

# WIRRAL TRANSPORT USER

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## Local Transport News

### COMMENT

We open this issue by offering our congratulations to Merseyrail Electrics on becoming 'Which?' top railway company of the year with a 70% Customer Satisfaction score - the highest they have seen in the 3 years they have been running the survey. They are the first railway company to be awarded a 'Which?' Recommended Provider. They are the top of 19 Railway Companies surveyed. The lowest had a satisfaction rate of only 40%. They are also top of 6 Regional Railways surveyed with 73%. Commuters and Leisure passengers think fares are satisfactory, give top marks for frequency and high scores for speed, punctuality and reliability.



John Harrison, Wirral Transport Museum, acted as tram driver for Angus Tilston's special celebration with Swan Movie Makers Wirral.

In recent years this area has been known as the Liverpool City Region. The Government has stepped in and has given us the snappy title of 'Halton Knowsley Liverpool St Helens Sefton & Wirral Combined Authority. According to Whitehall, some of our council leaders have objected to Liverpool City Region and

as they cannot agree the new title has been imposed on us. It probably has also something to do with the fact that our government does not like the word region. It has a feel of Europe about it, with many countries like Germany with their autonomous regions ie true localism.

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HMS 'ILLUSTRIOUS' VISITS THE MERSEY AND LIVERPOOL IN 2013



BIRKENHEAD'S OWN LISBON TRAM AT TAYLOR STREET MUSEUM TERMINUS



ALSTOM CITADIS TRAM AT THE RAILWAY STATION TERMINUS ON LINE T1 IN DIJON. See article inside.

As you can see Halton (Widnes & Runcorn) will now be included. Merseytravel will act as the transport executive of the combined authority. The new Local Transport Body will have additional responsibilities including highways planning and strategic planning. Members will be chairmen of each of the 6 borough plus the chair of Merseytravel & The Liverpool Enterprise Partnership. Once it has settled down we will give you more information next time

## **RAIL NORTH**

As part of Government's localism policy, another new body is being established - Rail North. This is a consortium of 33 local transport authorities in the North of England. The original idea that this body would be able to award franchises for railways in the north. Both Transpennine and Northern Rail are due for renewal shortly. Recently the arrangements have changed somewhat in that the Department of Transport will be involved and award the franchises. The centre cannot let go control. Someone on the radio recently suggested that England is the last colony of Great Britain and is still administered the same way as our old colonies. Everything controlled from the centre with directives being issued as to what we should do. So we now have some localism but not yet fully.

In RAIL magazine No 742 there is an interview with David Brown, Merseytravel's Director General, who is also Chairman of the Passenger Transport Executive Group, where you will find a good explanation of how things will work in the future for Rail North.

A short article later in this newsletter shows how a small french local authority (Dijon) can decide on, plan, design and finance a tramway and have it operating within 3 years - something that is just not possible in the UK at the moment. Here we see how true localism can operate.

We wish the HKLSSWCA every success. I have forgotten what the initials stand for already! Please remind me.

## **Liverpool John Lennon Airport**

Angus, has for some years represented the WTUA on behalf of Wirral South on two of the airport committees. These are the 'Noise Committee' and the 'Consultative Committee' Each committee meets at 3 month intervals. Members of the public can attend as observers.

We thought we would give you some up to date information regarding the airport. After the start of the recession passenger numbers held up well for the first few years. There is always a lag before events affect business adversely. As with other airports numbers are down from the peak in 2008 - European City of Culture Year. Two years ago numbers started to drop partly due to the recession but also to another factor. Manchester Airport which had shown no interest in catering for budget airlines had a change of heart and decided it wanted a share of the budget market. They already handle 20 million passengers a year - but for some reason want to carry on growing larger. If you live in Knutsford you will not be very happy with extra aircraft flying overhead which are at much lower levels at this spot than Liverpool's aircraft flying over Bromborough where the Mersey gives an opportunity to gain height. Both Easyjet & Ryanair have fairly substantial operations in Manchester, although both airlines have promised to increase capacity in Liverpool. Last year Ryanair said they hoped eventually to carry 3 million passengers a year from Liverpool. Liverpool Airport is fighting back with discussions with other airlines, including 'German Wings', possibly to increase both Charter Traffic and Business Use. Good news is that passenger numbers were up 2% in December compared with the previous year and even more in January. It is the most time efficient airport in the country with a higher percentage of on time flight than any other of the top 10 airports in the UK. Liverpool badly needs a fixed rail link to the airport and the opening of the Halton Curve which will give easy rail access from Chester and North Wales directions.

