

Signs celebrate our Viking past

Utility firm in funding boost

By LORNA HUGHES

ROAD signs marking Wirral's Viking heritage are to be erected in the borough for the first time.

Community groups and historians had called on Wirral Council to celebrate the link with special signposts in Thingwall, once believed to have been the site of a Viking parliament.

But the council refused, saying it was not an "appropriate use of resources".

United Utilities has now stepped in to provide £1,200 funding for four signs after a search for alternative sources of funding by Pensby and Thingwall councillor Don McCubbin.

Two will replace missing signs at the bottom of Cross Hill and Arrows Park Road, with another two on Irby Road and Pensby Road.

Wirral Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding of Nottingham University, said: "This is a fantastic example of enthusiastic collaboration in celebrating our area's great Viking heritage and I can't wait until they go up.



● Professor Stephen Harding with a Norwegian flag in Thingwall

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"Wirral is one of only two areas in England with definite Thingwall place names – the other is near Knotty Ash in Liverpool.

"It once marked the centre of Wirral's substantial and politically independent Viking settlement.

"The Vikings would meet once or twice a year to discuss matters of policy and law and it would also be a great time of meeting old friends and festivity."

Professor Harding came up

with the idea after noticing signs for similarly-named Tingwall in the Shetland Islands.

Like their Scottish equivalent, the Wirral signs have the Old Norse equivalent underneath and the translation – assembly field.

Councillor McCubbin said: "Stephen is doing a sterling job of promoting Wirral in Scandinavian countries.

"Doing something like this is fairly simple but is a link to our Viking heritage. It's good for the whole of Wirral but there is a concentration of Viking names around Pensby and Thingwall."

Experts believe the "Thing" – or actual site of the parliament – was on Cross Hill.

Roy Fisher of Irby, Thurston and Pensby Amenity Society, who also worked on the project, said: "We find it incredible that the Viking heritage of our area and Thingwall in particular isn't made more of because of its importance in British history.

"It has been great that the contributors to this project have been able to come and work together to achieve the objective of announcing to and reminding all travellers through Thingwall that this was once the most important place in this part of the country."