

WIRRAL TRANSPORT USER

Newsletter of the Wirral Transport Users Association

Summer 2017

Welcome to our latest issue of Wirral Transport User.

Our AGM will be held on Monday 31st July at the YMCA Birkenhead 7.30pm (19.30Hrs) Our guest speaker is Councillor Liam Robinson talking about Bus Developments

We give details of Liverpool Airport's Master Plan to 2050 consultation.

We look at proposed subsidised bus changes from September on Wirral

Stadler's artists impression of their new trains for Merseyrail ----->



The easiest way to explain the development of new trains for Merseyrail is to reproduce Stadler's press **release from February**
STADLER SIGNS CONTRACT TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN 52 METRO

TRAINS FOR LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

16/02/2017 –
Stadler has today signed a transformative deal with Merseytravel worth up to £700 million build and maintain 52 metro trains on the Merseyrail network for the Liverpool City Region from 2020. Replacing one of the oldest fleets in the UK, the new trains will provide fully step free access for all passengers, making Merseyrail the most accessible traditional network in the UK. A new Kirkdale maintenance depot will be entirely designed, built and operated by Stadler.

The current Merseytravel fleet is one of the oldest in the UK, with an average age of almost 40 years. This contract will entirely replace the existing fleet, making it one of the most

modern in the country and transforming the passenger experience. The trains will be able to carry 60% more passengers, while retaining the same number of seats, and will cut journey times by up to 10%.

The new four-car trains will all be in service by 2021, with the first unit arriving for testing by the middle of 2019. The value of the manufacture and maintenance contracts for the 52 trains is up to £700m and Merseytravel also has the option to trigger the manufacture of a further 60 vehicles.

The trains will have lower floors, only 960 mm above rail level, and will be entirely walk-

through, increasing their capacity to 486 people (182 seated, 302 standing, and two wheelchair users). Strong but lightweight carriages, built from aluminium extrusions, mean they will be safer and more energy efficient.

The 64.98 metres long and 2.82 metres wide trains will operate on a 750V DC third rail network with a maximum speed of 75 mph (120 km/h). The units will also be equipped with batteries that allow independent movement of the units in the workshop and depot areas. The trains will be able to be retrofitted for 25 kV AC operation and ETCS Level II.

Transforming safety

The new vehicles have been designed for the specific needs of customers travelling on the Merseyrail network, with many features reflecting what people said they wanted in research done by passenger watchdog, Transport Focus, in 2013.

Providing a new level of safety, intelligent sliding steps, combined with infrastructure improvements, will virtually eliminate the gap between the platform and the train, providing step free access at all entrances. With no 'gap to mind', the new fleet will be highly accessible for all, from wheelchair users and the elderly, to cyclists and passengers with luggage. Sensitive door sensors will detect obstructions, while door illuminations will inform passengers when it is safe to embark and alight.

On-board safety will be enhanced by open and airy compartments with no dividing doors, as well as CCTV and a transparent cabin for the driver. The trains will have wider aisles, larger vestibules at the doorways, more grab handles, making the train safer to use for standing passengers too.

All the interior fittings will be damage resistant and the exterior will be graffiti and spray paint resistant. The driver's cab offers a comfortable working environment with enhanced sight lines, an ergonomic desk arrangement and all of the functionality required for flexible, modern trains.

Transforming Stadler's presence in the UK

Through the maintenance contract, Stadler will undertake light and heavy maintenance of the units throughout their 35 year life cycle. Ensuring the highest possible availability of trains and the most efficient maintenance

turnaround, Stadler will design, construct and operate a brand new, state of the art depot at Kirkdale. Stadler will also oversee the maintenance of the existing fleet, which will be carried out at the current facility in Birkenhead.

Stadler will transfer 155 maintenance workers from Merseyrail into its own operations, bringing the total number of Stadler employees in the UK to over 200 people by 2019.

Peter Jenelten, Executive Vice President and Head of Marketing & Sales of Stadler said: "This contract with Merseytravel marks a very important milestone for Stadler in the UK. It will bring safer, more comfortable trains that can carry more people and will help provide the Liverpool City Region with the metro service it deserves.