## **BUSES**

The biggest surprise in the local bus industry is the suspension of bus lane in Liverpool until July.. It was thought that buses were the cause of congestion. It will then be reviewed. We always thought that too many cars cause congestion. We will just have wait and see what happens in July. Don't forget, the suspension is on within Liverpool City boundaries. It does not apply to Wirral's Bus Lanes.

There are not many changes to report on Wirral. Stagecoach have extended route 38 at both ends to give a journey from Bromborough Croft Retail Park (extended from Port Sunlight) to Heswall (extended from West Kirby).

This connects with a new route X22 they have introduced from Heswall to Chester. This must have some effect on the Avon route from West Kirby to Chester, particularly as the new route from Heswall runs a few minutes ahead of Avon's route. From a user point of view we would have liked a strict half hour interval between them.

## **Edgar Richards**

We would like to record our thanks for the work of Edgar Richards who has acted as our treasurer for many years. Now in his 9th decade he feels it is time to call it a day. Thank you Edgar for all your hard work. We hope your health improves.

### 1. Chester Railway Station

Following the excellent refurbishment of the footbridge we await the relocation of the east car park due to the Chester Business Quarter development. Meanwhile a feasibility study is on the way for another car park on the site of the former Chester Enterprise centre and NCL goods shed if CWAC (Chester West & Chester) gives its approval. This also includes the long-awaited plan for a pedestrian/cycle footbridge by Hoole Road. This will allow cyclists to avoid using the narrow Hoole Road bridge and give improved access to the station but a feasibility study is not planned until 2018 - four years away.

### 2. Timetable Changes

Whilst the first Desiro electric services are running from Manchester Airport to Scotland via Wigan we await the start of new hourly services from Liverpool to Newcastle via Manchester Victoria from May.

Merseyrail Wirral Line services to Chester are unchanged with no improvements to early Sunday onward connections. Occasional breakdowns to the ageing trains makes one think something will need to be done to improve reliability. Lack of parking at Bache and Spital is still a deterrent to increased patronage.

Minor changes have been made to Chester - Shrewsbury line services have been made but no general speed up or change to frequency.

Virgin London services from Chester continue to run hourly as previously and Arriva Trains Wales services are largely unchanged. It is a matter of concern the last train at 22.00 from London to Crewe just misses the last train from Crewe to Chester in the new timetable.

Meanwhile contractors have recently been finishing off the new shelters at the Chester Bus Exchange about a year after starting work. During the main work replacing the shelters half the buses had to be go elsewhere which required a ten minute walk, not convenient for those who wanted to go to the market and The Forum or change buses. Chester West and Chester Council admitted they had got it wrong after a dispute with the contractor but that is no compensation for loss of business. Some bus services from the east of the city have not returned leading to a permanent loss to the market area. My local bus Quality Partnership Stagecoach/ Arriva Blacon Pointer circular service has been quite successful and has even increased Sunday daytime and late evening services. We however await the review of the subsidised services in the next spending round as quite a few will be under threat due to further cuts.

### 3. Train fares

Average fare increases from Chester are 3-4% apparently limited to inflation this time. It is good that Merseyrail fare increases a usual are less and many have not gone up at all.

