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NUMBER ONE FOR COACH, BUS & MINIBUS

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Accessibility gets the wheels turning at JKT

news focus

Ember's landmark electric service

A look at the thinking behind the ZE coach startup

best practice

The Guild of British Coach Operators

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interview

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/Editor's Comment



TIME FOR A CHANGE OF LINE...



Tim Deakin
/ Editor

The industry continues to battle for survival. Earlier momentum of passengers' return to buses has largely stalled. Coach tourism saw a modest restart of sorts, but that, too, is made difficult to sustain as and when movement restrictions increase in some areas.

While the wider reasons for the tightening of restrictions are understandable, much less palatable is the approach that politicians are again taking to public transport, and by association coaches.

In England, advice in higher-risk areas is that public transport should once again be avoided. That represents a shift back towards political utterances from the early stages of the pandemic. At some points, the message then seemed intent on creating panic. Passenger numbers plummeted accordingly.

Growing bus patronage above the current level seems like it will be a difficult task in the medium term. Societal change will have removed a small number of passengers for good, and some operators display a nonchalant approach to promoting the work they are doing to keep their vehicles clean and sanitised.

In Scotland, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon now suggests that travel by coach has led to spread of the virus. No evidence has been produced. It will be particularly disheartening to hear for Scotland's coach operators, many of which derive their main income stream from tourism.

Attitudes such as these contrast with the results of international studies of virus transmission on public transport. Thanks to the efforts of operators to keep vehicles scrupulously clean, public transport settings have been the "safest places on earth", Dr Julian Tang told *Sky News*.

Dr Tang is professor of respiratory sciences. It is thus

// Politicians' attitudes contrast with the results of studies about virus transmission on public transport //



Studies have shown that public transport settings have been 'the safest on earth' during the pandemic

reasonable to take his words at face value. One of the studies in question shows that in France, only 1.2% of the country's 2,830 COVID-19 clusters have been traced to transport of any kind. In Hong Kong, where public transport reliance is high, the overall infection rate is "far less" than in Western countries.

The Managing Director of a coach operator in South Wales says that his business spends "thousands of pounds every month" on cleaning and sanitation supplies. It has fitted purifying units to air-conditioning systems and purchased digital thermometers.

That business does not need government handouts, its MD adds. He would rather it ran safely and efficiently and traded its way out of trouble. That is one operator's view; others may think differently. But something that the industry collectively does not need is the handing out of misinformation about the 'danger' of using public transport that is supported by neither facts nor evidence.

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INDUSTRY 'HAS DELIVERED' ON A NEED FOR MORE DEDICATED HOME-TO-SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Combination of planning, extra resource and changes to procedures have gelled together



Tim Deakin
/ Editor

The return of home-to-school transport in England has gone more smoothly than might have been expected. That is the experience of two operators that are heavily involved in the sector.

Both Yellow Buses of Bournemouth and Sittingbourne-based Chalkwell have unsurprisingly reported that key to a successful restart has been the provision of additional

vehicle capacity. Each operator has tapped into spare resources in their respective coach fleets to help with that.

Planning has also been key, says Yellow Buses Managing Director David Squire. The distribution of additional Department for Education (DfE) funding was finalised late in the day, but that did not create much difficulty thanks to the operator's schedule for ramping up its public network. It did that in two stages, which fitted well with the reintroduction of home-to school services.

LA contribution

Yellow Buses benefitted from staff at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council being well-versed in where pupil and student flows already existed. Schools it serves also returned in a phased manner. That was helpful, says Mr Squire.

The communication of arrangements to parents by schools has proved to be somewhat haphazard, he continues. But in some cases, children now receive

a better service than before. As an example, pre pandemic, some would wait for a bus at Bournemouth railway station. Now, the duplicate waits for them.

In addition to coaches in its own livery, Yellow Buses is utilising some Caetano Levantes not currently needed for National Express work. They have been debranded, as per National Express's stipulation. Their PSVAR compliance has proved useful.

Further increased vehicle requirements have been met through withdrawing surplus buses from sale. Others have been hired from Ensignbus. As a result, no capacity difficulties have been experienced, although Yellow Buses keeps a crewed 'hot spare' in each school peak that is ready to go quickly.

DBS issues avoided

Drivers' contracts of employment at Yellow Buses require that they are DBS cleared. That has helped to avoid any issues with waiting for checks to be carried out. "It has not been a problem for us. But from speaking to other operators around the country, it has certainly been difficult for some of them," says Mr Squire.

Chalkwell has also had no issued with DBS checks. It has been able to perform them online, and turnarounds have been rapid. Like Yellow Buses, the Kent operator has reassigned otherwise idle coaches and their drivers to additional dedicated home-to-school duties.

"On the whole, and from talking to other operators locally, the return to school has gone well here," says MD Roland Eglington. "Kent County Council (KCC) applied an 'intelligence-based' approach to where more capacity would be required. It was done on the



basis of there being a scaling up of dedicated transport, rather than a sea change.”

Procedures tweaked

Some Chalkwell services have been restricted to children and students to provide sufficient capacity, and the operator has changed some of its procedures. They include the approach

to cleaning and ‘fogging’ vehicles. Contactless ticket machines and pass checking have also been introduced.

Passengers are not restricted to ‘bubbles’ when aboard, so loading is done as normal. Standee capacity and side- and rearwards-facing seats on buses, and the front row of seats on coaches, have been taken out of use. Thanks to the

latter precaution, Mr Eglinton does not believe that screens are needed on coaches.

Tests paid for by firm

Chalkwell recruited staff in preparation for the September ramp-up. Mr Eglinton would like to add a handful more drivers, as the winter period could lead

to additional self-isolation.

In two instances where staff reported symptoms of the virus, Chalkwell paid for them to be tested. The results were delivered within 24hrs. Mr Eglinton notes that while a cost comes with doing that, it is preferable to losing staff for an undefined period or creating anxiety among other employees.

The level of compliance with face covering requirements among children and students has varied. Yellow Buses has seen few issues, but for Chalkwell it has been “challenging” in some situations. Chalkwell has worked with both KCC and schools in a bid to improve observance.

Other than that, the return to school has gone well for the two operators consulted by **routeone**. “We were conscious that we would be looked at closely when schools returned, and we were mindful that we needed to put on a good show,” says Mr Eglinton. “That we have delivered as an industry is good reason for the additional DfE money to continue into 2021.”



Go-Ahead Group enhances graduate scheme offering

Since the publication of an article on the Go-Ahead Group's graduate scheme [[routeone/Graduate training/September](#)], the Group has “restructured, enhanced and further improved” its offering.

Because of the impact of coronavirus COVID-19, Go-Ahead's new graduate training scheme will launch in January 2021, rather than September 2020. The programme no longer offers a three-week induction in Go-Ahead's central office. Instead, participants will receive a focused, two-day induction,

with 15 days' training spread over the two years.

The new model, implemented through feedback, helps candidates “to continually learn throughout the scheme,” says a spokesperson. Graduates will also meet for physical and virtual events throughout the year. They will hear directly from Go-Ahead Group CEO David Brown (pictured) every quarter

“Crucially, our revamped programme also places more focus on wellbeing and mental health, especially the transition



from university to working life,” adds the spokesperson.

“Given the uncertainty of coronavirus COVID-19 we are not taking on as many as 20 applicants this year, as advised

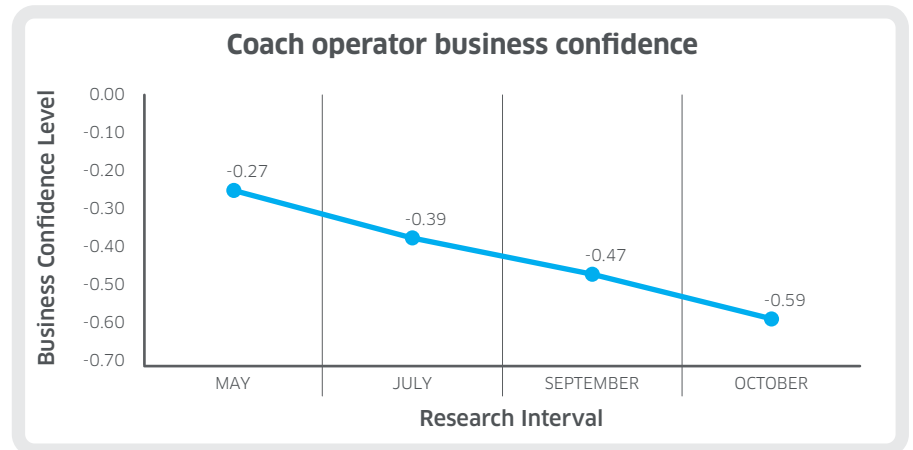
in the article. However, the graduate programme remains an integral part of the Go-Ahead Group and our new focus should provide an even better offering for candidates.”





