WIRRAL STREETCAR: PIONEERING SMALL-START SYSTEMS IN THE UK

News Analysis

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he Peel Group, developers of the multi-billion pound Wirral Waters project – the reimagining of the Birkenhead waterside
Docks area and the largest regeneration project in the UK – made a presentation to the UK’s All-Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group (APPLRG) at the House of
Parliament on 22 January, outlining the latest developments on this major project.

Peel showed how its ‘Streetcar’ scheme is a vital element in providing a sustainable
development and Richard Mawdley, Projects Director at Peel, began by outlining the Wirral
Waters story to date, progress made since its launch in 2006 and the importance of the
proposed light rail system as a catalyst to the regeneration of the Birkenhead Dock system.

Background

Birkenhead Docks stretches for 4.8km (three
miles) inland from the River Mersey, directly
to the first public park in the world, Hamilton
City of the Future’. Physical glimpses of Laird’s
dream remain, evidenced by Birkenhead Park,
which the Streetcar project will fit perfectly.

Computer-generated image showing the Wirral Waters development. There is a very US boulevard feel, into

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company was acquired by Peel Ports, a division of property and transport giant Peel Group, in 2005. The Peel Group is a private real
estate, transport and infrastructure investment
company and one of the most dynamic and
diverse property companies in the UK.

Wirral Waters

Peel launched the Wirral Waters regeneration
plan for Birkenhead in 2006. With a total area
of 500 acres (202.3 hectares), it is set to create
over 20,000 new jobs – and become a new
City of the Future. The development has certainly caught
the imagination of Wirral Council and local
departments. The proposals gained official
Enterprise Zone status – one of the UK’s largest urban regeneration projects.

The planned development stages of theWirral Streetcar project, also
showing existing railway and ferry transfer points

The detailed presentation shows that Peel
has learned from previous UK LRT schemes,
meeting all safety requirements. It adds: “The project has the
potential to become a catalyst for community involvement” and “Operational and cost
analysis suggests that... a positive net cash flow can be achieved.” Deloitte recommended
the scheme be further developed so a business
case could be produced in 2013.

Mr Mawdley concluded by saying that Peel
expected the development to be built in
phases, but hoped the first phases could be
open for the International Festival of Business
proposed for Merseyside in 2014. This sets
a demanding schedule, but if Merseytravel and the UK Government were as supportive as
the local council and industry, then the scheme
should be considered.

A lively Q&A session followed with many
suggesting that, if successful in the Wirral,
the streetcar could provide a basis for future
developments across the UK. On the question of
delivering a transport system, one commentator drew upon a
piece of advice from the US: “If you want to
break the mould of funding, one commentator drew upon a
piece of advice from the US: “If you want to

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