

CBW

1st
for recruitment
**JOB ADVERTS
EVERY WEEK**

■ Number One For PCV Professionals

**THIS
WEEK**



4-21

News

UKBA Conference,
Green Bus Fund 2,
BSOG to be reviewed?

Minibus



Lebasto
best the story... Sponsors of Minibus

Flip for
FREE
Minibus
magazine



28-32 The Wright Lines?

Wrightbus unveils the new addition
to its range - the StreetLite midibus

24-26 Busman Baker

New Transport Minister Norman
Baker shares his vision for the future



Hot windscreen deals for this summer.

See inside for details



AUTOGLASS
SPECIALS

Wright Bus for the Future

Gareth Evans reports on the launch of Wrightbus' new midi product, the StreetLite. The first integral in the Wrights' line-up has already attracted over £7m worth of orders.

There is no doubt that the StreetLite is the Wright Bus for the future. With a midi-size vehicle being absent from its range for some time, the StreetLite is an obvious choice for a new product.

A seasoned busman cannot help but notice the family resemblance, for the front end, or face, screams Wrightbus in an instant. The styling cues from the distinctive StreetCar, together with the rear window complements the exterior styling as well as adding to the light and airy feel of the passenger area.

Significantly, not only is the StreetLite the manufacturer's first integral product but it is also the first to be sold through its partnership with renowned independent supplier and rental specialist Mistral.

Why?

Mark Nodder, managing director explained the reasoning behind the new bus: "There has been a gap in our product range since Euro 4 - we didn't take our midi products beyond that.

"A fresh approach was required, a clean sheet, with a platform that lent itself both at home and the export market.

"The concept was inspired by our flagship and most complicated design - the StreetCar. That was a once in a generation opportunity - pit pushed the boundaries of a design at the time. We felt it should herald a new era for Wrights.

"We entered the Euro 4 and Euro 5 eras with a facelift across

our range - subtle changes, but those that add some refinement.

"In mid 2008, having long talked about it, our stylist Paul started sketching it. The face is undoubtedly a Wright face but it does have a slightly cheeky face. In some ways it's like the Simpsons - with the decker being Marge for example, while this is Bart, as the sort of slightly cheeky rascal of the family. Buses need to have character - passengers are people not cattle. We feel this looks and feels great - something public transport should.

"This bus is significant because it is the first real venture into own vehicles - but that's not to say we won't maintain partnerships with Volvo for example.

"Bus manufacturing in the UK is under real pressure at the moment - customers are buying what they have to in order to fulfil contracts. They're having hard time pleasing shareholders and the balance sheet.

"However, innovation in the way to deal with that. We've broken into the Hong Kong CKD market for example.

"And we're delighted to now be working with Mistral team. They came to us over a year ago to see what we could do together."

Mr Nodder paid tribute to project manager Jim Morrison, who was badly hurt in a recent motorcycle accident. "He's ok but it will be a while before he's back at work. I know he's sad not to be here but we've sent him a bag of goodies," he said.

Commenting on the





Clockwise from left: William Wright, Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster, Alistair Hammond, Mark Nodder & David Stirling; StreetLite - instantly recognisable Wrights styling; Well laid-out cab; Small window on front nearside removes blindspot; and Wheelchair ramp.



VEHICLE LAUNCH

Wright Streetlite

relationship between the two companies, Steve Low, commercial director at Mistral said: "We see the potential in the Wrightbus product to become a real competitor. Our partnership with Optare came to an end last year. We terminated it because we felt the businesses were going in different directions.

"There is no doubt that we will continue our relationship with ADL - we will continue to offer the Enviro 200," Mr Low stressed.

Mr Nodder said that Wrights will "continue to serve the needs of the big operators but Mistral will allow us to cater for the smaller operators. We'll pursue expansion, including working in partnership with Mistral overseas."

Turning to the question of the export market, Mr Nodder said that the firm is currently focussed on the first vehicles for Mistral.

"The London variant is ready for testing in the market. We will be looking at the end of 2011 or the beginning of 2012 for export. We see opportunities for Canada and USA - in addition to New Zealand and Australia. We are looking at mainland Europe but it's always difficult to deal with countries that build their own vehicles," conceded Mr Nodder.

