

Our strategy for the Market Towns and rural areas

Rural Herefordshire is characterised by high quality landscapes and townscapes, an agricultural economy, a very low population density and an extensive road network. For most people the car is and will remain the main mode of transport. However, with an increasing elderly population, families on low incomes and young people without their own transport, many people are reliant on public transport and other transport services to access education, work, shopping and health care. We are particularly aware that transport services are vital in helping elderly people and people with disabilities to remain independent and that this is very important for their wellbeing and helps reduce overall costs of healthcare and social isolation.

Challenges:

- Extensive network to keep open and safe, and seasonal pressures around agricultural activities
- Rural roads present safety problems – increasing trend in KSIs
- Maintaining basic levels of access with increasing revenue pressures and demands
- Ensuring new development does not have negative impact on local transport networks and that we can help residents live healthier lives

Opportunities:

- Good rail access at Leominster and Ledbury – connectivity to Hereford and other regional centres, long distance connections
- Recent investment of £20M in the network largely in rural areas has provided a sound base for asset management
- Balanced growth proposals will help sustain communities providing potential demand to help sustain core bus network, limited impact in terms of highway capacity
- Specific proposal for Leominster requiring southern link – reroute a proportion of through and commercial traffic to reduce congestion and AQMA problems
- Contributions from new development to help support local transport improvements and buses/community transport
- High levels of volunteering could be harnessed for transport and local maintenance approaches
- Total Transport Fund programme funded by DfT will review further opportunities for integration and coordination to increase access opportunities



Key strategy elements:

- A targeted asset management approach delivering value for money and resilience to ensure access for all our rural communities
- Focussing key aspects of service delivery through local areas by supporting volunteers to develop their own solutions to issues ranging from road maintenance, traffic impacts and Neighbourhood Plans.
- Targeted road safety programme to address the recent increase in KSIs and coordinate road safety with other promotional activity including active travel and health
- Negotiation with private developers to ensure on and off site measures to limit the traffic demands from new developments and encourage active modes, road safety and access for people without private car
- Continuing with our approach to support a core bus network by concluding and delivering the recommendation of the TTF review:
- Developing rail access improvements with station reviews (Leominster and Ledbury) to consider parking, integration with bus services, cycle access and disabled access.
- Maintaining the PROW network to help the tourist industry and local residents.
- Market town centre transport studies for Ledbury and Leominster to review requirements set out in the Core Strategy and Neighbourhood plans
- Working in partnership with schools to develop and implement a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy to encourage more walking, cycling and bus journeys to school and reduce the numbers of short distance car journeys.

Key improvements comprise:

- Investment in asset management of around £100M+ over the LTP period
- Targeted road safety highway improvements of around £250K per year
- Working with local communities to design and deliver Village Gateways
- Road safety education programme in partnership with West Midlands Constabulary, targeting young road users
- Infrastructure to support growth as set out in the Core Strategy such as the Leominster Southern Link Road.