### 4. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC)

A The Transport Strategy report (by AECOM) was commissioned to look in detail at all the transport needs of Chester's historic core in the light of the developments that form part of the 'One City Plan'. These included :-

1. Chester Business Quarter (near rail station) - where work has just started to create a slightly larger replacement for the east car park on Queens Road which will be complete by May. Then the existing car park will be converted into public space to give access to the rest of the Business Quarter. Phase 1 includes a six storey office block near to the station with construction starting in May
2. Chester Northgate Development - CWAC now own the site between the Town Hall and the inner ring road including the present Market Hall, Forum, library, car park, former Odeon/Commerce House site (to be made into a cinema/theatre/library), former Gateway Theatre (used by another company) and of particular concern to ourselves, the Bus Exchange. This is used by National, local and regional bus services.

The Transport Strategy proposes to move the Bus Exchange to the Frodsham Street end of Gorse Stacks and provide a 'Shopper Hopper' shuttle bus to other parts of the city. A bus loop with three stands off St Martins Way (Inner Ring Road) is part of the scheme together with a replacement multi-storey car park on the site of the present Bus Exchange. Buses will no longer be allowed to enter down Northgate Street due to the extension of pedestrianisation and so could be subject to more delays than now if coming to the bus loop. This will only be enough for a limited number of services to serve the Northgate Development directly. Layover time would have to be elsewhere to maximise use. With car parking limited to approx. as before and bus journeys maybe only 40% of the present trips the success of the development and the market could be at risk if people shop elsewhere. This may cause a further shift in emphasis from Northgate to Frodsham and Foregate Street areas. Bus priority measures such as at the revamped Northgate roundabout (which is expected to become a light-controlled single level

junction - no underpasses) will be needed to verify the claim of 'improvements to public transport.' A shared space environment on Little St. John Street will allow easier access for walking to the river / amphitheatre. Private car traffic will be restricted but buses will still use this corridor.

3. The Transport Strategy is expected to be published this Spring. It is considering new stations such as at Daresbury on the North Cheshire line between Runcorn East and Warrington which has become a major employment location.

### 5. Halton Curve boosted and renamed Mersey Dee link by Merseytravel but also renamed Mersey Connect by North Cheshire Rail Users Group !

The prospect of train services on this route were given a further boost when Network Rail announced it could offer to reinstate double track for £10.5m instead of £16m if it was done alongside other infrastructure work on the Liverpool - Runcorn - Weaver Junction route in 2016. In addition funding of £500,000 is to be underwritten by Merseytravel, and hopefully other local authorities, for a refresh of the 2007 Grip 3 (option selection) study. This will take forward the study almost to Grip 4 ( Outline Project Design ) in 8 - 12 months time. At the same time a 2009 study of expected passenger demand and benefits will be reworked showing the wider regional benefits of the Mersey Dee link which should make a better case. Services could operate from Liverpool and South Parkway (bus link to Liverpool Airport) to North Wales and hopefully the Ellesmere Port line. The Chester-Warrington and Crewe routes are already in Network Rail's task force commitment list for electrification in the next round of projects. It would be silly not to think about including this 1.5 mile link so creating a through electric link from Liverpool to Chester but it would need to go further - into North Wales. Currently only one passenger train operates towards Liverpool in the Summer on this one way only track. New freight traffic to Ineos Chlor at Runcorn is also a strong possibility once it is restored to a two way link from the Chester-Warrington line.

## 6. Hooton - Helsby

Celebrations of 150th Anniversary of Helsby-Hooton line took place on July 6th. A well-filled four coach train ran from Hooton to South Parkway and Liverpool after doing several runs on the Hooton - Helsby line. This reinforced the feeling that there is much interest in using the Halton Curve from the Ellesmere Port direction and also potentially to Warrington and Manchester. Incidentally Compass Railtours are about to take over the Chester - bound station buildings including the former ticket office. Maybe they could sell tickets for the regular trains as well. Chester University are also opening an Engineering Faculty in the former Thornton Research Centre with up to 1500 students not far from Stanlow and Thornton station this September. They could potentially use a revamped train service with improved access..

From March 6th there will be new artwork decorating the stations at Ellesmere Port, Overpool and Little Sutton. This is part of the Ellesmere Port Art festival and has been organised by Sally Buttifant of CWAC in association with local schools.

