

WIRRAL TRANSPORT USER

Welcome to our latest 'WIRRAL TRANSPORT USER.'

We take look at transport developments & issues in the Wirral, Liverpool, Chester and the North West.

Congratulats to Merseyrail Electrics in achieving the highest score among regional train operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey conducted by Passenger Focus. They received 90% for overall satisfaction. This is 5% above the regional average and 10% above the national average. Merseyrail has achieved 91% for punctuality and reliability, the highest score among franchisees. On 1st April 2 new franchises started with great plans for the future. (see inside) Transpennine Express and Northern now run by Arriva, a DB company. Their services meet directly with Arriva Trains Wales.



James Street Station - the new old look - a good job done

Annual General Meeting

Publication of this issue is aimed to coincide with our AGM at the Birkenhead YMCA on Monday 25th JULY. David Powell, Project Director Merseytravel will be our speaker. He will be talking about the aquisition of new trains for Merseyrail Electrics.

As far as our own association is concerned, we are still short of a secretary and have been for about 4 years. We would appreciate a volunteer for this position in order to help the committee with its administration. New general committee members are more than welcome.



DIJON AS IT WAS 100 YEARS AGO The photo is a bit small but Sunlight Soap is advertised on the tram



DIJON TODAY WITH ITS NEW TRAMWAY SYSTEM. Trams in Britain do not enjoy the support from Government as they do in Europe France has over 20 systems. We have less than 10.



LIVERPOOL BABY GRAND 245 FROM 1937 newly restored as new by members of MTPS at Wirral Transport Museum. Owned by National Museums Liverpool and given Lotterry Grants - a good job done by all

Latest News

New Rail User Groups/Associations

NCRUG WBRUA MCRUA OPSTA SCRUA plus WTUA have come together to cooperate and discuss rail matters of common interest in the Liverpool City Region. They will meet up as the Liverpool City Region Rail Users' Groups Coordination Meeting, probably quarterly.

Moorfields. Although work on the station will go on until the end of the year, Platform 2 re-opens after refurbishment on Saturday 23rd July. You can once again board trains here for Southport, Ormskirk & Kirkby trains.

Major events in Liverpool provide a major boost for Merseyrail carryings. On the weekend of the Giants in 2015 they carried half a million passengers - a record. The open Golf and Grand National are also major contributors .

Liverpool Central with its 15 million passengers a year received a 97% satisfaction rating published in March. Best among all major stations in the uk.

Trains Refurbished

Over last 12 months or so the train fleet has had a major refurbishment at a cost of £8.5 million - £5.5million from Angel the owners and £3 million from the operating company. Presumably this will be the last major refurbishment before the new fleet is purchased.

LOOP LINE CLOSURE

From January next year it is time to replace the track and concrete track bed in the Liverpool Loop to last for 60 years. The Wirral Line will be closed for 6 months in different phases. January for 6 weeks trains will terminate at Birkenhead North & Central Stations with rail replacement buses to Liverpool. For 15 weeks from February to May trains will terminate and start from James Street Monday to Friday. At weekends trains will be as January with rail replacement buses. For 20 days in May & June, again there will no trains to Liverpool all week. Bus rail replacement buses will operate. Obviously, with such a long closure for essential work Merseyrail Electrics will lose a lot of passengers and journey times will be considerably extended. Once normal service resumes we hope passengers will return to the railway in at least the same numbers

STATION LIFTS

We were promised lifts at Spital and other stations that needed them in 2006. They never appeared and it is now 2016. Whatever happened? The local Labour party have recently been campaigning for the Spital lift as the stairs are very steep and some disabled travellers cannot use the station. Let us hope a positive decision can be made soon.

Northern - Arriva Rail North Ltd

After being awarded the new franchise they will provide:

£1 billion investment overall

More than 2,000 extra services per week.

£400 million Investment in trains.

Pacers will disappear by end 2019.

More staff and refurbishment of stations.

A simpler fares structure.

LIVERPOOL JOHN LENNON AIRPORT.

Liverpool City Council have taken a 20% stake in the Airport. You may remember over 20 yearss ago all the local authoriyies on Merseyside had shares in the airport.

Passenger numbers up to the end of June are up 15% at 2.3 million compared with same period last year. There are 6 new routes and new airlines now operating from Liverpool.