COACH OPERATORS' BUSINESS CONFIDENCE DECLINES FURTHER

The ongoing **routeone** gauge of UK coach operator business confidence, which monitors attitudes and behaviours surrounding coronavirus COVID-19 and which was last updated on 8 October, has declined a further 25.5% to -0.59.



Sector variation is clear

Decline is apparent across all sectors. The most significant was in school contract (9%) and private hire (4%). Confidence in the tourism and rail replacement segments only varies slightly versus September.

Vehicles off the road reduce

The number of vehicles on the road has grown as businesses reopen. Previously, 37% of operators said that 91-100% of their vehicles were off the road. In October, 7% reported that proportion off the road.

BUS PASSENGER STATISTICS

Statistics generated by the Department for Transport (DfT) show that weekday bus usage both outside and within London has largely flattened since mid-September, halting the encouraging growth seen until then.

Weekend usage declines

At weekends, patronage dropped for both the Saturday and the Sunday for which the most recent data is available. On Saturday 3 October DfT measured usage outside London at 47% of that before the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. That was seven percentage points down on the previous Saturday and the lowest level of weekend patronage since Saturday 15 August.

Sunday 4 October saw 55% recorded outside London, down three percentage points on the previous Sunday. In London, the decline for 3 and 4 October was three and five percentage points respectively over the previous weekend.

Weekday ridership continues to hover at around the 55-60% mark. Tuesday 29 September saw a high-water mark for the recovery period outside London. 61% of pre-pandemic passengers were carried on that day, according to DfT's methodology.

That figure fell back to 55% on two of the following three days, but it is not since

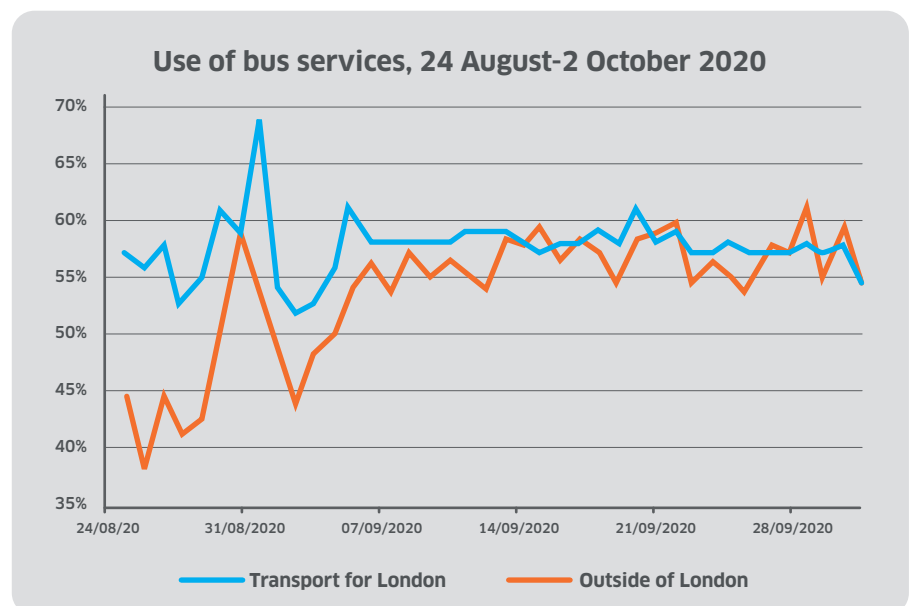
3 September that weekday patronage was below 50% of pre-pandemic levels outside London. Within the capital, weekday usage was last below 50% on 13 August.

Individual route variation

Recovery outside London varies greatly between route and operator, according to separate data compiled by industry managers' group The Ten Per Cent Club. Its members saw fare-paying passenger

numbers at an average of 60% of pre-pandemic levels at the end of September. Actual rates range from 46% to 74% on commercial services. Concessionary travel on commercial services is at an average of 45%, with a range between 18% and 76%.

Tendered services have recovered more slowly. They have seen a return of an average of 43% of fare paying passengers and 34% of concessionary travellers.



MILEAGE FIGURES LAY BARE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON COACH

Like for like comparison shows just 6.5% of 2019's YTD total has been operated in 2020

Figures collated by a coach operator comparing mileage covered by its vehicles in 2020 with like-for-like data for 2019 for its core business have further illustrated the impact of coronavirus COVID-19 on the coach tourism sector.

Peter Godward Coaches of Basildon covered 202,734 miles on core work in the first nine months of 2020. That was 6.5% of the 3,127,117 miles covered in the same period in 2019. The worst month - July 2020 - saw the operator run 0.15% of 2019's mileage, at 933 miles versus 611,346.

The figures cover all work

except home-to-school services. Operations Manager Andrew Church says that Peter Godward Coaches typically generates most of its income from visitors travelling to the UK from outside Europe, and hence it has been hit hard by the pandemic.

"Feedback from those clients is that they do not know when they will be able to start to travel to the UK again," says Mr Church.

Mileage covered by Godward's UK and foreign partner operators has been similarly decimated. In the first nine months of 2020 it was 8.8% of that period in 2019,

helped by a heavy requirement in February 2020. After that, no more partner mileage has been covered.

However, the operator continues to run some home-to-school services. It has also increased the amount of rail replacement work it carries out, both in Essex and elsewhere. Mr Church says that the decision to add more PSVAR compliant coaches to its fleet proved to be

shrewd in the latter respect.

Particularly disappointing, he adds, is that 2020 had started very well for the operator. January mileage covered by its own coaches was 9.3% higher than the same month in 2019. While that trend was not continued into February, Mr Church first predicted that 2020 overall would be up by around 18% over 2019.



Changes to EU drivers' hours rules now in force

On 20 August, amendments to EU drivers' hours regulations were made. Croner-i looks at the key changes and how coach operators will be affected

Amendments to the EU Drivers' Hours Regulations came into effect on 20 August which aim broadly to improve conditions for commercial drivers travelling on long distance jobs.

These new changes are likely to affect most operators in one way or another and, while more of the changes apply directly to HGV operators, coach operators should certainly also take note. Croner-i looks at the key changes.

- ➔ For overnight rests - there is now an outright ban on drivers taking weekly rest breaks in vehicles. A driver's employer will need to pay for adequate sleeping facilities
- ➔ Taking rests and breaks on ferries or rail journeys - where a driver accompanies a vehicle which

is transported by ferry or train, during a regular daily rest or reduced weekly rest period the driver shall have access to a sleeper cabin, bunk or couchette at their disposal

- ➔ 'Other work' - the rule on recording time spent carrying out non-driving activities has been tightened
- ➔ Double manned breaks - a driver can now take 45-minute breaks in a vehicle that is being driven by another driver
- ➔ All drivers should be able to return home within a four-week period
- ➔ The European Commission must ensure that information on safe and secure parking areas is easily accessible to drivers
- ➔ An extension of daily and weekly driving time in exceptional circumstances



Changes are likely to affect most operators in one way or another

so that drivers can reach their employer's operating centre or home before taking weekly rest.

/FIND OUT MORE

For full details on the amendments, see <https://bit.ly/33RBTeX>





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EMBER: A LANDMARK MOMENT FOR THE COACH INDUSTRY

Ember launched two battery-electric Yutong TCe12 coaches onto a scheduled route between Dundee and Edinburgh on 1 October. **It is the first step for a business model built entirely on zero-emission**



Tim Deakin
/ Editor

Start-up Ember has attracted significant mainstream attention for its work in establishing the UK's first scheduled coach service that is served by zero-emission vehicles. The route, between Dundee and Edinburgh, went live on 1 October. It uses two battery-electric Yutong TCe12s. But what is the wider thinking behind the Ember concept?

Ember was founded by Keith Bradbury and Pierce Glennie. Neither had prior experience in the coach and bus sector. Instead, they were previously involved in business lending, working with small organisations.

Making a jump from that sector to running coaches – and zero-emission coaches at that – is unprecedented. But Keith believes that parallels can be drawn between the two disciplines. His and Pierce's former employer is focused on offering customers the best proposition. That is something they believe transfers readily to passenger transport.

Keith and Pierce also believe that coming into something with no preconceptions allows them to build that business around the here and now. In Ember's case, the headline element of that is zero-emission. To leverage that credential, its model has been built around the challenges and opportunities that presents.

"If electrification is taken as the core part of a business, that organisation can do things that are interesting," says Keith.

"That approach is part of why we can run 850km per coach, per day. We have built our timetable around vehicles being battery-electric. They take multiple rapid charges through the day. We can run almost around the clock because we have built everything around electrification."

Why Edinburgh to Dundee to begin?