## 7. Chester - Wrexham redoubling

This entails redoubling of approx. 6 miles of track south of Saltney Junction was given a further go-ahead following the calling-in of the scheme for review by the new Welsh Minister of Transport Edwina Hart. The revised scheme costed at £44m includes resignalling/level crossing upgrades and work on Anglesey. Much work has already been done south of Wrexham. The whole work will allow an additional Holyhead - Cardiff service every two hours making it hourly and saving 16 mins. on present timings before Summer 2015. The NE Wales Transport Study identified a need for a station at Rossett but described as Wrexham North. The Study also strongly supports the provision of direct rail services from Wrexham over this route via the Mersey - Dee link (Halton Curve) though extension of some Manchester services is also a possibility.

## 8. Mid-Cheshire Line

The Manchester via Stockport, Altrincham, Knutsford and Northwich to Chester line is currently seeing a 5% p.a. rise in passengers. Overcrowding at peak times and Sats. before Christmas has even seen passengers left behind and delayed trains. There is clearly pent up demand for faster services and more capacity. Transport for Greater Manchester announced the results of a study into various options for the line was part of a larger study into possible tram - train routes. Unfortunately the line came last in the list for possible conversion to Tram - Train and that was only considering the route as far as Knutsford (cost £160m ). So, unsurprisingly, the more rural route beyond to Chester had no chance. Did they consider other options than full electrification ?

There is a study completed in 2013 by JMP consultants into the Mid-Cheshire line but there has been a delay in publication awaiting meetings with the funding partners.

## 9. The Northern Hub/ NW Electrification / Rolling Stock

Siemens Desiro rolling stock has been introduced on the new service from December 30th ( one train initially ) phasing out class 185 TPE diesel units as more new trains are commissioned up to May 2014 on the newly electrified Manchester - Wigan route. There is now an hourly service from Manchester to Scotland alternating between Glasgow and Edinburgh using this route (No Scots. services now on Bolton route due to electrification work). From May TPE diesel stock will be used to provide a fast Liverpool - Manchester Victoria - Newcastle service in 3 hours, Liverpool - Manchester non-stop in 32 mins.

By December 2014 electrification work should be finished on the Liverpool - Newton - le - Willows and also Manchester Victoria section of the Manchester route and Wigan via St Helens lines thus allowing electric services to begin including the Manchester Airport route. According to a news release on Feb. 7th when George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, visited Manchester to announce £600m of investment in The Northern Hub/Manchester Airport 4th platform etc. Liverpool - Manchester Victoria electric services will start in December (no mention of other services). The plan is to use ex-Thameslink trains. There might be just six available after refurbishment and upgrading . New Thameslink trains have been ordered but will not be entering service in any quantity till about Summer 2016 so there could be a two year wait for more trains unless others can be found acceptable to train operators.

By December 2016 electrification will extend to Stalybridge and extension of some Liverpool services to terminate there. Also the Ordsall Chord should be open allowing trains approaching from Manchester Victoria from the east to go to Manchester Airport. This will prompt a major recast of services including running a faster Chester - Manchester via Warrington service. Part of the faster bit is probably because they will run into Manchester Victoria due to their being diesel trains but watch this space. Arriva Trains Wales are expected to run these services till October 2018 under a two year extension to the franchise so presumably it would require some renegotiation. It will suit some travellers going to Manchester but not others. If going further it may be a benefit. It is all pluses and minuses. We need electric trains !

The NE Wales Area Based Transport Study and CWAC's Proposed Chester Transport Strategy support electrification of the North Wales Coast Line.

## FERRIES AND SHIPPING by Gordon Ditchfield

Mersey Ferries say they can run existing services, charters, and Manchester Ship Canal cruises with two vessels: 'Royal Iris of the Mersey' formerly 'Mountwood' and 'Snowdrop' formerly 'Woodchurch'. The third vessel 'Royal Daffodil' now laid up in East Float, Birkenhead. Her engines are of Cummins Waartsilla manufacture and are now obsolete. Replacement spares are difficult to obtain. Hopefully this can be overcome as three vessels are really required, otherwise a breakdown in the service means bus replacements.

