuter services from Birmingham to Stratford.

6. Lichfield to Burton-on-Trent. This would return trains north from Lichfield TV and Sutton Coldfield towards Burton and Derby. The track is in situ and is used by freight and e.c.s. workings to Central Rivers depot. There is a need for an intermediate station at Alrewas which would serve the National Memorial Arboretum which lies close by to the proposed station site.

7. Stourbridge Junction to Dudley, Walsall and Lichfield. This route is currently only open or in situ in sections although the formation has been protected. If reopened it would provide a much-needed alternative freight route through the west Midlands conurbation that avoids congested sections of the WCML and other routes. It also avoids the Lickey incline. There is also a need for local passenger services along the route through the Black Country, involving the reopening of stations such as Dudley, Dudley Port and Wednesbury. An extension southwards from Wednesbury of the Midland Metro has been proposed over part of this route; hopefully engineering solutions can be found to allow both heavy and light rail to share the formation.

This is a 'snap-shot' of the situation across our region. Omitted are committed schemes where funding is in place, such as the new station at Kenilworth, NUCKLE, or the work on the Redditch branch and at Bromsgrove.

What do you think? Have we missed any lines out? Please feel free to hack this about and e-mail your points to steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk.

Passenger Focus newsletter "Passenger Voice"- August 2014

Readers of Railfuture west Midlands eNews who subscribe to it by e-mail also received the latest Passenger Focus bulletin, which include their annual report highlighting their work over the past year:

<http://email.passengerfocus.org.uk/passengerfocus/lz.aspx?p1=051235S548209&w=867&cID=0&cValue=1>

The Passenger Focus bulletin included a case study of compensation problems when travelling with more than one train company. It is repeated here as it is relevant to West Midlands readers.

A passenger purchased an annual season ticket between a station in Surrey and London. This journey uses the services of two different train companies.

When he tried to claim compensation for journeys he was delayed on, both companies refused with each one advising him it was the other company's responsibility. He contacted Passenger Focus for our assistance after nearly six months of trying to resolve the issue directly with the train companies.

Under the terms of their Passenger's Charter, train companies have to compensate season-ticket holders for poor performance. Compensation becomes more complicated if the passenger's journey is made on the services of more than one company as performance is usually judged by the services of the company on the route serving the station where the ticket was bought.

He was at first refused because the passenger was delayed on the second train company's services.

Passenger Focus took the matter up with both the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and the Department for Transport as we shared the passenger's view that this was unfair. We were pleased to learn that both companies have finally agreed to offer compensation to this passenger and arranged to work together to prevent the situation occurring again in the future.

The next Railfuture West Midlands eNews will be issue 4 in September 2014.

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