"The UK is a key part of our global strategy and this contract represents the latest step in our growth here. We have recently been successful in several high profile tenders, including the provision of 58 multiple units for the East Anglia franchise and the delivery of 17 metro trains for the Glasgow Subway, and we now look forward to working with Merseytravel to deliver its new trains on schedule."

Frank Rogers, Chief Executive of Merseytravel said: "We are very much looking forward to working with Stadler. The fleet of new trains will provide the foundations of our City Region's long term rail strategy and we anticipate our relationship with Stadler developing into a strong, enduring partnership.

Merseyrail is already high performing network and these trains, designed with local people in mind, will help support that for decades to come. The new trains will be safer and able to carry more people, more quickly and,

when combined with infrastructure improvements, the new fleet will make Merseyrail the most accessible traditional network in the UK."

All the above is swiss company Stadler's official press release which effectively summarises the new train situation for Merseyrail.

Questions?

Why does Merseytravel have an option for a further 60 trains?

It is all part of the 30 year plan where further lines may be electrified and brought into the Merseyrail Electrics orbit.

For example, Kirkby to Skelmersdale and possibly beyond to Wigan.

Extending the Liverpool, Wirral Chester service to link with HS2 at Crewe, Diversion of local City Line Services to the City Centre via Wapping tunnel before HS2 arrives in Lime Street. Eventual Bidston to Wrexham electrification.

Most of the extra trains will need to be dual voltage to operate on 750v DC and 25,000v AC. Although they will have batteries for in depot movement, within a few years battery technology may have advanced so that battery fitted trains could operate on none electrified lines.

Will extra work be needed before the new trains can run on Merseyrail? Yes, power supply will have to be stabilised at 750v. At the moment it can vary.

Platform heights may need to be standardised. eg at Chester there is quite a drop from the train to the platform, which will probably need to be eliminated. Will guards be abolished? That is the plan but some trains, not all, will have a customer service person on board for assistance and emergency situations. It seems to be a DfT requirement that new trains are Driver only Controlled. This has caused some problems, not only here, but also in the London area.

What concerns a lot of people, particularly women on their own, is the lack of a second person on some trains. Perhaps a 5 pence fare increase would cover the extra costs involved in manning of all trains.

We look forward to the arrival of the first train in 2 years time.

Liverpool Airport News

Master Plan Consultation

Liverpool John Lennon Airport 33 is to set out its plans for future developments and continued expansion of its business through to 2030 and to 2050 as it launches its updated Airport Master Plan as part of a four week public consultation which finishes on Monday 24th July. You can get fuller details (almost 100 pages) on their website on which there is a response form for you to complete. Some of the proposals are not new as they were included in the plan on which were consulted about 10 years ago.

The Airport has plans to serve more destinations including long haul, with passenger forecasts indicating the potential to grow passenger numbers from 4.8 million passengers per year in 2016 to 7.8 million by 2030, and to 11 million by 2050. These increases will require investment in a proposed expansion of the terminal building, additional car parking, passenger facilities including hotels, retail, food and drink services and a short extension of the runway.

There is also potential to grow cargo operations at the airport, to attract specialist aviation businesses and to develop a cluster of related high quality employment opportunities.

The investments in the Airport's physical infrastructure has a potential to increase the total annual Gross Value Added impact to £625 million, and will enable it to support 12,280 jobs across the City Region by 2030. This will also benefit the wider Northern Powerhouse too.

The Master Plan also considers the environmental effects of the proposals and includes measures to ensure that adverse impacts are identified and wherever possible mitigated. Despite the increased activity, the overall impacts of noise on surrounding areas is expected to be reduced as improvements in aircraft technology result in quieter aircraft and more focused flight paths.

The Master Plan will create opportunities for new employment space and an extension to the existing Speke Garston Coastal Reserve along the Mersey shoreline.

Other Airport News

Currently Airport numbers in 2017 are on target to exceed 5 million passengers this year. 6 regular airlines operate from here and a number of new routes have been introduced including 4 by Blue Air the Roumanian based airline which has now using Liverpool as a new base and has stationed, for the moment, one of its aircraft here.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport Master Plan To 2050

Public consultation

Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) is in the process of updating its Master Plan, setting out its plans for future development and growth until 2050.

Help us shape a 'Faster, Easier, and Friendlier' airport.