Various reasons exist for why Ember chose Scotland, and particularly the Dundee to Edinburgh axis, to launch. And a service between the two cities is indeed merely the start. Keith and Pierce plan to roll

zero-emission scheduled coach services out to other routes in due course.

"There is a lot of support in Scotland for zero-emission. The country is arguably more ambitious in its targets for improvements than the rest of the UK," says Keith. "That approach is well aligned with what we want to do with the electrification of public transport."

A round trip between Dundee and Edinburgh is around 210km. That fits well with the TCe12's range while also allowing a suitable contingency for delays, including possible closure of the Queensferry Crossing. All charging is undertaken



Ember's business model is built on zero-emission, which it says will give more opportunities



LEFT:
The tourism market may lead to an innovative adoption of electric bike and scooter charging

in Dundee. When delays are experienced, coaches need to make only a brief charge after arrival to have enough stored energy to complete the following trip.

Dundee City Council's stance played a part in where Ember adopted as its home. Keith says that the local authority is proactive in fostering zero-emission ideas. It has also been helpful in terms of supporting the installation of the necessary infrastructure. As a result, the coaches are based in Dundee. Ember's office is there, and seven drivers have been recruited in the city.

BSOG incentive payment a key factor, says Ember

The Scottish Government's approach was also prominent in Ember's thinking. Yutong's TCe12 was accredited as an Ultra-Low Emission Bus in August. In Scotland, that unlocks a 30p per kilometre BSOG incentive payment when used on eligible work. That factored into Ember's decision to choose Scotland as its home. It also works well with the operator's business model.

"One thing that we like about the BSOG

// We can run almost 24hr per day because we have built everything around electrification //

approach is that it pays by the kilometre," says Keith. "That incentivises us to use our vehicles intensively. A zero-emission coach costs more to buy than a diesel and the operator bears that additional cost. But paying BSOG on a pence-per-kilometre basis is rewarding if a vehicle is used intensively."

Heavy use of the TCe12s is among the foundations of Ember's business model. Each coach is required seven days per week. While the early experience of another operator of the type is that the TCe12 is highly reliable, Ember still needs contingency.

"Our timetable has one fewer service on Sundays. Routine maintenance is undertaken by our contractor early

on Sunday morning. Contingency in terms of unplanned downtime is through our relationships with other operators in Dundee," says Keith.

At times of disruption, Ember's priority is to move customers with the minimum delay. That may involve a hired diesel coach, a minibus or even a taxi.

Further evidence of the newcomer's approach to customers is shown by its fare structure. Should a passenger choose not to travel, their payment is refunded in full. Ember's pricing point is simple: Each journey has one fare, regardless of how far in advance it is booked.

Dundee to Edinburgh is £7.50 one-way. The operator believes that puts it in a strong position against rail competition. All tickets are delivered via a QR code, which is scanned by the driver upon boarding.

The first- and last-mile aspect of a journey

A further aspect of the Ember model will be the offer of first- and last-mile connectivity. Such an add-on will follow the core A to B product. One element may

NEWS FOCUS/Ember zero-emission scheduled coaches



LEFT:
Support from both
Dundee City Council and
the Scottish Government
was key to Ember's launch

involve customers using a minibus that delivers them to or collects them from the coach stop. But a significant piece of new thinking is also in the mix.

Tourism is the key to the latter proposition. It may involve electric bikes or scooters being carried on coaches that could be hired to passengers after arrival and returned later in the day ahead of the return journey.

That offering, too, has been considered around the overall zero-emission model. In a highly-novel proposal, bikes and/or scooters could be charged while in transit from the coach batteries. "We have already had some conversations with the providers of those bikes and scooters," says Keith.

Already an eye on future expansion

While the present may be an odd time to launch a new product, Ember's view is one for the longer term.

Governments have nailed their flags to the zero-emission mast, and the operator sees it as "inevitable" that further progress

// We can run almost 24hr per day because we have built everything around electrification //

will be made quickly on that journey.

Ember's aim is to look at launching more routes within Scotland over the coming 12 months. Fort William, Glasgow and Oban are all on its shortlist for services in 2021. Beyond that, it will examine markets outside Scotland. That may involve franchising the concept under some circumstances.

Keith notes that as technology advances and the range of battery-electric coaches grows, they will come to suit more scheduled service applications. "There is opportunity everywhere," he says. "Once you figure out how to operate these vehicles at a high level of utilisation,

the product can be exported to different markets."

The existing range of the TCe12 already opens longer routes than Dundee to Edinburgh, if charging infrastructure is suitably located. Ember wants to be able to run battery-electric coaches on end-to-end duties of up to around 200 miles, although it does not rule out longer services as and when battery chemistry matures further and ranges increase.

Ember: A key step in coaching's move away from diesel

It is certain that Ember's operation of zero-emission coaches on scheduled service work will be a point of interest for the industry and something that is watched closely by friends and competitors alike. National Express has already outlined an ambition for its scheduled coach network to become entirely zero-emission by 2035. Far ahead of that, Ember's fledgling route between Dundee and Edinburgh represents a landmark step towards the scheduled industry's eventual move away from diesel.

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Mike Jewell
/ Legal Journalist

The revocation of the 19-vehicle international O-Licence held by Newent-based George Young's Coaches by Traffic Commissioner (TC) Nick Denton; the disqualification of Directors Gwendoline Young and Kevin Young from holding or obtaining a PSV O-Licence for three years; and the disqualification of both Edward Berry and Gwendoline Young from acting as a Transport Manager (TM) indefinitely, have been upheld by the Upper Tribunal on appeal.

At a Public Inquiry (PI) in September 2018, the O-Licence was suspended for seven days. Undertakings were given that Gwendoline Young would step down as TM by 31 October 2018; that a new TM would be nominated by 5 November 2018; and that roller brake tests would be carried out every 12 weeks [routeone/Court Report/24 October 2018].

Edward Berry was nominated as TM by 5 November 2018, but nothing was submitted until April 2019. The document submitted then was not a contract. It was merely a signed agreement.

Mr Berry did not act as TM during that period and Mrs Young did not step down. On 9 May 2019 at a school bus check, a Gloucestershire County Council engineer

found numerous serious defects on one of the company's vehicles, including exhaust fumes and water entering the interior.

21-week interval

The declared inspection period was eight weeks. One vehicle that had gone 21 weeks between inspections was said to be off the road yet there were 36 driver defect reports for it during that period. Some of the inspection records showed 30 to 40 defects. Mr Young agreed with Mr Denton's comment that the records were "pure fiction" [routeone/Court Report/4 December 2019].

Making the revocation and disqualification orders, TC Denton said that the financial evidence showed a figure considerably short of the £88,000 required to support a licence of 19 vehicles.

// The Upper Tribunal said that TC Denton had dealt with a company whose Directors had seen fit to mislead him and DVSA //

The operator was dependent on selling a number of vehicles to raise sufficient funds to support the O-Licence. The valuation of the vehicles was, according to a coach sales company, unlikely to be realised within a four-week period. If the operator was relying on those vehicles, it should have sold some of them a while ago to realise the necessary funds.

Undertaking not fulfilled

Kevin Young failed to fulfil the undertaking he gave in September 2018 to appoint a new TM. He simply went through the motions of appointing someone but never took any steps to ensure that that person actually carried out the TM's role in practice.

Mr Young knew that was not what was required. That was why he attempted to hide Mr Berry's absence from both the TC and a Vehicle Examiner. Gwendoline Young connived in that attempt to evade the undertakings given at the September 2018 PI. Mr Denton took account of the subsequent failure to effectively address the shortcomings in maintenance and vehicle condition.

Mr Young had expressed an intention at the September 2018 PI of qualifying as a TM. But all that happened subsequently – in October 2018 – was that he emailed

// There had been breaches of undertakings concerning roller brake testing and the need to keep vehicles fit and serviceable //

Mr Denton's office to ask if he could be accepted as a TM under acquired rights. That had not been possible for the past eight years.

The maintenance records showed that roller brake tests were not being carried out every 12 weeks, contrary to the undertaking given at the September 2018 PI.

TM by acquired rights

In disqualifying both Edward Berry and Gwendoline Young from acting as a TM, Mr Denton said that they both held the TM qualification by virtue of acquired rights. They had never taken the TM CPC examination, or in Mrs Young's case, ever undertaken any formal training. In judgement, neither of them possessed the competence or knowledge that was expected of a modern-day, competent and reputable TM [routeone/Court Report/4 December 2019].

Upholding the revocation of the O-Licence and the disqualification of its Directors, the Upper Tribunal said that TC Denton had dealt with

a company whose Directors had seen fit to mislead him and DVSA.

Furthermore, there had been breaches of undertakings concerning roller brake testing and the need to keep vehicles fit and serviceable. It had been argued that an alternative form of testing that was carried out was just as effective. However, when undertakings were given, it was reasonable to expect that they be complied with.