Motorists and bus users who frequently use Duke Street Bridge will see that 'Royal Iris of the Mersey' has a tarpaulin shelter over her promenade deck. The vessel is having a new deck fitted which is a significant investment and will help to extend her life. The two service vessels have engines which are currently in production and spares can be obtained.

During the Winter Lairds has seen sea ferry dry docking including Irish Sea ferry 'Ulysses' and 'Isle of Inishmore'. Stena Line had 'Stena Europe' here in December.

More vessels arrive as companies can free vessels in the winter.

2014 will be a bumper year with 46 cruise ship arrivals and departures. 2015 will be the year when all 3 Cunard ships will be in port at the same time. A unique experience for Liverpool and the Mersey.

See excursion details insert sheet with this issue giving details of 'Friends of the Ferries' cruise this summer





## LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY TRUST PROGRESS ON THE CORWEN EXTENSION – January 2014 review



### Golden Moment at Bonwm

The end of a period of sustained track laying which saw 1000 yards of track assembled was celebrated on 27 December when local Corwen Community representatives attended at Bonwm to see two lengths of track linked up. Councillor Huw Jones helped fix a golden fishplate in place which created a two mile length of track west of Carrog.

At the start of the New Year there was a further celebration when a ballast train was propelled onto the new section to drop stone west of the site of the former Bonwm Halt. The class 26 diesel locomotive powered the first train on to the site since the scrap man's went through in 1968/9 and was a triumphant moment for all the volunteers involved in this project. A further locomotive movement took place on 30 January when the ex Birkenhead class 03 shunter delivered the works train to an extended railhead.

The obstacle of overbridge 28A was over come in early January when the contractors took down their scaffolding after repairs to the under arch brickwork, the abutments and coping stones. The way west is now open for further track laying and immediate availability of materials will bring the head of steel up to the arch. Further progress is dependent on the delivery of supplies of base ballast and acquisition of more concrete sleepers. A Corwen Sleeper Appeal has been launched on the basis that each sleeper and fittings costs £20 and a thousand are needed to complete the job through to Corwen. There has been a good response to the appeal for financial assistance, but the fund remains open for further donations to complete the purchase.

### Corwen station site

At the Corwen end of the trackbed there has been much activity throughout the autumn and winter as contractors have tackled the major civil engineering needs of the Corwen Flood Alleviation Scheme. This has involved taking out underpass 30 on the embankment which will be the site of the temporary station. Out flow pipe work has been installed to connect up with drainage channels adjacent to the station site. All this work prevented access to the railway which delayed delivery of base ballast. However, as of mid January, the railway's contractor was able to access the site and within seven days had dug and concreted the 66 footings for the station platform which must now await the arrival of track to allow the delivery of the wooden platform sections.

With half a mile of track to lay to reach the station site progress is now dependent on delivery of materials but, in the meantime, much progress has been made in clearing overgrown vegetation in the cutting beyond over bridge 28A. On the final approach work has seen under pass bridge 29 rebuilt to allow pedestrian access to a riverside nature reserve. The station site is now very visible to those passing on the adjacent A5 road.

### Prospects

All being well, trains will arrive at the phase 1 station, to be known with the bilingual name of Dwyrain Corwen East, during 2014. As of now, a date for their operation on the extension is unknown given all the work still to do, which will include the top ballasting and tamping of the track to pack and align it. However the train times are included in the Llangollen Railway's 2014 timetable subject to a further announcement being made later.

Those wishing to support this final phase of a long drawn out epic in railway restoration can contribute to the Corwen Sleeper appeal by sending a donation, payable Llangollen Railway Trust Ltd, to Mr P. Bailey, Dolwen, Bryneglwys, Corwen, Denbs, LL21 9LY.

Further details and illustrations can be found on the Llangollen Railway's website at:  
[www.llangollen-Railway.co.uk](http://www.llangollen-Railway.co.uk) – click on Enthusiasts & Archive to go to the Corwen section.