Liverpool John Lennon Airport
Faster. Easier. Friendlier.

Wirral Bus Plans - see also back page.

From September, many of the subsidised bus routes will be withdrawn or radically altered. This is part of a plan to save £5million over 5 years. Taking into account the 1.5 million population in the city region this works out at just one penny per day per person. This is peanuts in relation to total expenditure and ruins the current network.

Merseytravel have tried with rerouting some retained services to make sure everyone has a nearby bus service, but it won't necessarily take you to where you want to go.

For example the 112 runs from Poulton Lancelyn every 30 minutes to New Ferry. It will be replaced by the current 84/85 Heswall/Clatterbridge service rerouted to eliminate Thornton Hough but include Poulton Lancelyn and go via Brimstage for the first time. It will still be possible to travel from Poulton Lancelyn to New Ferry by changing (300 yard walk) to a 410 to Townfield Lane and changing to a 464. A 15 minute journey could now take 40 minutes or more depending on timings of the connecting buses.

A number of commercial bus services will change at the same time in September, some with reduced frequencies. You cannot blame Merseytravel, they are caught up in the government's austerity policy.



LEEK & RUDYARD RAILWAY 17th June 2017 - Simon Wilkinson.

Excursions 2016 & 2017

On this page we show some pictures from our recent excursions. One in September last year when we covered the Bala Lake Railway, and part of the Welsh Highland. The second is our first excursion of this year when we again visited

The Bala Lake Railway - Jim Anderson



two very different railways - the Rudyard Lake Railway of 10 1/4 inch gauge and the Churnet Valley Railway, standard gauge. Both railways are on portions of the trackbed of the old North



On the Churnet Valley Railway - Jim Anderson

Staffordshire Railway. We have an apology to make to about 6 of our members where details of this year's outing were sent by email but bounced back as being incorrect addresses. We will find out the correct addresses for next time.

The Welsh Highland Railway - Mike Laycock



Chester Area News and Developments

By Dennis Harrison

TRANSPORT NEWS, CHESTER & CHESTER / E'PORT to LIVERPOOL LINES

1. Chester Railway Station

Nearby at the Business Quarter development, the first office block, 1 City place, has attracted its fifth tenant thus adding more potential passengers for rail services. Our proposals for extending the daytime 15 minute frequency on Merseyrail acquire further impetus. Other major customers work at the West Cheshire Hospital and use the Bache Station.

New services from Liverpool using the Halton Chord, Leeds and the Wrexham line could require extra platforms and track alterations in the future. Chester station, the busiest in the area, suffers from a lack of available through platforms.

2. Timetable Changes

8 - Class 319 units are being adapted to also run on diesel power and are expected to be used somewhere in the North West.

The cherished North Wales Coast - Chester - Manchester Airport trains are set to continue at least for another year.



Merseyrail Wirral Line services to Chester are still unchanged, except for loop work changes until June 18th. We await new trains. Lack of parking at Bache and Spital is still a deterrent to increased patronage. We have responded to Cheshire West and Chester's parking strategy document which includes that at railway stations. Also we are assisting Merseytravel in doing survey of car and bicycle parking use at Wirral Line stations at the request of TravelWatch NW.

Photos - Dennis Harrison

The New Bus Station CHESTER



Photos - Dennis Harrison

Chester Area News Continued

We still await improvements to Chester - Shrewsbury line services. The double tracking from Saltney Junction to Rossett is in use now with no increase in trains.

Virgin London services from Chester and North Wales continue to run hourly as previously and Arriva Trains Wales services are largely unchanged. Still the last weekday train at 22.00 from London to Crewe misses the last train from Crewe to Chester by a mere 2 minutes.

Chester Bus Exchange saw its last buses on June 4th and these transferred to the new bus station on June 5th. Sealand Road P & R, Nantwich, Northwich and Warrington X30 services deserted the Bus Exchange earlier and are running from the far end of Foregate St. Frodsham St. was partly closed for streetworks in the latter part of 2016 and was not complete until May with all buses diverted to temporary stops whilst Gorse Stacks Bus Interchange was in its latter stages of construction. Rail Link, Park & Ride and Chester city services from Saltney and the east side plus Guilden Sutton have returned to Frodsham St. What additional stops will be made to serve Storyhouse (now open), the Northgate Development (starting soon) to meet the needs of local people. Some 3 bus pull ins were shown on plans in the past by the Inner Ring Road and a stop is being created outside Storyhouse.