That was what the adjudication arm of the regulatory regime required. Against the background of deliberate deception and breach of undertakings, it could not realistically be said that any of TC Denton's decisions were disproportionate or were wrong.

Others' culpability accepted

In the case of Edward Berry, the Upper Tribunal said that the thrust of his argument was that he did nothing wrong or little wrong because he was prevented from acting as TM by the culpable conduct of others.

The TC accepted the culpability of others. However, it was right to say that Mr Berry essentially

'sat back' for a period of time having himself signed form TM1. Mr Berry did not resign when, on his own account, he was rebuffed by the operator, him having approached it or its Directors in June 2019.

Mr Denton thought that Mr Berry should have resigned at that point. He also thought, more generally, that Mr Berry should have been proactive in informing the Office of the TC of the difficulties he was experiencing, bearing in mind Mr Berry had himself, through signing form TM1, informed the Office of the TC that he was going to act as TM on the licence on a fully-time basis.

Mr Berry's actions

gave an outward veneer of professional competence to an O-Licence when the reality was very different.

It could not be said that TC Denton's decision to the effect that Mr Berry had lost his good reputation was plainly wrong. That was so, notwithstanding his previous lengthy involvement in the field of transport or the fact that others were at fault too.

Mr Berry had indicated that it was intention to retire as a TM. That was the course of action that the TC thought was probably best. So, it might well be that if Mr Berry had succeeded in the appeal proceedings, he would have derived no practical benefit from it.



'It could not realistically be said that any of Mr Denton's decisions were disproportionate or wrong'

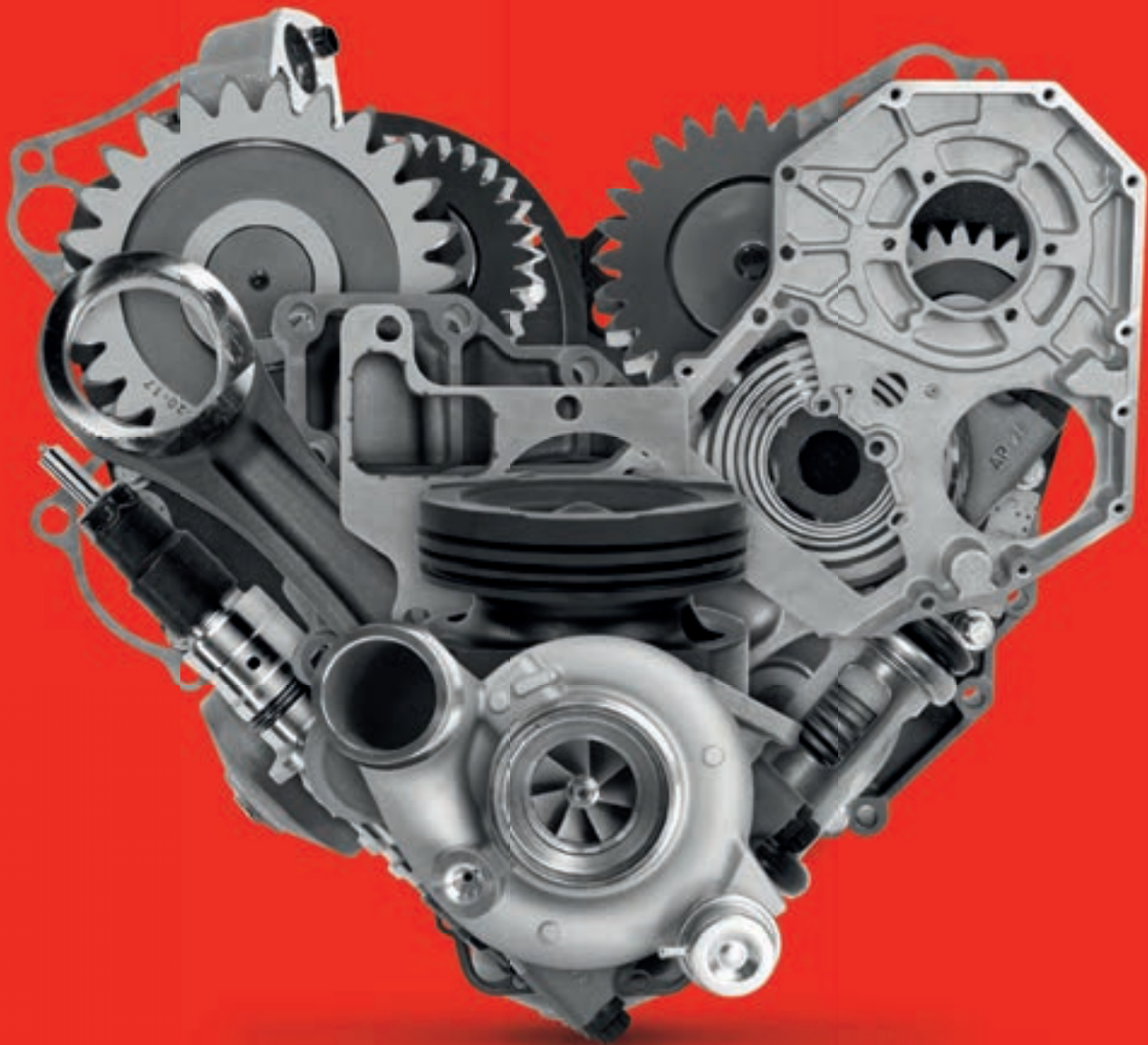


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 **Go North East / Wrightbus StreetDeck**



Go North East (GNE) has taken delivery of six new Wrightbus StreetDecks as part of a £3m investment in its express X1 service, supplied by **Wrightbus/02825 641212**.

In total, thirteen state-of-the-art, low-emission buses will turn the X1 route into part of the company's premium X-lines brand of interurban express services across the North East, GNE says, and will be instantly

recognisable by their gold and red colour scheme.

On-board amenities include wi-fi, USB and wireless charging spots, next-stop audio-visual announcements and tables on the upper deck.

GNE Managing Director Martijn Gilbert says: "We hope this major investment in brand new, low-emission, luxury buses will help transform bus travel and support the region's recovery."

 **Felixstowe Travel / Scania Interlink**

Felixstowe Travel has taken delivery of a new Scania K 410 EB with Interlink bodywork, supplied by **Scania Great Britain/01909 500822**.

The coach is fully PSVAR-compliant. It comes equipped with 53 half-leather seats, centre-sunken toilet, drinks dispenser, DVD player, climate control and reverse camera.

Owner Mick Dabbs says the purchase follows on from

successful deployment of two Scania Interlink coaches in 2019.

"We found them to be very reliable with an excellent level of passenger comfort," he explains. "The bonus of purchasing a Scania coach is the included two-year repair and maintenance package, which is carried out for us by our local Scania dealer. This means we don't have to travel far to get our vehicle maintained."



 **Donald MacNeil Coaches / Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Ilesbus Vegas**



Donald MacNeil Coaches of Castlebay, on the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides, has added a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter to its fleet, supplied by **Ilesbus/07402 847289**.

The Sprinter is built to Ilesbus Vegas specification. It has 19 reclining seats finished in real leather, large double-glazed panoramic windows, an additional windscreen above the OEM fitted screen, interior

suede trim, full real wood veneer on the dashboard and beneath the windows, curved gangway flooring with wood-effect linoleum and removable carpet.

Each seat has a USB charging port and the minicoach is equipped with rear heating, fridge, and DVD player. A steel extension offers a large rear boot and exterior enhancements include Ilesbus' new front bumper and coach back design.

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/NET TALK

[@routeoneteam](#)

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We've been out and about again earlier today attending a further face covering event with the TravelSafe team [@gmpolice](#) [@OfficialTfGM](#) and other operators on Rochdale Road #SafeGM
9 October

[@CPT_UK](#)

Our third clean air themed blog is by [@AndrewWickhamGo](#) who writes about the [@BluestarHQ](#) fleet of air filtering buses that are cleaning Southampton's air #CleanAirDay [@cleanairdayuk](#)
8 October

[@SnapTravelTech](#)

Snap's BACK on the road! We're so excited to show you all the measures in place to make sure you can travel safely and comfortably
25 September

f /routeonemagazine

Heathside Travel
Happy 4th birthday to us! Here's a little video of where we've been and what we've been up to over the last four years. Thank you to our loyal customers for standing by us. Thank you to our staff for everything they do.
1 October

Bakers Dolphin
Our coach and happy clients have arrived in Lake Como where they will enjoy the next six nights... and the sun is shining. This is our last tour down to Lake Como this season
28 September

/THE WHISPERER



COACH CELEBRATES FANS

FC Cologne has found a unique way to bring its most loyal fans on tour with the players, hears The Whisperer. The Setra TopClass touring coach features the names of the 6,000 season-ticket holders who waived the refund of their tickets during the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis. The team's mascot hasn't been 'forgoatten' about either, with the image of Hennes the goat also adorned on the coach.