Herefordshire and Market Towns Rural Transport Strategy

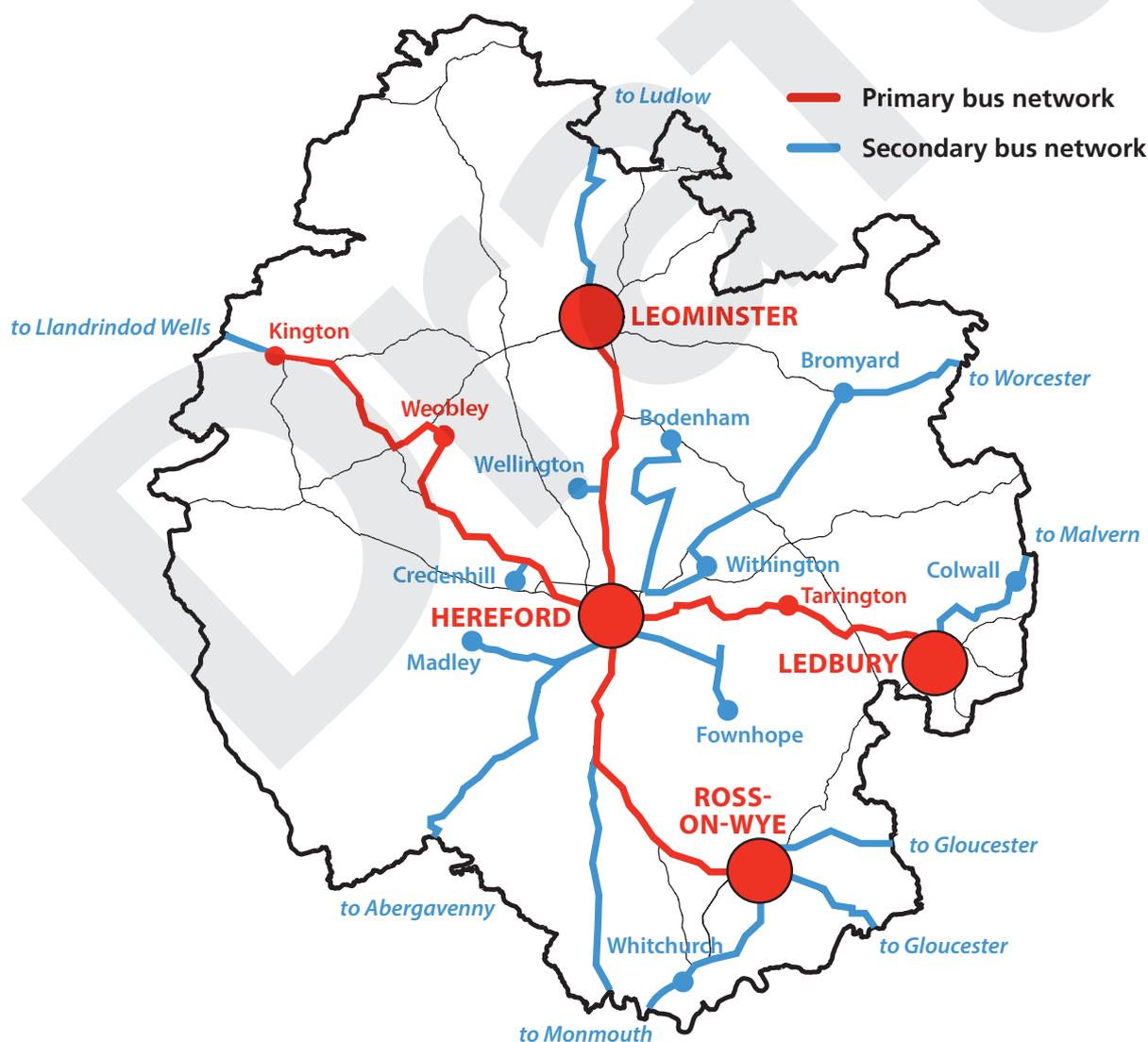
| Policy Area | Activity |
|---------------------|---|
| Passenger transport | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural transport hubs including park and share• Core network of bus services• Total transport project - health, education, community, subsidised and commercial bus services• SMART ticketing• Improved access and parking at Leominster and Ledbury stations• Lobbying for rail service capacity and infrastructure improvements |
| Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leominster - Bargates, southern link road• Working with developers to deliver new roads and active travel measures to support development at Ross, Ledbury and Kington |
| Road safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Village Gateway schemes• Accident investigation and prevention• Minor safety improvements• School crossing patrols• Road safety training and promotion |
| Maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic network management• Bridges, culverts and retaining walls• Surfacing, kerbing and potholes• Drainage and flooding• Winter services• Parks, trees, landscaping and verges• Signals, signs and lines• Public rights of way• Emergency response and support• Street cleaning and lighting |



Passenger transport

In a rural county like Herefordshire with a small population there are not enough people to enable bus operators to operate all services commercially. Of the 3.1 million bus journeys made each year in Herefordshire, around 39% are supported by a financial subsidy from the council. We have recently completed a process to identify savings by working with bus operators on solutions and consulting with the public. The result is a 'core network' of bus services that operate between the market towns and larger villages and Hereford on a regular pattern during the day from Monday to Saturday.