The opening of Gorse Stacks has seen the operation of Free Bus 200 between there, George St. and the market (by old Bus Exchange) every 15 mins. to try and reduce the disbenefits for people who want to go there. The market traders are obviously not happy that it is necessary to catch two buses (taking much longer) or walk so making its location less convenient. They are clearly losing trade which will at least last till the Northgate Development is completed in a few years. The opening of Gorse Stacks has been accompanied by operational difficulties/late running particularly the buses entering after the Canal St. stop (from Blacon and Sealand Road not being able to access Delamere St. to go straight into the new interchange, thus having to negotiate two roundabouts. The Bus Lane in Upper Northgate St. (southbound & now unnecessary) is being reversed in changes to give access to Delamere St. and solve the problem. But in the short term that will involve even more pain as all buses will have to do U-turn to avoid George St. whilst Upper Northgate St. works are carried out for 4-6 weeks. The good news is that George St. will become a bus stop again and all buses heading that way will be able to stop there. At least this is nearer to Northgate St, Storyhouse and the cathedral.

3. Train fares

Most off peak fares rose between 1.4 and 2.0 % in January. Merseyrail remain very good value. Northern went up by 2.2% in January but a further 10% has just been added in Greater Manchester.

4. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC)

1. Chester Northgate Development and area - The former Odeon cinema opened as Storyhouse on May 11th, comprising Chester library, a cafe/restaurant, cinema and theatre.

2. We have been meeting CWAC and interested parties along with rep's from other RUG's regarding the new Welsh Franchise.

3. CWAC Chair Samantha Dixon is also chair of N Wales and Mersey Dee Task Force, a consortium of all the area's Local Authorities, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and Business Organisations wanting improvements to the areas rail services as the existing franchises assume no growth in passengers. To this end they have produced 'Growth Track 360', their vision for the future of rail services in the area. If you would like to support them and find out more you can visit and sign up to their website

www.growthtrack360.com

5. Halton Curve

The first services to run over the Halton Curve are on course for December 2018 and will initially be a 1 train per hour in each direction Liverpool Lime Street vis South Parkway to Chester, operator unknown. The infrastructure works for bidirectional working are scheduled to be completed this Summer.

6. Hooton - Helsby

The Ellesmere Port Docks branch is not being used following the sand traffic's transfer to the siding near Quinn Glass at Ince. It is hoped car traffic from and to the continent may run to Vauxhalls following trials. The studies being undertaken at the behest of Cheshire West and Chester Council to establish a regular passenger service rather than the irregular trains that run at present from Helsby to Ellesmere Port are not yet available. Initial funding for a Community Rail Officer hosted by the University of Chester for the Ellesmere Port to four Helsby line has been found.

Meanwhile, under their franchise agreement, Arriva Northern, is committed to an out and back service to Manchester from Ellesmere Port. Whether this will be additional to the present largely inconvenient service on the route remains to be seen. There does need to be more than a token service. New housing near Ince and Elton station and the new Chester University site at Thornton needs a public transport service on this axis particularly as there is no longer a number 36 bus service (Ellesmere Port-Runcorn via places en route) due to the demise of GHA coaches.

7. Chester - Wrexham redoubling south of Rossett

The Welsh Office are looking at further redoubling to increase capacity as it is not yet possible to run a regular half hourly interval service. Seemingly an unallocated £10m is available. Shrewsbury - Chester RUA have ambitions to run from Cardiff and Birmingham to Holyhead and Liverpool with Chester - Crewe services coming from Shrewsbury. They have been offered a meeting with a Welsh Office Official.

Also Wrexham North to serve a newly built prison, would require some redoubling, Wrexham South together with Deeside Industrial Park (on the Wrexham - Bidston line) are on a list of possible new stations.

There is also a requirement for freight paths and in this respect Hanson at Padeswood, near Hope, are planning a new cement kiln and rail loading facilities for cement to go to Scotland, London and Bristol.