George Jones  
Llangollen Railway Trust Ltd

PS The latest news: The extension to Corwen may not open until Mid Year. The full timetable is in the railway's 2014 leaflet.

# Heritage Railways Success

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WITHIN 2 HOURS BY COACH OR BY CAR WE HAVE A WONDERFUL CHOICE OF HERITAGE RAILWAYS IN NORTH WALES.

They are all narrow gauge apart from the Llangollen Railway which is standard gauge. (See article elsewhere in the Newsletter for an update on progress to Corwen.)

Sixty years ago most of these railways did not exist. It has been due to the work of early amateur preservationists, many of whom had professional experience. Today they employ many hundreds of people, some permanent and some temporary. The total numbers visiting these Welsh railways total over 800,000 annually. This brings a tremendous economic boost to the area's service industries as well as engineering. The spin off is now considerable.

In 2013 usage has increased significantly with further growth expected this year. Some of the figures may surprise you.

Some of the latest figures are as follows:

Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland  
400,000 passengers annually. Up to 100 employees.

Llangollen Railway  
150,000 passengers - more expected when Corwen opens  
40 staff

Snowdon Mountain Railway.  
135,000 passengers.  
40 permanent staff up to 100 in season.

Llanberis Lake Railway  
71,000 passengers  
9 permanent staff 25 in season

Bala Lake Railway  
20,000 passengers  
11 staff

Numbers of paid staff are also assisted by a large number of volunteers.



On the Welsh Highland

The possibility of reopening the line from Bangor to Caernarfon is being looked into. This would link in to the Welsh Highland at a centrally located station. It would then be possible to do a circular rail tour through Snowdonia.

It is reckoned that the heritage railways put £50 million into the North Wales economy each year, creating many jobs and bringing enjoyment to many people.

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Taylor Street Museum

WIRRAL HERITAGE TRAMWAY  
THE MERSEYSIDE TRAMWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY (MTPS) HAS TAKEN OVER THE RUNNING OF WIRRAL'S HERITAGE TRAMWAY FROM WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL.

It is now run entirely by volunteers. The 3 permanent staff either took early retirement or were made redundant at the end of 2012. So far they have 17 volunteers including a number of trained drivers. This year, the fare will be £2 for adults. Tram times will link with the Mersey Ferry. The usual weekend service will run plus extra days during school holidays. The council still own the tramway. The MTPS have to raise enough money to cover the running costs. Members of MTPS will still carry out construction and repair work on the in the Taylor Street Workshops. Liverpool Tram, owned by National Museums Liverpool, 245 is almost complete and ready to run. Pacific Road building is to become a business centre. There are tram lines down the centre of the front part and Merseytravel's Blackpool Tram has been stored there. MTPS may still be able to use these tracks. There is no sign of Peel's proposed tramway to serve Wirral Waters & International Trade Centre developments or of the developments themselves. We wish MTPS every success.

## A NEW TRAMWAY IN 3 YEARS?? by Angus Tilston

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Based on information in TAUT (Tramways & Urban Transit) and a personal visit.

I visited Dijon, 180 miles South East of Paris, in May last year. The journey by TGV took 1 hour 40 minutes using the High Speed line for the first part of the journey and normal track for the rest of the journey. Dijon is, of course, famous for its wine & mustard. Greater Dijon only has a population of 250,000.

Due to increasing congestion and overcrowding affecting bus services it was decided in May 2008 that a new segregated public transport system was needed. The mayor and local council decided standard gauge Light Rail was the best option which was formally adopted in November 2009. 3 years later the tramway was in operation.

Here is the timetable:

Oct 2008 Light Rail was selected

May 2009 Public Enquiry

Nov 2009 Formal adoption of the Light Rail system by council & mayor

Dec 2009 Declaration as a public utility.

July 2010 A Public-Private Partnership agreed with Ineo for 26 years for the design, supply, maintain and finance the electrical system.