Specification

The StreetLite is an integral - a first for Wrights. Power comes from a four-cylinder Cummins iSBe Euro 5 compliant engine, with the option of 160BHP or 185BHP for 8.8m and 9.5m lengths, with the additional option of a six-cylinder 225 or 250BHP engine for 10.2 and 10.8m versions. Wrights says this makes the StreetLite a highly responsive, flexible and fuel efficient vehicle. The durability and efficiency of the Cummins engine is matched by the latest Voith DIWA.3E or DIWA.5 gearbox with integral hydrodynamic retarder.

StreetLite is available in two main configurations, one with the door located behind the front axle ("Wheel Forward") and one with the door ahead of the front wheel ("Door Forward"). Each configuration, in turn, has two length options (8.8/9.5m and 10.2/10.8m), which Wrights says have been specifically chosen to optimise interior layout and seating capacity across the range. The fruits of Wrightbus'



Clockwise from above: Leather seated version of the StreetLite with LED lighting; First use of Safe-T-Punch on a UK-manufactured bus; Dashboard display; Wrightbus' MD Mark Nodder, Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster & Mistral Group MD, Simon Fawcett

FACT FILE

CHASSIS/BODY Wright Bus (Integral)

ENGINE Cummins iSBe Euro 5/EE initially. Hybrid Electric coming soon

TRANSMISSION Voith DIWA.3E or DIWA.5 with integral hydrodynamic retarder

SEATING CAPACITY See separate panel

AVAILABLE FROM Mistral 0800 781 4144
www.mistral-group.com
Wright Bus 028 2564 1212
www.wrightbus.com



consultation with operators is there to be seen. A practical example can be found in the headlamps, which are positioned outside of the impact zone, while there is a one piece bumper below the front grill for easy replacement.

Wright's say ease of servicing and minimal downtime were both key design considerations in the development of the StreetLite. A prime example is the demountable skid, which slides out from the rear of the vehicle to provide rapid access to the engine, gearbox, cooling pack, air filter and exhaust.

The Continental Kibes 32 multiplex electrical system features a menu driven vehicle on board diagnostic facility, whilst the main electric centre is in a single and easily accessible position inside the vehicle over the front axle between the cab and the door, providing a clean

environment for diagnostic checks.

Shown to the trade press last week were two models - one with a leather-seated interior and the other with moquette. The latter had been constructed to Mistral's spec, incorporating a subtle logo against a blue background.

Product Innovation

Over the last 18 months or so, Wrightbus has invested £7m in research & development. Invest NI to supported the development of the bus to the tune of £616,520, with part funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

As Mark Nodder readily admitted: "Looking back to February 2009, we started to wonder what we were going to do after we lost several key contracts. We believe we are now on the path to recovery. We are not there yet, but we're on the way. We're certainly not going

to give up! This new midi is very much a strategic step for us."

Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster, who cut the ceremonial ribbon said: "While times remain tough, I've always found Wrightbus to have a real willingness to keep going and work in partnership with Invest NI. Instead of asking for money, they asked for funds to invest to be innovative. It's a global business that stretches from Las Vegas to Singapore."

"Wouldn't I like that travel schedule?!" she mused.

Out on the road

Out on the road, one cannot help but conclude that much thought has gone into the finer points of the design of this bus.

Opening the driver's door, one is greeted with a spacious area. There is room for example, to stow a brush behind the seat – something that is often important for a bus run by an independent rural operator, where the drivers clean their vehicles, often during the day. The large step inside the door also provides a useful home for the driver's bag.

The drop down locker from the off-side ceiling, which could provide a home for cleaning rags for example.

All controls are easy to hand and can be found in what are might be termed 'logical'

locations, while the steering can be adjusted with utmost ease.

Blowers are conveniently located either side of the cab display, making them ideal to cool/warm hands according to the season.

Heating controls are conveniently at hand, located between the seat and cab window. The HeaVac roof-blown heating system is used, incorporating 50/50 fresh and re-blown. There is also a separate saloon heating box and cab de-mister.

The compact, smart design of the dashboard is a standard Wrights product, featuring in the Geimin2 and both versions of the StreetCar.

Damian McGarry, product

development director said that the firm is working with a UK manufacturer to integrate their system into Wrights' display – which will enable up to 126 characters showing driver economy to be displayed.

Visibility from the cab is excellent – and to this end it has been developed to be fully ISO 16121 compliant for ergonomics and all-round visibility.

The windscreen angle has been increased by eight degrees compared to other Wrights products. This is to reduce internal reflections and the glare from other vehicles' headlights – especially important for this product, which is clearly lends itself for use on rural routes.