8. Mid-Cheshire Line MCRUA

The Manchester via Stockport, Altrincham, Knutsford and Northwich to Chester line timetable is much the same. Arriva trains has published its proposed draft consultative timetable for May 2018. They will provide hourly services on Sundays plus on off-peak weekdays an extra hourly semi-fast service from Greenbank to Manchester which will start as all stations from Chester. The stopping service is expected to run from Greenbank to Stockport only due to pathing problems beyond Stockport. We'll have to wait and see as MCRUA want to improve on the Draft Timetable as Manchester Piccadilly is the busiest for Mid-Cheshire trains Mon. - Fri but Chester is busiest on Sats.

9. The Northern Hub

The NW electrification is now due to be complete in 2019. Work east of Manchester Victoria is still in the pipeline.

The Ordsall Chord in Manchester is due to open in December. Trains approaching Manchester Victoria from the east will go to Manchester Airport. A new hourly Northern Connect service from Chester will go to Manchester Victoria and on to the Calder Valley and Leeds, expected Dec. 2019. Arriva Trains Wales are continuing running Chester - Manchester/Airport services till October 2018 under a two year extension to their franchise. More paths have been found to continue the airport services despite the new services from the Ordsall Chord. The extra platforms at Manchester Piccadilly have been paused for re-evaluation.

10. N Wales Coast Line - Resignalling/modernisation of North Wales Coast Line is finally taking place. The Upgrade costing £50m started in January and covers the section between Shotton and Colwyn Bay, in particular Abergele station and Mostyn. The works are due to finish by Summer 2018 with the signalling being commissioned in March.

Vacancy for a Secretary

Volunteer Required

Job involves handling correspondence Communication (Electronic/Telephone) for an active transport society.

Expenses reimbursed.

Regular Committee Meetings are held at Port Sunlight Station on the second Tuesday of each month. Please come along and meet us.

or contact Chairman John Ryan on 334 7723 or email atilston@waitrose.com

Liverpool Lime Street Station

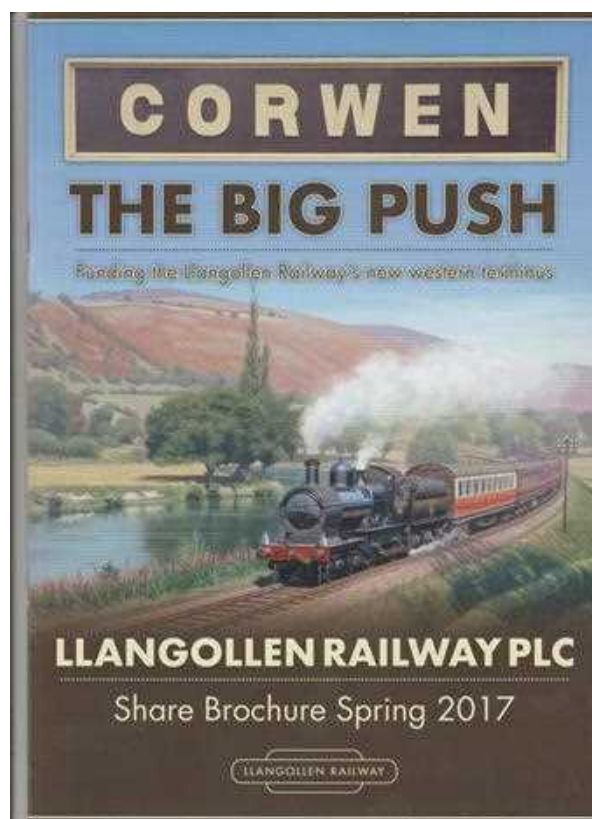
Now that the Wirral Loop Line works have been completed to schedule after 6 months closure, it is the turn of Lime Street station to be closed and redeveloped.

An extra Platform is to be constructed. The station will be closed for 9 days from 30th September. Work will be completed on the first phase of the redevelopment in the Autumn of 2018. The station will be able to handle an extra 3 trains an hour. HS2 is on the horizon and has to be catered for. It is possible by the time HS2 arrives that City Line local trains may be using Wapping Tunnel to access the city centre.