This may be the best year since 2011 with gradual recovery from the recession. Who knows what 'Brexit' will bring.

OUR EXCURSIONS

We try to run 2 or 3 per year. In May we ran a very successful one to the East Lancashire Railway followed by Whalley & Lancashire Witch Country. We hope to run one in August.

Mersey Ferries

We are indebted to Friends of the Ferries Newsletter for the following information. 25th July is our AGM. It is also coincidentally 200 years since 'Princess Charlotte', the first steam powered passenger ferry boat was launched and ready to start operating from Eastham on the 26th at 11.00am. Thereafter it left Eastham Ferry for Liverpool at 8.00am and 3.30pm daily, meeting the Chester coach to and from Eastham. The journey from Liverpool to Chester took 3 hours. Today it takes 40 minutes by electric train. Eastham Ferry ran until 1929 and lasted 113 years. Eastham was also known as Richmond of the Mersey with its Pleasure Grounds, Bear Pit, cafes & hotel and was a destination in its own right for pleasure seeking Liverpudlians or were they known as Liverpoolians in those days? The information is credited to the Eastham Archive Group.

TRANSPENINE EXPRESS

TPE's plans after commencing the new franchise on 1st April are as follows:

2016 Improved catering provisions.

A start on refurbishing existing trains.

2017 Free Wi-Fi at all 19 TPE stations.

Major investment in mobile & smart ticketing.

Mobile ticketing on all TPE routes later in year.

December: Manchester Airport to York extended to Newcastle.

& 7 day a week daily service introduced.

2018 December: new Liverpool - Glasgow service

2018 - 2020 Brand new trains introduced.

2019 December: Liverpool-Newcastle route extended to Edinburgh.

From 2020 their routes virtually circle the North.

Manchester/Liverpool to Glasgow & Edinburgh via the West Coast Line & Edinburgh to Liverpool via Newcastle York, Leeds & Manchester.

Dock Cruise

Friends of the Ferries ran a very successful annual dock cruise on 25th June. They were able to view the almost ready Panamax terminal in the river at Seaforth.

New Ferry Boats

There is a need to replace the present ferry boats. It is planned to replace two

boats over the next 15 years. Two will replace the existing three. This leaves no margin for flexibility.

USA from Liverpool Airport

An easy route to the USA is via Are Lingus. All customs & immigration clearance is done in Dublin Airport which gives trouble free access to the USA on arrival. Price is from £215.

LOOKING BACK BUT STILL USED TODAY



MV TEAL on Lake Windermere. Built by Vickers of Barrow in 1936. B2X 6 cylinder diesel engines with a crew of 7. 533 passengers.



The RIESENRAD 212 Ft high in Vienna. A good example of British Victorian engineering from 1897. There were examples in Blackpool & Paris. Built by Lt Walter Bassett Bassett R.N.



Birkenhead's oldest electric tram from 1901 by George F Milnes

TRANSPORT NEWS, CHESTER & CHESTER/ELLESMERE PORT TO LIVERPOOL LINES

1. Chester Railway Station

The public space in the former east car park has been opened providing a link to the Central Business Quarter development, the canal, the Waitrose store and other Boughton shops etc. Markets (see 4), open air theatre productions and other events are planned in the former Carriage Shed which has undergone a restoration plus a new glass roof. £1.5m has been spent by Chester West and Chester Council plus a grant from the European Development Fund. The venue will also be available for Chester residents to hire.

2. Timetable Changes

Liverpool to Manchester Airport, Victoria and Wigan local services became all electric giving a considerable increase in capacity over 2 - car diesel multiple units.

The expected daytime and much desired North Wales Coast - Chester - Manchester Airport has been applied for again by Arriva Trains Wales starting in Dec. 16 following a successful appeal. Paths are still wanted for Calder Valley trains via Manchester Victoria via the much delayed Ordsall Chord to the Airport. However, two days before the beginning of the Summer timetable, ATW received approval to extend these trains to the Airport and so they started before appearing in the paper timetable. The websites however are up to date.

Merseyrail Wirral Line services to Chester are still unchanged.

We have written a letter to Merseytravel asking for a 15 min. interval service into Chester in the mornings and similarly an extension of more frequent services from Chester in the evening. We have also asked for earlier services on Sundays and await new trains. These are to provide better onward connections and also for commuters. Lack of parking at Bache and Spital is still a deterrent to increased patronage. We await improvements to Chester - Shrewsbury line services due to the delayed opening of double tracking from Saltney Junction to Rossett.