Oct 2010 Construction started on 2 lines covering 12 miles

Feb 2012 First tram trials took place

Sep 2012 Tram deliveries completed and service starts on completed line 1

Dec 2012 Line 2 completed and service started. All parallel bus services withdrawn.

Tram fleet consists of 32 Alstom Citadis Trams

I took the opportunity to ride Line 1 from end to end. Line 1 starts at the station, Line 2 passes 200 yards away where it joins line 1 for a about 2 km of joint usage. It was very well used and a comfortable ride. The track has neat grass in the centre of the tracks. A 24 hour ticket cost me Euros 2.60 about £2.20 The tramway runs from 05.45 (07.00 Sundays) to 00.39.

What about costs?

These were as follows:

Total cost 399million Euros

Sources

Europe Investment Bank - loan 150million Euros

French Government 47million

European -

Regional Investment Fund 5m Euros

Burgundy Region 40m Euros

Department of Cote d'Or 20m Euros

Investment by Ineo 52m Euros

Local Transport Inversement Tax of 1.8% to

cover the balance & repay the loans.



Driver's View of the Green Tram Line



Dijon's Transport Trade Mark



Terminus of Line 1 at the Station

Comment:

This is a good example of how localism works in France in relatively small cities.

We do not have mayors and local authorities with such power to act in this way.

We would not have the power to withdraw parallel bus routes. As our buses are controlled by separate commercial companies it would be regarded as anti competitive to do so. Dijon has a single integrated system. Such a small proportion of their grant is taken from central government. It is doubtful such small city of only 250,000 population could be allowed to justify a tramway in Britain. The local transport Inversement Tax is the French system of paying for investment in public transport. It can be levied on employers, in towns of 10,000 population and more, with more than 9 employees based on salaries paid. In Dijon this rate is 1.8%. It has helped the development of public transport systems throughout France. 25 French towns now have light rail systems, 3 are under construction and 4 are planned. Could it be copied over here? Merseyside's 1.5 million population far exceeds that of Dijon yet there are little prospects of a light rail system here in the foreseeable future. The final decision would have to come from central government.



## MERSEYRAIL TRAINS REFURBISHMENT

The current fleet was introduced in 1978 18 months after the opening of the Liverpool Loop & Link services. 33 Class 507 were delivered new for Northern Line. The 43 Class 508, delivered later, were secondhand on delivery for Wirral Line. They were used on Southern Region as 4 car units for a time but were rejected by them as being unsuitable for their needs and the trains were transferred up here as 3 car units. They would also provide sufficient capacity for the planned extensions to Wigan Wallgate, Skelmersdale via Giro and Warrington. Remember the Solari Destination Indicators at Liverpool Central and Moorfields which showed these destinations which were never to materialise? 10 years ago the trains were given a major refurbishment with better seating arrangements to make them last a further 10 years when it was hoped new trains would be introduced about 2014.. Merseytravel have sought new designs. In the meantime a new refurbishment has been announced for £8.5 million - £5.5 by Angel Trains which own the trains and £3 million from Merseyrail. Improvements are being made to the interiors and the exteriors. Most noticeable will be new exterior designs depicting leisure, work and

student travel. There will be 6 different colourful designs. Some units are now in service and the full job will be completed by Birkenhead North depot by spring 2015. This should provide a good quality of train for the next 5 years when new trains may be introduced. However, they may not be as an option being considered is a major refurbishment of the existing fleet at that time, which could include new AC Traction Motors and new bodywork. This could then give them a life for

possibly 60 years. This may be a cheaper option as new trains may prove to be too expensive but will not allow for growth.

### EXCURSIONS

Enclosed with this Newsletter is an insert covering possible excursions this year.

Please complete details and return as soon as possible to enable us to plan. We are considering a Tram afternoon, as in the photo above, which will include a buffet lunch on one of the other trams.

## SNAPSHOTS



*The special tram,  
BIRKENHEAD 20 from 1901,  
used for Angus's celebration  
with Swan Movie Makers.*

*Foxcote Manor awaits  
departure on a Mince Pie &  
Sherry Special at New Year on  
the Llangollen Railway.*