ABOVE:

FC Cologne's unique Setra team coach



ABOVE:

Cold and damp - the buses saved the day

RUNNING DAY SUCCESS

The Whisperer was pleased to hear that, despite the truly autumnal weather, Wythall's Autumn Running Day went ahead as planned. Many vehicles were on show for the 260 visitors to admire, including a 1948 Southdown Leyland PS1/1 HUF 303 and a 1950 AEC Regal LPT 328. A welcome visitor was a newly-preserved 2008 Optare Solo. The Whisperer thinks it's great to see the significant 'modern' vehicles coming into the preservation fold.



ABOVE:

The 1985 Leyland in question

CAN YOU HELP WRACO?

The Whisperer has been asked to publish an information request for Wakefield-based WRACO and is only too happy to oblige. The operator is working on getting the dashboard of its 1985 Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 3200 back to "as delivered" condition. Director Julie Aylward is looking for information on how to connect a Radiomobile 1545X PA to the Blaupunkt radio cassette player. Think you can help? Please contact Julie at julie.aylward@wraco.uk



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LETTER OF THE WEEK



TIME TO SORT OUT BRIDGE STRIKES

Is it really beyond the wit of man to sort out the problem of bridge strikes once and for all? [[routeone/News/15 september](#)]

I would submit the best way to avoid them is put up heavy, indestructible metal frames about 50m before a low bridge (an argument could be made for

all bridges which are below the 5.5m max vehicle height in this country).

That way, the only thing that gets damaged is the offending vehicle. Admittedly, passengers would be at risk on top decks of PSVs, but a cheap set of bells before such a structure would surely cure that?

I know this solution has been used in various places around Reading and I believe in parts of the Midlands.

David Archer, Walsall



Clearing up any PSVAR confusions...

I am not sure what Gary Clark is trying to prove in last month's issue [[routeone/Letters/September 2020](#)], but here is a brief synopsis of PSVAR regarding railway replacement services.

The coach or bus operator enters into a contract with the train operating company (TOC) to provide an alternative service between point A and point B for an agreed sum. Part of that contract will usually stipulate that vehicles used should be PSVAR-certified, therefore the operators must provide vehicles that satisfy that requirement.

Even if there is no mention in the contract for provision of PSVAR (and I would expect every TOC will ensure it's included), there are overriding factors that make

it necessary to provide such vehicles. That is because passengers are being carried at separate fares on what is, in effect, a local bus service which is open to the public.

Therefore, if you accept a contract from a TOC, you should comply with its contents. Home to school transport is a little different and there are three types:

- a)** If the local authority (LA) pays the operator for the vehicle and does not charge any of the scholars, then it's outside PSVAR and any type of vehicle can be used. I suspect that most school contracts meet this requirement
- b)** However, if the LA is selling seats to scholars who are not eligible for free school transport, then it becomes a commercial service and requires PSVAR-certified vehicles
- c)** If an operator is contracted

by a place of learning to provide transport for their students, and these students pay either the operator directly or the school collects the fares either directly or indirectly, then the vehicles have to be PSVAR. Only if the services are free to every student can it be outside PSVAR.

So, it's up to the LAs to choose between A or B. If they choose B to increase their revenue, they will have to expect the tender price to increase as they are requesting operators to offer a different type of vehicle.

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WILL 'BOLD' PLANS FOR THE BUS INDUSTRY SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY?

With mixed messages and possible 'deadly' decisions, our man in Westminster asks if the future of the bus hangs in the balance



Westminster Watcher
/ Political Journalist

Bus patronage is slowly creeping back up, certainly more so than is the case with rail, although it remains well below pre-lockdown levels.

As I write, the word is all about further local lockdowns to come, which will surely only depress demand for travel yet again. These are bleak times for the public transport sector, although the sector can hardly complain that it's any worse off

than so many other industries and businesses.

Questions to be asked

The big policy conundrum is: how long should the taxpayer directly subsidise private bus operators?

There is a strong public policy case for subsidising bus services and in certain respects the taxpayer already does - both through the Bus Service Operators Grant and through local authorities subsidising services not provided by the commercial market.

Here's my difficulty: Is it right

for the taxpayer to subsidise private companies simply because patronage has dropped?

In the short term and because of the circumstances that have caused patronage to collapse, I can see that a rescue package to keep routes running was the right thing to do.

But as patronage starts to climb back up, when should the government say that private operators should cut their cloth to supply the new commercial market, with any subsidy paid to combined authorities and local transport authorities to step in - as they

do now - to support services that the commercial market doesn't supply?

No easy answers

Put another way, if the commercial market ends up being much smaller, then the natural response should be for the commercial, private operators to respond commercially - as they always did before the pandemic distorted things.

It's a difficult call and I am not suggesting that, in the short term at least, there is an easy answer.

But if in the longer term the expectation is that the government should continue to support the private operators in the way it is, I worry that the private operators will become subsidy junkies and the whole point of deregulation will be distorted.

A mixed message?

The one thing I don't understand is why the government has been sending out a message that implies public transport is not safe. That does not help private operators in their efforts to grow back patronage.

The reality is that buses are

// **Private operators will become subsidy junkies and the whole point of deregulation will be distorted** //



'Confidence in the government's handling of the pandemic is waning'



'What about the Superbus networks and first electric bus town we were promised?'

now subject to much more intense cleaning regimes. Even scientific and medical professions have questioned why the government urged the public to avoid public transport at the start of lockdown.

The government should now do much more to address this.

'Deadly' decisions

With the growing expert opinion saying lockdown has done more long-term harm than good, confidence in the government's handling of the pandemic is waning.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and I don't envy the task of the Prime Minister in responding to the pandemic. But a growing number of experts are saying that, while life would have been grim for some weeks without the lockdown in March, we would by now be through the whole thing with no second wave.

It seems many scientists and doctors are saying that

lockdown has prolonged the pandemic.

It's alarming to hear that the original report from Imperial College, which warned of up to 500,000 deaths in the UK if we did not go into lockdown, also warned that closing schools and asking us all to socially distance would be "deadly". Apparently, this part of the report, simply got overlooked.

The daily struggle

If I were a private bus operator, I think I would be angry to hear that a lockdown was probably the worst thing the government could do.

As I said, hindsight is a wonderful thing, which none of us possess. Governments around the world have faced impossible decisions, and it's easy to be critical. But when you hear that there was a warning of the "deadly" consequences of a lockdown and that it was overlooked, you do start to wonder.

// When you hear that there was a warning of the 'deadly' consequences of a lockdown and that it was overlooked, you do start to wonder //

Meanwhile, bus operators now must struggle with the daily task of trying to encourage people back to buses.

I am told that one or two operators have conducted surveys of their previous passengers and found that something like 20% will never return because they have found alternative ways to do things, like shop online.

Future of the bus

It is far from clear to me what the long-term future holds for the commercial bus market.

I can't see ongoing, direct taxpayer support to operators being viable - either in terms

of affordability or public policy - so I suspect we will see a material shrinkage in the size of the commercial market.

When Boris Johnson became Prime Minister, he declared his love for the bus. How he and his ministers respond to the new challenges the industry faces will be fascinating to watch.

Apart from anything else, they have the small matter of 4,000 new green buses to fund, which looks increasingly difficult to do. And what about the 'Superbus' networks and the first electric bus town we were promised back in February?

I wonder whether these bold plans will now see the light of day.

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Pierce Glennie, Ember Co-Founder

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THE PAINFUL REALITY OF A PANDEMIC ON OPERATORS



Staff overtime 'is now rarer than a sensible tweet from Donald Trump'



As the pandemic becomes our new reality, one coach operator looks at the impact of COVID-19 on their business



Industry expert / Commentator

Looking through the office window with the phones not ringing and the emails not pinging, the reality of the current situation for the coach industry is really hitting home.

At the start of the pandemic, the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) showed that over 40% of coach companies could fail without some form of government support. Allowing for a bit of scaremongering and a natural desire to paint the worst possible scenario in an understandable attempt to get government backing, they were sobering statistics.

I haven't seen evidence of that and, to my knowledge, not one company within a 25-mile radius of us has stopped trading. Many have threatened to, but they are all still turning out each morning.

Why? My guess is that the worst is coming - and coming fast. The initial wave of government support is petering out and our industry - like many others - will be left to paddle our own canoe.

Going gets tough

Our turnover is now almost entirely school contracts and local services. We have no private hire, school trips or sporting events work, and our holiday programme has practically stopped until, I imagine, Easter

2021 at the earliest.