Priority network of core bus services



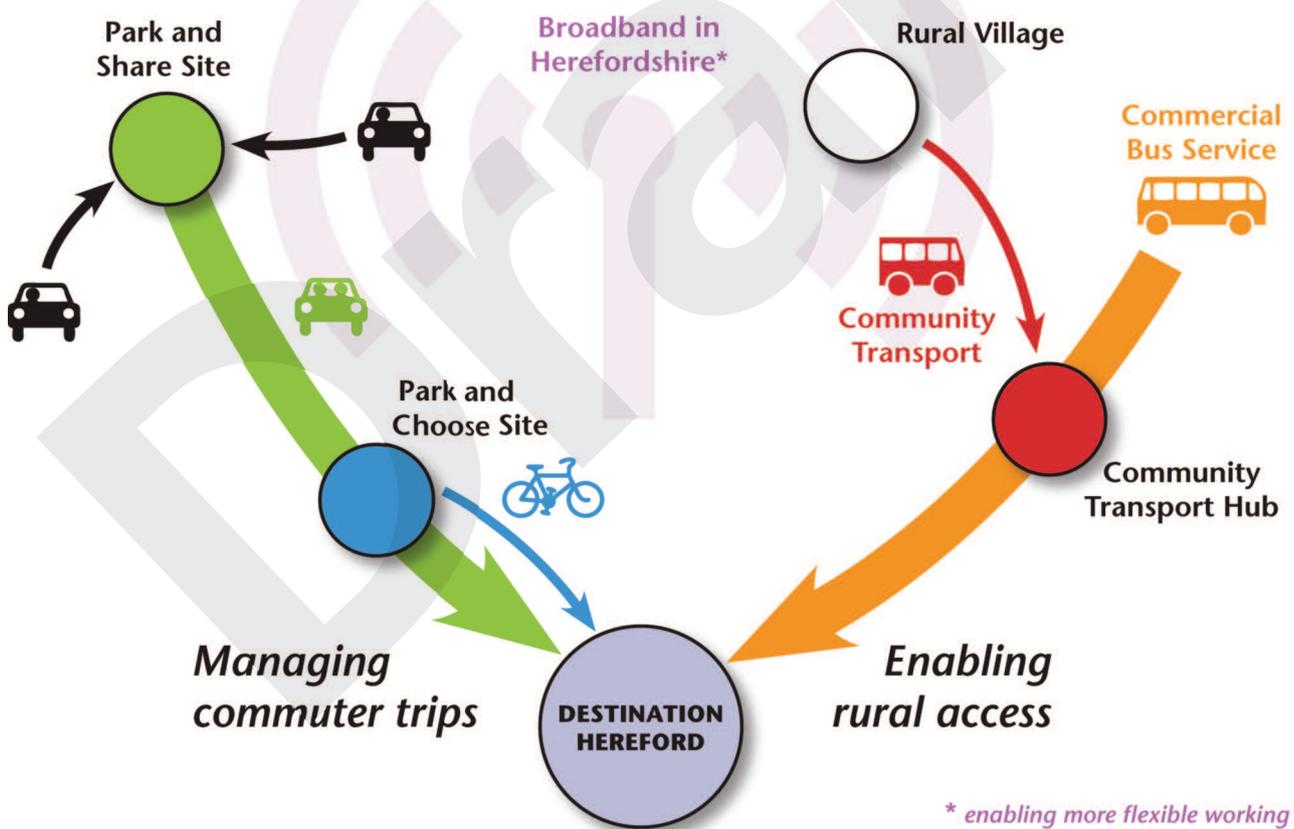
Passenger transport priorities

- Maintain a 'Core Network' of bus services
- Develop community transport to assist feeder service routes
- Assist and improve bus operator contracts including a Quality Bus Partnership
- Lobby at a national level for additional rural transport funding and for more capacity for Wales and Borders and Birmingham Lines such as double track between Shelwick junction and Great Malvern
- Introduce rural transport hubs at key stops with cycle parking, high quality shelters and 'real time' information.
- Better coordinate health, education, community, subsidised and commercial bus services. We are establishing how this could be achieved through our Total Transport project.
 - Contract integration and efficiencies to reduce costs and protect services
 - greater service integration and coordination to improve information for users.
 - multi operator ticketing to simplify journey planning
 - integrating rural services with rail services and improving access for bus users in Hereford
- Deliver 'SMART' ticketing across the network to make it easier to use bus services
- Work with network rail and train operating companies to deliver more parking at Leominster and Ledbury stations
- Fully engage with DfT and Welsh Government in re-franchising opportunities to secure further service improvements.