Another point of note is the tiny window on front near-side, which Damian said came as a result of the discussions with operators. This means that children for example, can now be seen in what would otherwise be a blind spot.

One perhaps obvious omission is a coat hook. A factory-fitted device would arguably provide greater strength and durability than that perhaps fitted by the operator at a later date.

There is much open space at what is termed the 'front belt rail' – i.e. the area between the wheel and the windscreen. With no security screen in place, it is safe to say that this area could be brushed and mopped with ease, while Wrights assured CBW that it is perfectly safe to stand on to polish when required.

As a passenger, the ride quality is very good, but Wrights say further refinements are planned. The bus features an Independent Front Suspension system – a unique and patented design, developed for the new vehicle.

Seat spacing is not an issue – except perhaps on the back row. However, compared to other offerings in the market, this is no different.

Reaction

After the trade press departed last week, a cross-section of operators were invited to see the new bus.

Among the operators who visited was Bill Hiron from Stephenson's of Essex. "There are a few minor niggles but nothing that cannot be resolved. For example, the space occupied by the Wrights logo on the front is the only place you can put an operator fleet name. With the greatest of respects, the manufacturer's name will not mean anything to our passengers."

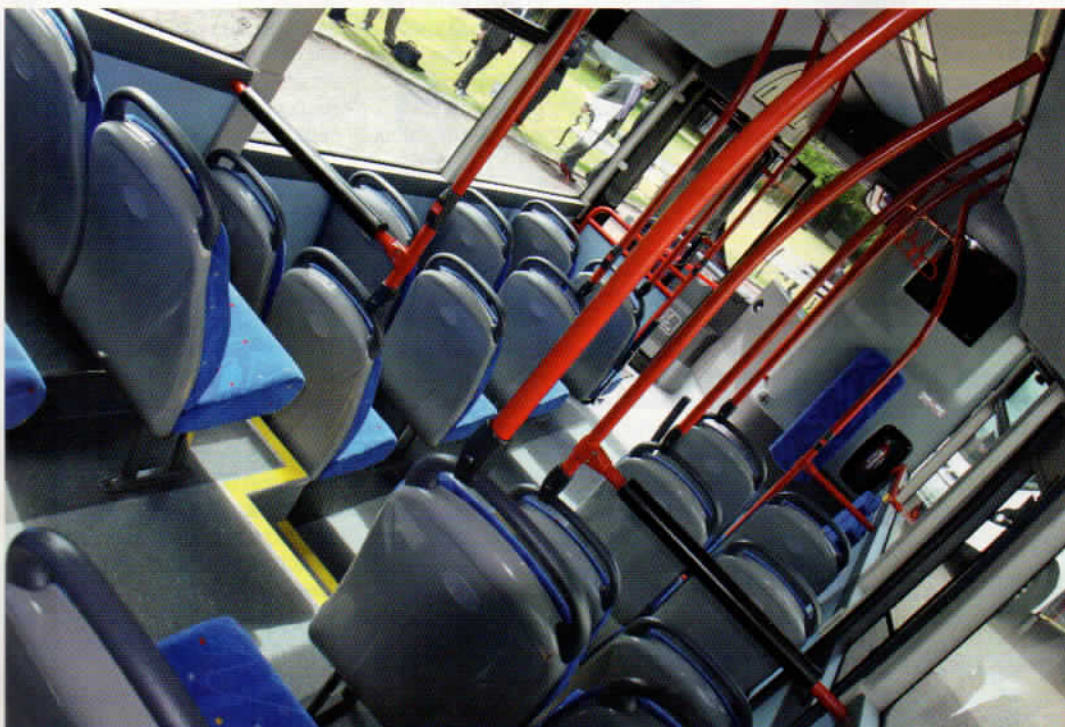
"That aside, it's a great looking bus and obviously its huge benefit is the number of seats that have been squeezed into the length but at the same time, leg room does not appear to have been sacrificed."

"It's certainly ideal for rural work, while the variant with the door in front of the wheel will be more suited to intensive urban work, having the ability to swing into bus stops."

Western Greyhound's Mark Howarth said: "I was very



Above: Cummins engine at the rear; Below: Moquette variant



VEHICLE LAUNCH

Wright Streetlite



Glazed rear window gives distinctive Wrights styling & helps to create a bright, airy interior

impressed with it. It was good to get 33 seats into that length. I also appreciated the opportunity for operators to comment and the fact that they were encouraged to give their input - Wrights and Mistral were genuinely interested to ensure they get the product right. It also drove very well."