That simply doesn't stack up financially. Wages, HP and finance, insurance, maintenance and lots of sundry costs mean we are in a far worse position cashflow-wise now than when we were effectively mothballed.

Every invoice received is scrutinised and every penny spent by anyone must be run by me. There isn't much joy in that. I was always taught that when the going gets tough, you simply work harder. This time, though, that isn't an option.

Who will survive?

Which brings me back to the over 40% and how many operators will be left by February half term 2021.

You don't need to be an expert on viruses to suggest it will be ones who have a good mixed base of work, aren't overburdened with HP and finance, and already run as lean an operation as possible.

Owning your own premises and having a good accountant will also help.

Staff to think of

Sadly, the winter of discontent is here for all of us.

It not just operators that are concerned for companies that

have spanned generations. Our staff also have bills and mortgages that need to be paid. Where overtime was once plentiful, it is now rarer than a sensible tweet from Donald Trump.

If we are one of the lucky ones that aren't part of the over 40%, I'll see you on the other side. But if you or I are one of the ones who don't make it, then it probably wasn't your fault. Good luck.

// I was always taught that when the going gets tough, you simply work harder. This time, though, that isn't an option//



An expected £3bn will help achieve 4,000 new zero-emission buses by 2025

WORK CONTINUES DESPITE COVID-19

Despite more possible restrictions, the government has not forgotten its commitment to the bus industry



Dan Hayes
/ Contributor

As shutters are slowly drawn on businesses in the north and much of the country prepares for the impact of a second wave, the government is working on the Green Recovery and the National Bus Strategy.

We understand the government is assessing options for an emergency bus fund to help operators purchase vehicles and support manufacturing jobs.

This fund would be restricted to this year and potentially provide a greater level of support than in 'normal times'. However, state aid rules are important and legal implications of any COVID-19 response scheme are being considered.

Funding in the pipeline

The National Bus Strategy (NBS) is set to have a clear action list of how the government will help the industry reverse pre-COVID-19 decline.

Although subject to the Spending Review, there is an expected £3bn for new buses and infrastructure to help improve speeds and, importantly, a step change in funding to achieve 4,000 new zero-emission buses by 2025.

As part of this work, the government is considering a variety of proposals about how to flip the market from diesel to zero emission.

The shift to zero emission is the right one as it improves local air quality and if the fuel/energy is low carbon, it also supports our net-zero targets. But, these new technologies are more expensive than diesels and

require investment in refuelling and charging infrastructure.

'Plug in' grant

To kick-start the zero-emission bus market, the government is considering investing around £1bn in support for the purchase of new buses and infrastructure. The two most popular ideas are through either a "plug-in" bus grant or through a leasing scheme.

The plug-in bus grant would see bus manufacturers and dealers being able to claim a fixed amount of money per bus from the government through the plug-in vehicle grant. This would remove the long application times and delays with announcements we see with existing competition schemes.

Bus leasing options

The second option being considered is a financing and leasing arrangement, where

government or a third party either partially or wholly owns zero-emission buses and then leases them out to operators over a fixed period.

This would remove a bottleneck in leasing options where there is much uncertainty around the residual value of zero-emission buses. This could work separately or with a plug-in bus grant.

BSOG is also being looked at, although government does not seem keen to change incentives for low- and ultra-low emission buses at present.

LowCVP is discussing some of these key challenges ahead at its Bus Working Group this week (15 October). It is also hosting a coach interest group meeting on Thursday 29 October.

FIND OUT MORE

Register to attend by emailing daniel.hayes@lowcvp.org.uk

// The government is considering investing around £1bn in support for the purchase of new buses and infrastructure //

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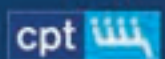
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LOOKING AHEAD TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF OUR INDUSTRY



Keeping one eye on the future is vital to ensure the industry's inclusivity and environmental goals are delivered



Graham Vidler
/ CPT CEO

Since March, CPT has been working hard to try and ensure that you have what you need to run your business during these unprecedented times.

This has often meant interventions focused on the urgent, such as: Clarifying what the latest lockdown rules mean for coach operators running tours, securing the next round of the CBSSG funding or highlighting inconsistencies in government messaging around public transport.

However, CPT is also looking further ahead and the forthcoming Spending Review, expected by the end of this year, is a chance to do just that. This year's Review is expected to see Rishi Sunak set spending for each government department for the next three years, although it may turn out to cover a shorter period. So, what should Mr Sunak be including this time round?

Retrofit funding key

Although the coach and bus sectors are different, many issues overlap. One is the central role they play in cleaning our air and in the

battle against the climate emergency.

Therefore, alongside more immediate financial support for the coach sector, the introduction of central grants to help operators retrofit their fleets to Euro VI standard - bringing an end to the postcode lottery of funding - is vital.

The people's choice

For bus, we need to see government investment that reflects the realities of the pandemic to deliver its ambition of 4,000 green buses.

We also need to ensure that travelling by bus is the first choice for people, which means quicker and more reliable journeys.

This means we need to put bus at the heart of our transport networks and invest significantly in bus priority measures in towns and cities across the country. If everyone took one more bus journey a month, we would reduce the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by two million tonnes a year.

Cost of accessibility

Finally, we know that coaches provide a safe and convenient form of transport for people who might otherwise be reluctant to travel.

The PSV Accessibility Regulations form an important part of the government's inclusivity agenda, but the pandemic has made the transition to a more accessible fleet even more challenging as operators have been left with little or no capital or credit for adaptations or replacements. Therefore, the industry needs grants to help cover these costs.

Although much of CPT's focus is on the here and now, it's important we keep at least one eye on the future to ensure that we have the policies in place to help deliver the reliable, inclusive and hyphenate network we will need for a green, passenger-led recovery.

// CPT is also looking further ahead and the forthcoming Spending Review, expected by the end of this year, is a chance to do just that //



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REVOLUTIONISING THE ART OF DEPOT MANAGEMENT

Depot management is an art, and one that can deliver high efficiency and service standards if done well. VAB Berlin offers a comprehensive cloud-based product that can greatly help out



Tim Deakin
/ Editor

With electrification, vehicle connectivity and an increasing reliance on cloud-based platforms for staff scheduling, engineering management and KPI delivery, data is king in the bus industry. But that data can only be leveraged if it is brought together in an easy to understand shared interface. That is where Verkehrsautomatisierung Berlin – or VAB Berlin – believes it comes in.

VAB Berlin is 100% owned by Hanning & Kahl. Based in the German capital and with 54 employees, it counts a well-developed and bespoke data-based depot management system among its products. That tool harvests operational data from a multitude of sources and brings it together to deliver efficiency and productivity gains, and – the supplier says – improvements in service delivery.

That approach, VAB Berlin adds, allows depot management to be streamlined while at the same time being optimised for the specific operational landscape of the location in question. VAB Berlin is well represented among its home nation's major urban bus operations, and in several other European nations.

The company has 35 years' experience, 250 solutions for the wider world of public transport and 350 clients worldwide. Together with Hanning & Kahl, VAB Berlin says it is "unique in Europe in this form." It has now turned its attention to the UK bus market.

VAB Berlin's depot connectivity

Connectivity is at the heart of the VAB Berlin depot management solution. It aims to replace up to seven individual systems with one platform. The product draws down data from whatever sources are available, relating to matters from vehicle location and status to defect reporting and scheduling of engineering interventions to battery charge levels on electric buses.

"Our depot management platform can be seen as being the centre point of a spider's web of data sources," says Robert Jones, Commercial Agent for VAB Berlin in the UK.

"It connects the control centre, allocators, schedulers and the workshop. They all get the information they need quickly. That includes the driver being able to see from home where his or her bus



// The potential for centralisation is a significant strong point of the platform, VAB Berlin believes //

is parked in the depot. Drivers can even sign on for work from home.

"We feed in data that already exists, but which lacks overall coherence. That lack of coherence could mean that the person in charge of the workshop cannot communicate properly with depot controllers about when a bus is ready for service or required for attention, for example." Because VAB Berlin collates existing data, it does not require additional hardware on buses.

Modularity is at VAB Berlin's heart

The system is based on modularity. VAB Berlin can build in each function that the customer requires. The first step in a bus's journey through the depot management system may come with reporting its arrival back off service. After cleaning and fuelling – which is logged by the platform as required – staff can be told where to park it depending on whether it requires attention or is ready for further service.

The VAB Berlin system can work with digital defect reporting and the allocation of maintenance work in advance to recognise when attention is required. A garage appointment can also be entered manually.

Where the bus is ready for passenger service once fuelling and cleaning are completed, the driver or shunter can be directed to park it in a location that enables a smooth morning run-out the following day. Timetables and allocation requirements of bus types can be considered in that process. Buses are colour-coded on the controller's display to reflect their status.