We are delivering a network of locations where car drivers or connecting transport services (such as community transport) can meet other drivers to car share or transfer to other modes such as bus, cycling or rail. Typically, these Park and Choose sites provide free parking and where possible will be located in rural settlements or businesses to help sustain the rural economy. This initiative delivers a number of benefits:

- Reduce costs of parking at the eventual destination and reduce petrol costs on the shared part of the journey
- Provide access to the bus/rail network for those who are not within walking distance of a bus stop/rail station (senior citizens and disabled people would then be able to complete their journey for free using their bus pass)
- Enabling rural commuters to incorporate cycling/walking into their trip and avoiding congestion (relates to Park and Choose on the outskirts of Hereford and market towns)
- Free up time for parents and others who might normally drive friends and family all the way to a destination. Similarly, could enable community transport drivers to provide more journeys in rural areas if they make shorter trips to hubs for bus services rather than longer distance door to door journeys.



Development

We will develop a transport plan for Leominster that includes proposals for the public realm in the town centre, increasing parking at Leominster station and explores how a southern link road with complementary active travel measures could work for the town. We will also be working closely with Network Rail to understand and mitigate the impacts of the re-signalling project on the Mill Street level crossing.

We will also develop a transport plan for Ledbury that includes proposals for the public realm in the town centre and additional parking at the station. We will be working closely with developers to plan and deliver road and active travel schemes required to support the Core Strategy housing allocations at Ross, Bromyard and Kington.



Road Safety and Maintenance

Herefordshire has an exceptional track record in reducing the most serious road traffic casualties over the past decade. This has been achieved through a combination of targeted safety improvements based on an intelligent analysis of accident locations, education and training, and integration of safety improvement measures within standard maintenance works. However, our accident statistics over the past 18 months show that the downward trend has stopped and accidents may be on the increase. We are working with West Mercia Police to identify the reasons for this change.



A recent road safety scheme on Holme Lacy Road.

Maintaining the overall network to a high standard will be a challenge – our capital allocations have reduced over the past 5 years and revenue funding is under severe pressure. It is critical in this context that we invest the available funding in the most effective way we can. This means focussing more of our efforts on preventative maintenance and shifting the balance away from reactive works. This shift in approach will not affect our standards for treating the most serious defects promptly so that safety will be maintained.

The winter of 2013/14 saw much disruption to the nation's transport network as a result of prolonged periods of extreme weather. As a result many thousands road users were effected. In response the Secretary of State commissioned a review of the resilience of the nation's transport network resulting in the 2014 Transport Resilience Review. This report recommended that Local Highway Authorities identify a 'resilient network' to which they will give priority in order to maintain economic activity and access to key services during extreme weather. In response we have identified a strategic network (see plan overleaf) and we will prioritise the maintenance of that network:

The network will ensure that:

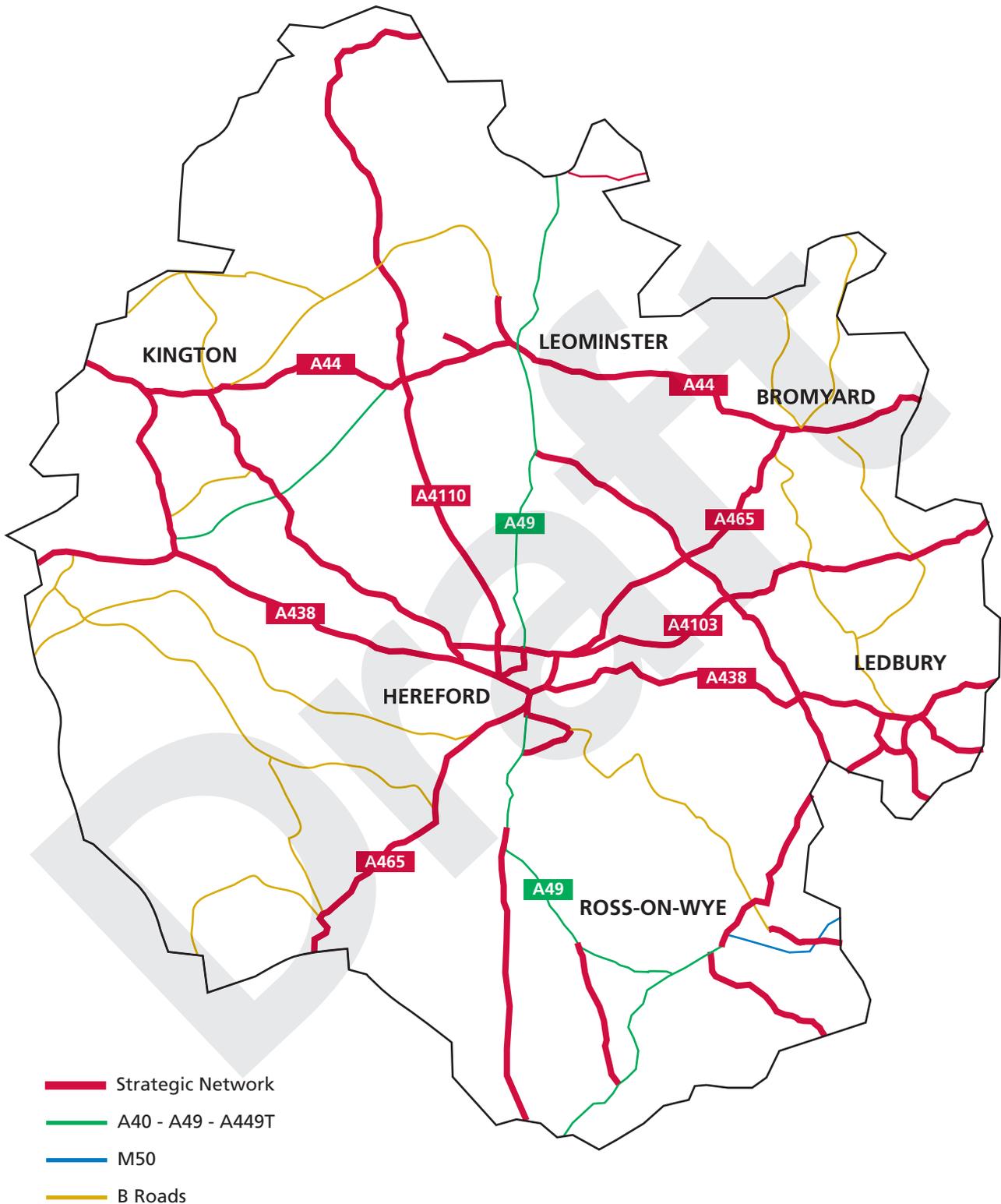
- Main towns are connected to other main towns internally within the county and also outside Herefordshire using principal roads or via the trunk road network.
- Access to the following are protected:
 - Main business parks
 - hospitals
 - railway stations
 - principal Ministry of Defence sites
 - waste sites.

- Hereford crematorium.
- special schools and disabled colleges.
- Local Authority depots.
- principal retail areas in Hereford and the Market Towns

We already have a well-established parish lengthsman scheme which provides resource and support to local communities to deliver some highways services locally. This is a rewarding approach which has seen local communities take control over issues such as local gritting in severe weather, clearing drainage to help reduce flooding problems and verge clearance to improve safety at junctions. We want to develop local delivery of schemes further and will work with local communities to assess what other highways services can be delivered more effectively by local people.



Proposed Strategic Network in response to the 2014 Transport Resilience Review



Evaluation and Monitoring

To monitor the effectiveness of the LTP we have set several indicators that we will report on annually in our annual performance report. This will allow us to track progress and monitor the effectiveness of our measures and schemes.

| Performance | Indicator |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Road condition | The percentage of road network in poor condition |
| Emissions | Nitrogen dioxide and particulate levels in Air Quality Management Areas CO2 from transport |
| Transport volumes and journey times | Annual average daily and peak hour traffic flows on routes in Hereford and on rural routes across the county Annual average off-road cycle flows in Hereford Annual average walking volumes on selected routes Annual average journey times and peak hour journey times on selected routes in Hereford |
| Public transport | Urban and community transport bus patronage Rail ticket sales |
| Road safety | People killed or seriously injured by mode |
| Health | Percentage of Herefordshire population not meeting the government's physical activity level targets. Percentage of Herefordshire population classed as overweight |