A representative from a large group operator told *CBW*: "You always know what you're getting when you buy a bus from Wrights. This is sure to be no different. It's a welcome addition to their product line-up."

Asked how the operator event went, Mistral's Steve Low told *CBW*: "Their feedback was equally as positive as that given by the press to be honest. We had a real cross-section of operators, ranging from engineering directors of the larger groups invited by Wrights to the principals and managing directors from smaller operators."

Safety First

A particularly notable safety feature on the StreetLite is the first use on a manufactured bus in the UK of the 'Safe-T-Punches' (sic) system - previously featured on *CBW's* Products page.

Put simply, the device removes the requirement for emergency hammers and the inherent risk of theft or damage. In the event of an emergency, passengers pull the yellow cord and press

the button, breaking the shatter-resistant glass in an instant.

Commenting on the news, Christen Iversen, director at Safe T System Limited told *CBW*: "I expect that if the devices are roundly accepted by operators we'll probably fit around 1,600 units per year. Each bus is fitted with six Punches - four on wall windows and two in roof hatches."

"There has been suggestion that they may also be fitted on fire extinguisher covers and as a replacement for the Overton handle on the exterior of the rear upper deck window on a double deck vehicle. On a double deck vehicle, there would be a few more Safe-T-Punches fitted to

windows on the upper deck, but we are unclear on double deck fittings at the moment.

"The Punches are warranted for life and also extremely difficult to remove if they're properly fitted. If they're ever used, we'll replace the Safe T Punch free of charge if the used one's returned to us."

"Working with Wrightbus as an ally in this has been hugely beneficial to us and seen VOSA and now the VCA accept that Safe-T-Punches may be used in lieu of traditional break glass hammers on public transport."

"Personally, I feel that from any passenger's perspective, a WrightBus must now be the safest bus on the road."

STREETLITE CONFIGURATIONS

StreetLite is available in two configurations - one with the door located behind the front axle ('Wheel Forward') and one with the door ahead of the front wheel ('Door Forward'). With a standard 2445mm width across the range, body lengths and seating layouts have been carefully chosen to deliver excellent seating capacity, something which Wrights believes is essential to flexible & efficient operation in this market segment.

Vehicle Length	Door Position	Max Seated Capacity	Max Standing Capacity	Max Capacity
8.8m	WF	33	39	70
9.5m	WF	37	37	70
10.2m	DF	37	37	70
10.2m (2 door)	DF	31	40	71
10.8m	DF	41	38	70
10.8m (2 door)	DF	35	40	71

WF = Wheel Forward DF = Door Forward

Orders

A total of 72 new Wrightbus StreetLites will be entering production after the summer break at the Galgorm factory, with an order for 60 of the new midi buses also confirmed at the launch event by retail sales partner Mistral UK. The total value of the combined order is in the region of £7.4m.

On the day that the new midi bus from Wrightbus was unveiled, an order for 12 new StreetLites for Isle of Man Transport has been announced by the Ballymena-based company.

The Manx bus operator has specified both the Wheel Forward and Door Forward variants of the new StreetLite in an order worth a total of £1.4m. The order comprises of six 9.5m Wheel Forward and half a dozen 10.8m Door Forward variants, with vehicle deliveries programmed between December 2010 and March 2011. The single door StreetLites have an overall capacity of 70 passengers, with a maximum seated capacity of 33 on the 9.5m version, with a further 8 passengers seated on the longer 10.8m vehicles.

The order from the Island's bus operator will see the new vehicles joining 11 Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini Double Deckers, which as reported in *CBW* at the time, went into service on the Isle of Man last year. The first six vehicles are destined for rural routes around the Island, with the second batch set to enter service on local routes in and around Douglas, the capital of the Isle of Man.

Commenting on the order, Ian Longworth, director of public transport at Isle of Man Transport said: "I first saw the StreetLite in development back in March this year and was hugely impressed by the overall concept. Following an evaluation process, the new midi bus from Wrights came out on top and we were pleased to be able to place this order."

"I am delighted that Isle of Man Transport have underlined their confidence in our new small bus by placing an order at the official launch of StreetLite" said Wright Group MD Mark Nodder. "It is a highly significant as it is the first such order to be placed by a fleet operator." *CBW*
CBW is indebted to Wright Bus, Mistral & Voith.