Llangollen Railway - The BIG PUSH

Progress at the new Corwen Station is well underway. To help fund its completion (cost £750,000) the company is raising funds through the issue of new shares in the railway. Shares are £1 each. The minimum purchase is £50. If you purchase 100 or more you get various privileges dependent on the number purchased.

An application form can be downloaded from their website - www.llangollen-railway.co.uk The good news is that they have been given a grant of £128,000 from the Welsh Government. Rural Communities - which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. They hope it will open in time for the 2018 season.

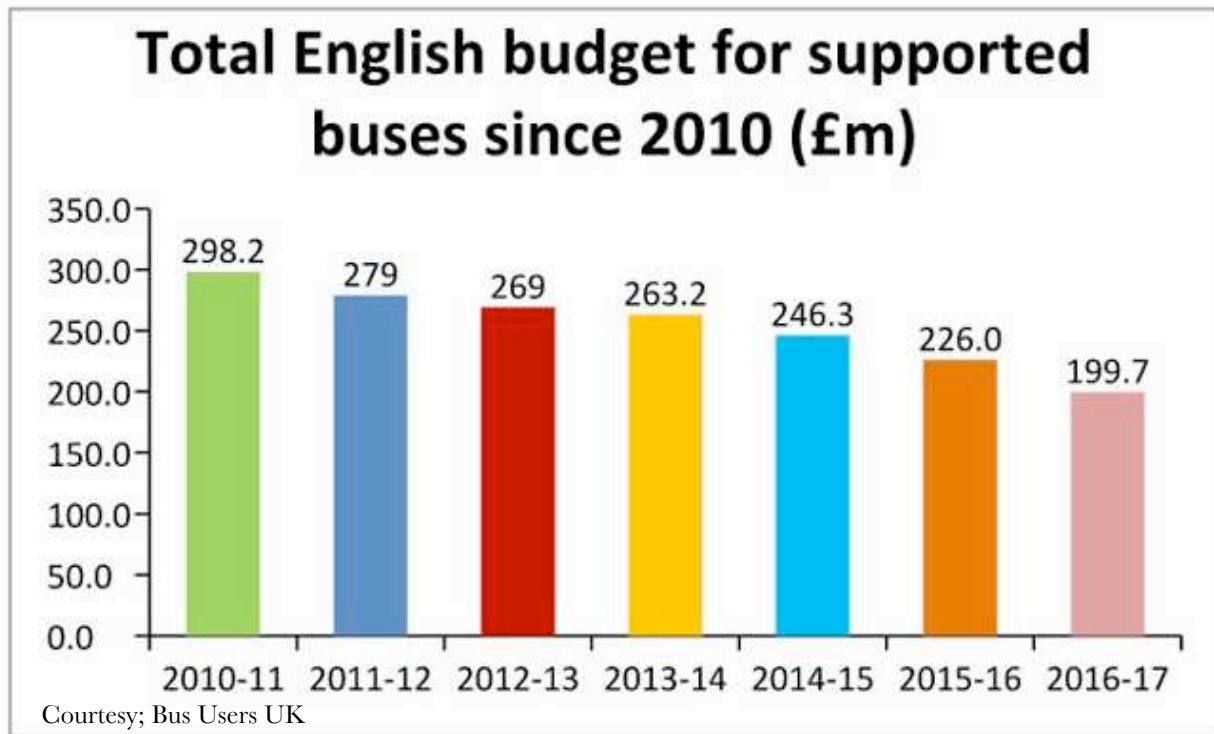


Recent Executive Changes

Andrew Cornish CEO of Liverpool Airport has resigned to take up a new position. He has been with airport company since 1914. He left at the end of June.

From September David Brown, Head of Transport for the North (TfN) is moving to become managing director of Arriva Rail North Ltd, which operates the Northern Franchise.

Replacements have not yet been announced.



Buses in Crisis, 2017

When you cut off bus routes, you cut off opportunities. Many people are severed from jobs and education, friends and family, shops and public services - including vital medical services. In early 2017 we made over 100 Freedom of Information requests to local councils to get a full picture of recent bus cuts; the findings are deeply concerning. Funding for buses across England and Wales has been cut by 33% since 2010, and by nearly £30 million in just the last year. Over 500 routes were reduced or completely withdrawn in 2016/17. *Bus Users UK.*

Editorial Team: Angus Tilston MBE,

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