Initially completion was to be Spring 2015, then Nov. 2015, the latest delay due to having to replace a signal cable. Edwina Hart, at the Welsh Office, did delay the original scheme but now it is Network Rail.

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

Chester Bus Exchange is still in operation whilst the former Odeon cinema is converted under the "Renew" scheme and

steelwork on the extension is erected at the back of the site for the new theatre. The new Bus Exchange supports and curved laminated timber roof beams have been erected on the new site at Gorse Stacks. We wait to see with baited breath what bus services will be provided from where and what additional stops will be made to serve the Northgate area and development and the needs of local people. A new longer circular bus service is planned from the railway station. Whilst the new Bus Exchange is poorly sited for the Northgate Development, market and the new arts centre (now christened Storyhouse) it will be nearer the railway station. A 3 bay bus pull in on the inner ring road was planned as part of the scheme. We'll see !

3. Train fares - Regulated fares went up by about 1% in January. From September sadly Virgin trains ended the ability of Senior Railcard holders to travel in peak hours at off peak prices to London. This seems wrong when trains, in the shoulders of the peak have plenty of space, particularly onerous is the ban on using off peak tickets between 15.00 and 19.00 hrs. Part of the solution is to buy an advance single ticket which can be bought up to the day before and do the same on the return. But it gives no flexibility in the peak and flexibility is expensive. But it gives no flexibility in the peak and flexibility is expensive.

Llangollen Railway

Progress continues on the new Corwen Central Station. It needs to be ready by October to meet planning and other conditions otherwise they will not be allowed to use the present temporary station beyond this time. They still need funds. Please send donations to the Llangollen Railway if you wish to help. Once it opens we may run a coach trip to use it.

4. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC)

1. Chester Business Quarter (near rail station) - 1st office block complete and former carriage shed which became the East station car park has been converted into public space, which serves as access to Business Quarter for rail users. A new car park was opened



structurally complete by the Bus Exchange. The new Bus Exchange at Gorse stacks has been erected and is being roofed over at the moment. Both will be complete by Spring next year but we await dates. A 6-month closure of Frodsham St. has started on 27th June during which all diverted buses will use temporary stops in the Foregate St/ Love St. area meaning a longer walk for many. This is to refurbish Frodsham St. prior to opening of the new Bus Exchange. See leaflets for further details.

3. Park & Ride services from Sealand Road and Boughton Heath will be linked via the City centre and similarly those from Upton(Zoo) and Wrexham Road.

4. The Western Relief Road (Saltney to Sealand Road) has been resurrected with the cost being in the range of £48.7 m to £74.1 m. An initial bid has been made to the Dft's new Local Majors Fund. In the past a new

road was shown to cause large traffic increases on Sealand Road.

5. Halton Curve by Cedric Green

The full business case for the re-opening of the Halton Curve for bi-directional working was approved by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on the 15th April 2016. Approval was also given for the additional £5.67million required to cover extra costs which had not been factored into the original figure of £10.4million thus giving a total of £16.07million.

The Guidance to Railway Investment Projects, (GRIP) stage 4 studies which cover 'single option selection', begin in July and are expected to be completed by December this year. The GRIP stage 5 studies covering detailed design work will commence early in 2017 and the work is aligned with the up-grade of the West Coast Main Line between Weaver Junction and Wavertree. This alignment of work streams reduces the cost by £2million which has already been taken account of in the above figures.

The first service to run over the Halton Curve is scheduled for December 2018 and will be a 1 tph Liverpool Lime Street to Chester. Extensions of this service will, hopefully, follow when capacity issues on the Chester/Wrexham and North Wales Coast line are resolved.

It is probably a little ingenuous to point out that back in 1994 when the points failed at

Frodsham Junction the cost of replacement would have been £48,000. Unfortunately, at that time, British Rail were working in a 'managed decline' environment so they just took out the faulty points. We live and learn at some considerable cost!