VAB Berlin's user interface is also accessible to mobile controllers – either in the depot yard or on the road – via an iPad



ABOVE:
VAB Berlin has many bus operator clients in its home nation of Germany, including Üstra in Hannover

RIGHT:
The VAB Berlin platform brings together operational data from various sources in one user interface



or a similar device.

If needed, data may be downloaded from the bus automatically when it returns to the depot. That harvesting can include tyre pressures and CCTV downloads, among others.

Managing electric buses is a key module

A key element of the platform is the management of battery-electric buses. The system can draw down data on the location and status of chargers. It can also display the charge level of each bus that is connected to them and present it alongside duty allocation parameters. Real-time visualisation of buses' energy usage can also be delivered.

When coupled to the system's potential to know the range requirements of individual bus duties, that allows allocators to make informed decisions. The system can also be configured to consider the energy requirement of pre-heating or pre-cooling battery-electric buses when they are on charge.

Allocation is a further aspect that the VAB Berlin system can simplify. Robert says that thanks to its connected nature, allocation

can be run automatically if it suits the operator. Alternatively, it can be done manually by a staff member at the depot based on the information presented. It can also be carried out centrally by one person who deals with multiple operating centres.

"We can feed data from scheduling software into our system. When other factors are considered, such as electric bus range or the requirement for certain buses to be available for maintenance at a specified time, it can allocate vehicles automatically taking those into account," says Robert.

A further aspect of that is how a specific type of bus can be allocated to a defined duty. If a smaller vehicle is more suitable on Sundays or outside of school terms, for example, that can be factored in.

Centralisation is possible with VAB Berlin

The potential for centralisation is a significant strong point of the platform, VAB Berlin believes. To demonstrate that, it uses an operator in Germany. That business has 1,500 buses across 12 depots within a radius of 200km. While supervisory staff and large workshops are



LEFT:
VAB Berlin will configure the platform to display what the customer wants, using existing data sources

// Our depot management platform can be seen as being the centre point of a spider's web of data sources //

located at each, overall control sits with a central location.

"Everything at that operator is managed from one point, down to drivers signing on. It takes the onus away from having to employ more people to carry out tasks at depot level," says Robert. "It also removes a level of communication and the potential for misunderstandings by centralising key tasks."

A further capability of the VAB Berlin depot management solution concerns driver sign-on. Duty commencement terminals for staff to book on can be integrated into the platform, in addition to drivers being able to use their own smartphones for the task.

Either of those methods can inform the driver of their allocated bus without the need to report directly to a controller, including before they arrive at work when a mobile device is used.

A smartphone sign-on system could also assist supervisory staff when a driver is not coming to work, giving them advance notice to source a replacement should they be needed. "It is totally paperless, and nobody has to wait and see if the driver is coming to work."

Franchising and manufacturers' interests

While operators are currently the target market for the VAB Berlin depot management solution in the UK, the company has a close eye on movements to reregulate buses in Britain outside London. It says that the product can give franchising bodies whatever level

of easily accessible data that they deem necessary to monitor the performance of their contractor operators.

"A franchising body may not necessarily be interested in the depth of data that an operator would be. But our platform could pull together the required information from multiple operators and present it to the overseeing body, subject to any data protection laws," says Robert.

VAB Berlin is additionally working with a large European coach and bus manufacturer with a view to it taking on elements of the system. That would allow the manufacturer to monitor its battery-electric buses when they are being used by the operator.

For procurement of VAB Berlin's depot management platform, the supplier is flexible in terms of its approach. Robert says that while up-front payment is one option, another approach that is currently under review could involve financing via a monthly fee.

"Our system is an interface between the operator and its data to reduce costs and improve service delivery. If data for something is available, we can harness it."

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ENGINEERING SET FOR OVERHAUL IN FIRST'S BIG PLANS

Part of First Bus's wider and ongoing plans to transform its business is a heavy overhaul of engineering. **Reliability-centred maintenance driven by data is at the heart of that work**



Tim Deakin
/ Editor

Slowly but increasingly surely, major change continues to come to First Bus's operations as it pushes on with its transformation programme. That process is now extending to the company's engineering resource with an overhaul of what is still a tradition-led function.

Engineering changes will capture both physical and non-physical aspects. The process also has one eye on the future of the industry. First's underlying aim is to shake up what happens at depots to maximise utilisation: Utilisation of vehicles, of staff time and of workshop capacity.

Safety is a prime consideration as part of the transformation, says First Bus Engineering Director Ian Warr. Any changes that the company makes to its approach will never compromise reliability or safety. In particular, he finds the idea of people being injured (or worse) on any bus, regardless of its operator, "intolerable".

Vehicle fires are another point of focus. Among those, electrical fires are a particular problem. Operators are frustrated about that, says Ian. "We are working with manufacturers to help them to 'machine learn' what the causes are," he explains. "Selling a vehicle to us is not the endgame. Manufacturers have an obligation to learn and to design out risk."

First Bus engineering will become 'cradle to grave'

That ethos fits with First's ambitions for utilisation through a 'cradle to grave' approach to vehicles. Buy-in from manufacturers is vital if the engineering transformation project is to be delivered. Ian wants to see bus builders design out anything that could compromise customer or driver safety. That includes fire risks.

But why the need to overhaul so comprehensively the engineering approach? It is partly to advance First Bus into the same realm as other automotive sectors and the aviation industry. Like the bus business they are each relatively niche with high capital cost assets. But Ian believes that bus engineering has not matured to the degree seen in hangars and commercial vehicle manufacturers' main dealerships.



"There is a desperate need for us to catch up with that," he says. "We must not be arrogant enough to think that we cannot learn from other sectors to discover what works and what does not."

'People are our most important asset'

Effective asset management underpins First's work on engineering transformation. Ian sees staff as the company's biggest asset. They must be on board with what is ahead. Without their buy-in, the full extent of potential success will not be delivered. But an onus will fall on those same staff members to do their bit and accept that a new way of working has come and is to stay.

That will include some cultural change, Ian says. Central to that will be removing any divide between engineering management and workshop staff. In an echo of established practices at main dealers, a move away from a 'job and finish' approach will also be fostered. Instead, an engineer's workload will be planned, although timings will flex to allow tasks to be undertaken properly.

How workloads will be planned in the future will centre on being smarter with vehicle downtime and the utilisation of a much-expanded data function. Doing so will allow First to understand the optimum moment to intervene for defect rectification and other work that is neither reliability- nor safety-critical.

For more minor defects, that will involve not loading rectification



LEFT:
First's staff are its most important asset, and they must be along for the ride, says Engineering Director Ian Warr

RIGHT TOP:
First's overhaul of its engineering resource is all about driving vehicle, staff time and workshop utilisation

RIGHT MIDDLE:
Use of data and shared knowledge and best practice will drive cost efficiencies across the business

RIGHT BELOW:
The revised approach aims to smooth engineering peaks and allow a reduction in spare vehicle cover



work onto time already allocated to routine inspection. Such a practice can create what Ian describes as “unmanageable pinch points”. They slow those inspections, compromise in-service time and lead to a requirement for increased spare cover.

“Forward planning about when to clear deferrable defects allows us to work round vehicle and engineer availability. It is no longer about trying to squeeze in what we can where we can. It is a more strategic approach, but to deliver it we need access to data and analytics. That can identify trends and patterns, allowing a more predictive approach to be taken rather than one that is reactive.”

Preventative will overtake reactive in First's plans

That approach will also extend to routine maintenance duties. As an example, Ian points to work that is done on a pre-defined schedule such as oil and filter changes with no reference to what the bus has done in the meantime. Reliability-centred maintenance uses data to identify the optimum time of such interventions to prevent failure. That chimes with another of First's aims for the engineering transformation project: A reduction of waste.

Preventative maintenance, with the avoidance of failures at its heart, smooths the overall cost of looking after a fleet, Ian says. “Reactive maintenance has previously been perceived as the optimum from an accounting perspective. But the cost of resulting failures is a

// Forward planning about when to clear deferrable defects allows us to work round vehicle and engineer availability //

factor, both in terms of repair and vehicle recovery.”

Reactive maintenance brings with it an erratic cost base. But Ian is clear that changes to maintenance processes and management will not come at the expense of any fundamentals. Nor will they compromise work that is required immediately to address defects that affect safety or reliability.

Ian notes that most major unit failures are caused by a maintenance failure in the first place. Again, he draws parallels with aviation. There,

heavy data use and the optimisation of component change intervals mitigate the risk of failure while also delivering excellent levels of equipment availability.

But preventative maintenance will only work at its best when delivered hand-in-hand with data that is shared across First's operating companies. Removing a 'silo' approach – where one business may have tackled a problem that is unbeknownst subsequently experienced at another depot – is key.

