

WIRRAL TRANSPORT USERS ASSOCIATION

Notes of WTUA Annual General Meeting at Merebrook Public House on Wednesday afternoon 13.10.2021

The public talk preceding the AGM was given by John Allcock, Chairman of WBRUA, who spoke on *The Work and Aspirations of the Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users Association*

Chairman's Report for 2019-21 (and additional comments)

1. Tributes

The chairman paid tributes to two former members of the committee – Angus Tilston who died in August 2019, Simon Wilkinson who died in December 2019, both of whom made valuable contributions to the society.

2. Committee Meetings

After the meeting in February 2020, the committee meetings were suspended due to Covid19. They have since resumed from June 2021, with a change of venue to the Merebrook public house in the afternoons. The accommodation in the Merebrook is in a side room which is more spacious than the previous venue and still offers privacy for discussion. Meeting in the afternoon means that the pub is not busy and committee members can travel both ways in the daylight even in winter.

3. Decisions taken during the meetings this year

- a) Nigel Bird was co-opted as a member of the committee. He had attended the last few meetings before the Covid19 break to see how the committee functioned. The chairman asked him if he would take the role of Information Officer, to which he agreed, and the committee was pleased to confirm him in this role.
- b) As a result of discussions over the phone/email before the committee meetings were resumed, the committee had decided not to charge membership subscriptions for 2021. This was formally agreed at the first of the restarted meetings. An addendum to the constitution was devised for submission to the AGM for members approval:

"The Executive Committee may extend the membership of existing paid-up members into the following year(s) at no cost to the members and such members will be considered as paid up in that year(s) and therefore be able to vote at the AGM."

This allows the association to keep its membership intact without having to charge a subscription and also allows the measure to be repeated in

future years if circumstances dictate.

- c) The committee judged that the facilities at the Merebrook are very good and so it was agreed that in future the committee would continue to hold its meetings at the Merebrook. It was also decided to hold the 2020/2021 AGM in October (before the clocks go back) in the Merebrook function room. John Allcock agreed to give the lecture preceding this AGM.
- d) The committee agreed that the membership subscription rates should be increased and a new scale of rates (mostly increasing the different classes by £2) should be presented to the members for approval at the AGM.
- e) The committee members agreed to make a contribution of £40 from the WTUA to the fund organised by *Travel Watch* to provide a memorial seat at Macclesfield station for Chris Dale who had given long service to transport matters for many years before his death. The seat unveiling was planned for 15th October 2021.

4. Some transport matters in the region which were discussed/actioned

- a) New stations - The housing growth near Ledsham in the Wirral is quite substantial and is calling out for the opening of a new station between Hooton and Capenhurst. We strongly support the proposal and have made representations to Merseytravel and Chester West and Chester council. A new station at Deeside Parkway between Neston and Shotton on the Borderlands line has been promoted by the Wrexham - Bidston Rail Users Association and we support them in this. Currently, it looks like this project is likely to go ahead. A station at Woodchurch between Upton and Heswall on the Borderlands line has been mentioned in Merseytravel plans. Another new station which we consider would be beneficial is one at Town Meadow between Moreton and Meols but with much lower potential usage figures we do not believe that applying any pressure for it at this time would produce any results.
- b) Liverpool City Region. There is an ambiguity in this name. The political interpretation is that it designates the region defined as the Liverpool-centred combined authority which comprises the local government districts of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens and Wirral. The travel-orientated interpretation is that it designates the area covered by the combined authority and also includes the areas surrounding it from which a significant number of people travel to work, shop or visit for entertainment in the Merseyside conurbation. Perhaps this area should be formally named the 'Merseyside Transport Catchment Area'.
- c) AECOM study. A multi-modal transport study by AECOM includes a consideration of part of the Cheshire West and Chester area. Its initial report advised that rail was the best transport mode to link Ellesmere Port to

Helsby. It also suggested a bus link between Hooton and Neston. The final report has not yet been published. [The new Merseyrail class 777 units which are currently being tested on Merseyrail routes are capable of carrying sufficient batteries to provide power for up to 20 miles- this would seem to be the best and most likely solution to providing a better service between Ellesmere Port and Helsby.] A joint WTUA/NCRUG (North Cheshire Rail Users Group) approach to monitoring and responding to the report has been agreed. Both groups regularly raise the issue of this line in Liverpool City Region User Group meetings.

- d) Trafford Park Western Link. The WTUA chairman has participated with members of other user groups in producing a proposal for creating this link to ease rail traffic congestion into Manchester Piccadilly from the west (ie. including from Liverpool). This proposal has been submitted to the TFN (Transport for the North – a statutory sub-national transport body).

5. Other activities by members of the WTUA committee

Together with members of other user groups, we visited the class 777 open-day at Birkenhead North, participated in judging 'Best Kept Stations in Cheshire' and produced an advisory report about Rail Freight activities based in Winwick and Carrington (to the north and east, resp. of Warrington). This has been sent to Merseytravel, Cheshire West & Chester Authority, Rail Freight Group and Warrington Borough Council. One of the committee has been actively monitoring developments in the Seaforth Container Dock and Liverpool 2 Port. A few committee members attend the Travel Watch NW meetings about three times a year which provides an opportunity to hear from and meet personnel from Train Operating Companies, Merseytravel and Transport for Greater Manchester. We also attend some events held by Cheshire West and Chester Council, Train Operating Companies, Merseytravel and Transport for Greater Manchester.

6. How members can help

Contribute to our Newsletter and/or Website. Send us articles about transport matters and/or good photos of transport in action.

Join the committee. The committee meets monthly except for July. There is still a vacancy on the committee for the post of Secretary. We would also like extra members to increase the monitoring coverage of Wirral bus routes and service changes. We also need a member to monitor air transportation and to attend liaison meetings at Liverpool John Lennon Airport. If any WTUA member wishes to attend a committee meeting to see what goes on, please ring the Chairman on 0151-334-7723.