Passenger Numbers
Mersey PTE 93 million
Greater Manchester 73 mil
West Yorkshire 67 mil
Arriva TW 58mil
Merseyrail Electrics 75 mil

Lime Street 13.8m
Liv Central 14.7m
James St 2.9m
Moorfields 6.3m

NETWORK RAIL UPGRADES

This is planned between 2016 - 2019
Maghull North new station
Newton le Willows Interchange
Halton Curve
Lime Street - Remodelling track & platforms - retail upgrade
Liverpool Loop track & slab replacement
Huyton 4th track
Weaver Jct to Wavertree Jct resignalling
Ditton Intermodal

6. Hooton - Helsby

We still await the siding to carry sand traffic coming from Middleton Towers near Kings Lynn. A conveyor will be used to take the sand to Quinn Glass. This is presently being offloaded from the train on to a convoy of lorries at Ellesmere Port Docks for Quinn Glass but this arrangement is expected to cease soon.

The studies being undertaken at the behest of Cheshire West and Chester Council to establish a regular passenger service rather than the four irregular trains that run at present from Helsby to Ellesmere Port only. No news at present but clearly an extension of the present services beyond Helsby and with greater frequency is needed to encourage more passengers. New development along the line helps the case.

A single service to Manchester Airport from Ellesmere Port and back is due to start during the new Northern franchise (could be Dec. 2018) and speculation that it may start more conveniently for connections in the bay at Hooton.

7. Chester - Wrexham redoubling

The Welsh Route Study strongly supports the provision of direct rail services from Wrexham over this route via the Mersey - Dee link (Halton Curve) and to Manchester. Cllr. Liam Robinson, Merseytravel Chairman, says funding should have been sought from them to increase capacity over the whole route to Wrexham to introduce services from

Liverpool and South Parkway via the Halton Curve. A station is still proposed at Wrexham North to serve the new prison as well as that area which will increase the need for more capacity. Roger Cobbe of Arriva Trains Wales has highlighted capacity problems at Chester station with extra trains from the Halton Chord. He suggests diverting Holyhead - Cardiff trains via a restored west to south chord via Shotton High Level (a stop for Deeside ?) towards Wrexham thus saving 15 mins. on travelling via Chester. This would be to the detriment of Chester passengers unless the future Halton Chord services from Liverpool were extended to Wrexham to provide connections. The savings from not providing extra through platforms at Chester could go towards the cost of the Shotton Chord.

8. Mid-Cheshire Line

The Manchester via Stockport, Altrincham, Knutsford and Northwich to Chester line is still seeing a 5% p.a. rise in passengers. Overcrowding occurs on the northern section of the line at peak times. The successful bid for the Northern franchise was by Arriva trains which started on 1st April. They will provide hourly services on Sundays plus on off-peak weekdays an extra hourly semi-fast service serving principal stations from Greenbank to Manchester (this is a min. service specification) from Dec. 2017 using refurbished trains. New trains will be introduced from last 6 months of 2018. So

the Pacers should finally be gone by Dec. '19 when all new trains are due in service.

9. The Northern Hub/ NW Electrification

The NW electrification is now due to be complete in 2019. Work east of Manchester Victoria is seriously delayed partly due to reassessment of scheme and lack of resources finishing maybe towards the end of this decade.

The approved Ordsall Chord in Manchester has survived the legal challenge and the rail link to the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry has already seen its last train. Trains approaching Manchester Victoria from the east will be able to go to Manchester Airport. Work has already started on this chord. A new Northern Connect service from Chester trains will go to Manchester Victoria and on to the Calder Valley and Bradford/Leeds. Arriva Trains Wales are still running Chester - Manchester services till October 2018 i.e. till the end of their extended franchise.

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New Station for the Wrexham-Bidston Line?
WBRUA have suggested a new station, Deeside Parkway, to serve the Deeside Industrial Estate with P & R facilities and a bus connection. It would be situated on the A548 where it crosses the railway line near Connah's Quay. Possibility is being studied by Flint C.C.

Neston's place in public transport today

From a public transport point of view Neston lies in a piece of no man's land between the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral in the Liverpool City Region and North Wales. Consequently it is badly served by public transport. The reason for this goes back into the history of the early 1970s, The Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive was formed in 1969 and Neston was included within its boundaries. With the formation of Merseyside County Council in 1974 a group of people Neston organised objections to Neston being included within the county boundaries. This was successful and Neston has been left out ever since. During the short PTE responsibility they built a Bus Rail Interchange, which no longer exists. The system map in Liverpool displayed while the Merseyrail Underground was being built, Neston was shown as the terminus of one of the Wirral Electric lines. This later fell by the wayside when local councillors in the Merseyside Area had a panic attack about railway construction costs and among other things decided to close the line between Rock Ferry & Chester apart from Bromborough which gave the impetus for the formation of our organisation, then called the Bebington Rail Action Group. To shorten a long story, our action saved the line and eventually the line was electrified to Chester & Ellesmere Port. Since then passenger figures have soared and we now have 6 trains per hour from Hooton to Liverpool.

At the moment Neston has only 3 bus services: the 487 which runs half hourly from Liverpool via Birkenhead & Neston to Ness Gardens and an hourly Chester bus run by Avon from West Kirby to Chester, plus an irregular approx every hour and ten minutes 272 to Ellesmere Port.



Only the railway and the 487/488 bus runs on Sundays.

The railway runs every hour to & from Wrexham & Bidston for trains to Liverpool. There are 6 trains on a Sunday. The railway has the reputation of being the most unreliable in the North West & Wales. It suffers from Shotton turn rounds from time to time. (ie When the train is running late from Wrexham the company may decide to terminate it at Shotton to make the next train to Wrexham run on time). People turned off the train going North then have another hour to wait pick up the next train. This a very unsatisfactory situation. If the service was more reliable more people would use. Many Neston residents take their car to Hooton which has a large car park and they have 6 trains an hour in the Liverpool direction.

Another area where Neston is at a disadvantage are the fares charged on the railway. From Neston to Southport via Merseyrail changing at Bidston it costs about £13 return. From Hooton which has been included in the Merseyrail fare zone, as have the railway line service to Chester and Ellesmere Port, passengers can obtain a Mersey Saveaway ticket for £5.20 This gives them full use of the Merseyrail Network plus, for example buses, in Southport and a single journey on the Mersey Ferry. These fares also apply from the next station after Neston - Heswall.

One solution to the fares problem would be to include Neston Station in the Merseytravel Fare Zone system.

Presumably it will be when the line is eventually electrified.

Wrexham Bidston Rail Users Association believes passenger numbers on the Bidston Wrexham line will be considerably increased if the service could be improved to half hourly. There are plans to possibly do this when the Welsh contract comes up for renewal in 2018.

As the trains are based in Cardiff we suggested some years ago that Merseyrail Electrics take over the service as an unelectrified extension of Merseyrail. It was turned down as the company wanted limit itself to electric trains and not become involved in Diesel traction.

There are short term possibilities. When new electric trains are ordered for Merseyrail it is possible that some dual mode trains may be ordered to allow trains to be run on unelectrified sections. When the single tunnels opened under Liverpool in 1977 it was said passenger trains carrying fuel oil would not be allowed in single line tunnels. Trains would have to terminate at James Street at the unused platform in the wide tunnel. Presumably, this still is the case..

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The map above shows the present border between Wirral Metropolitan Borough and Neston. The Merseytravel area has now been extended to cover Halton (Widnes & Runcorn). Merseytravel fares and tickets will eventually be introduced here.

Alan McGiffin,

I remember Alan well. He was always keenly interested in trains. He obtained a degree in chemistry at Liverpool University and then worked for several years at British Steel, Shotton. He joined the Bebington Rail Action Group (BRAG) on its formation in 1978 and was one of the early committee members, BRAG later became the Wirral Transport Users Association (WTUA) on Bus deregulation. He was on the WTUA Committee for many years. He also joined WBRUA committee when Graham Tolliday formed it a few years later. Eventually, he and his wife moved to Port Erin in the Isle of Man and took over a private hotel on the promenade overlooking the harbour area. I stayed a few times - wonderful views from some bedroom windows. When the holiday trade dropped he then moved to Berlin where he was for about 6 years, retaining his membership of both organizations. He returned last year on retirement, and rejoined the WTUA committee. In the Isle of Man, I remember, he always took the weekly receipts to the bank in Douglas by steam train in season. He was always quiet and unassuming and was quite a private person. He will be a great loss for both organizations. Our sympathy goes to his family.

Angus Tilston

At the moment we produce one edition per year. We would like to aim for two. For this we need extra resource with people willing to write articles and send them in Word format by email to the editors..

New Construction in Chester



Chester's New Bus Station under construction. On the old cattle market.

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