"Within First Bus we have some operating companies that excel at delivering good service while minimising costs. We have others that deliver an excellent service, but at a higher cost. Where efficiency gains can be understood and implemented through the sharing of data and knowledge, best practice can spread quickly," says Ian.

Data is the key to future maintenance evolution

Collating data rapidly and making it easily available to those that need it is a priority. First's North American operation – currently for sale – already has a platform configured to do that. First Bus is seeking something similar that suits its own needs.

Sources of harvested data will include drivers' first use checks. Those entries will be digitised via Ticketer equipment. Under such an arrangement, non-safety critical defects are known to engineers at the time they are inputted by the driver. With hard copy defect reports, they likely do not enter the engineering realm until the bus returns to the depot, potentially 18 hours later.

Utilisation of data will also factor into reducing the incidence of vehicle fires. Using data to identify where fires originate, Ian suggests that a small hand-held thermal imaging camera could be used on known 'hot spots'. That would identify any failing components that become unusually hot when the vehicle is in

service. Findings would be recorded, adding to the data available for future use.

Value will be delivered by investing in people

If the full value of First's work on engineering efficiency is to be realised, attracting the right staff is paramount. "Globally, the industry has an issue with engineering labour supply and skills," says Ian. "If we do not resolve that, it will cripple us."

The arrival of new driveline technologies will generate short-term growing pains as operators adopt them. But in the longer term he believes that the shift will help with the attraction of new talent. Zero-emission is perceived as new and cutting-edge. To leverage that, Ian believes that the right way to approach fixing the staffing problem is to create academies "that turn young people into bus engineers." He has seen success with that in a previous role.

It is well known that safety is First Group's absolute priority. Ian sees that adoption of increasing vehicle technology is key to furthering that. But it also fits with its engineering transformation.

In the longer term, the road to automation will deliver benefits. Ian believes that such a pathway already exists. First is additionally pursuing a provincial bus safety standard. It will utilise data and analytics. Preventing injuries is at its heart, but driver aids will reduce external damage. That will allow engineers' time to be reallocated to other areas.

What First Bus's plans for engineering transformation delivers over the coming months and years will be fascinating to see. The industry is already witnessing wholesale change as zero-emission buses come to the fore. First is already at the forefront of that technology shift. Dovetailing maintenance evolution with it may well form a solid basis upon which to build the bus operations of the future.



// **We must not be arrogant enough to think that we cannot learn from other sectors to discover what works and what does not**//



LEFT:
The industry must not be 'too arrogant' to look and see what works in other engineering disciplines

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LOAN OR LEASE? BUYING COACHES AFTER COVID-19

COVID-19, PSVAR and changes around emission control zones have brought severe distress to the coach market. **Could it change your approach to vehicle ownership?**



Alex Crawford
/ Journalist

With prices of used coaches depressed, and the need to stay compliant with emission control zones and the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR), is owning vehicles outright still an attractive option for operators – or will leasing, which shifts the risk associated with reselling away from operators, become the default position for new vehicles?

Shifting trends

Traditional purchase arrangements within coach and bus carry risks, and few times has that been made so apparent as during the mayhem of 2020. All financing of a new vehicle has at its core a spreading of the cost of ownership, taking a view of what that vehicle is worth over a period of time. A typical agreement will factor in depreciation to build an agreed amount of retained cash in an asset, later to be released. But with vehicles across the country off the roads, and cash tied up in fleets without a stable resale market, leasing may offer a favourable alternative.

Anecdotally, both funders and vehicle dealers report a more favourable view of lease contracts in recent years, and a number of operators are feeling the benefits of keeping some or all of their fleet off the balance sheet. Irizar UK Sales Director Julie Hartley says attitudes to lease have changed substantially over the last 20 years, and where it might traditionally have applied to bus operations it is now more viable for coach. But that acceleration may have been driven by low leasing prices. Leasing does not avoid the drop in residual values experienced by operators – it simply shifts the risk. And if lease providers are put at higher risk, it will reflect prices.

A matter of risk

An operator that doesn't wish to expose itself to any risk can negotiate with a finance company to achieve an acceptable monthly

rate for a fixed price business model in its books. With knowledge of what's going out each month and confidence in underlying income, whether by contract or historic private hire or tour work, these activities can be costed against each other. What no operator or finance company likely anticipated was the level of distress currently in the market. Used vehicle prices have fallen so far below the market norm that valuations in fleets have been completely disrupted. Tier one funders may show significant reluctance to involve themselves in the market for some time.

Greys of Ely is one operator that has vehicles on lease, driven by a desire to remove the depreciation question and after moving into a different market space of shuttle work, where vehicles are selected for contracts.

"I once believed you should buy new, work the vehicle as hard as you can for three to six years, then try to sell that asset while there is still good residual value in it," says Managing Director Richard Grey.

A visit to the Irizar e-mobility site in 2018 then demonstrated where the future of coach is going, and led Richard to wonder where the future of residual values would be should zero-emission (ZE) or a Euro VII equivalent hybrid platform become a reality. The introduction of London's Low and Ultra-Low Emission Zones compounded this. PSVAR enforcement arrived just in time to create the perfect storm, and that was before coronavirus COVID-19 saw a glut in used vehicles that sent residual values on a nosedive.

"At that marker point I realised an operator of our size cannot maintain buying new at this pace," he says.

Outside of the pandemic, concern over the future of Euro VI vehicles should a Euro VII equivalent arrive is a reasonable one, and a tricky issue to grapple. The market is already coming to terms with the status of Euro V and non-PSVAR compliant coaches. "They have become virtually worthless in Cambridge," Richard says. "The premium I have





LEFT:
Saturation of the used vehicle market has contributed to depressed prices

BELOW:
Some operators see the benefits of having vehicles both on and off balance sheet

// Both funders and vehicle dealers report a more favourable view of lease contracts in recent years //



built up in a vehicle won't be there anymore. Our vehicles might be perfectly serviceable at the end of their first life, but there may be no market for them with the legislative changes."


The topic is muddy, and depends much on the area of operation. Euro Vs are perfectly serviceable in other regions, and prices will stabilise. Whether the next jump in powertrain technology disrupts the market to the same extent as Euro VI and PSVAR remains to be seen.

It is important to remember that residual values, under pressure from the speed of technology development and legislative change, impact lease prices. The natural reaction for operators might be to take the risk out of buying by moving into lease. Those who did before the

pandemic are in a good position now, but finance companies are not able to dodge the bullet. The impact of falling residuals will see lease prices increase. Julie says operators then face a question: "To weigh up whether hire purchase and residual risk is a better route than an escalating cost on lease."

2020 may just be a bubble in time – as bad as it gets, meaning depressed values are not permanent. It is a moot point; some vehicle values are likely to stabilise, others not. Those which are Euro VI and able to be retrofitted with wheelchair lifts are the obvious candidates for the former scenario. Areas outside of major conurbations and emission control zones may hold little concern for operators running



 Accessibility is a defence against falling residuals

non-Euro VI fleets, but some will want to tick all boxes instead of factoring in costs of emission zone charges.

Having a vehicle legislated out of a fleet is not a new problem. It has been faced by the London bus market for some time, brought by the constraints of contracted agreements. In those scenarios, shorter-term funding structures such as lease or hire purchase with balloon payments are a potential approach and at first glance are attractive. Leasing suits a fixed contract cycle, but for regional operators looking to de-risk their business with a fixed cost of operation on balance sheets, it could be a business model to follow. Some operators like Greys of Ely hedge their bets with some vehicles on their balance sheet, and some off.

What leasing does provide is scalability, and the ability to become compliant very quickly. The advantage of owning the asset is quickly eroded if there is no market in which to sell it and release money, and this has resulted in operators favouring the lease commitment. "There is too much product in the second-hand market space, too much disruption, and until that moves on, owning a vehicle is not something an operator wants. It doesn't offer enough flexibility," Richard says.

The road to zero-emission

With discussions over the next level of emissions, and improvements in zero-emission technology, operators should also be considering the lifecycle of future products, according to Mistral Asset Finance Group Managing Director Steve Low.

"There is a lot of risk about investing in the right product, and the world seems to operate on a quicker product cycle now than it has ever done before," Steve says. "For coaches, the same laws are likely to hold true. The speed of development in terms of pace of change is exponential. These are issues that will play out over the next few years and be factored into the market."

A good recent example is hybrid technology, which has not proved an attractive option on the used market, with many former hybrid buses converted back into diesel for second life. "Hybrid was for many a steppingstone between diesel and electric. That might follow through

// Lease is now viewed as an opportunity to reduce risk and have a regular fleet of newer vehicles //

to the coach market before hydrogen becomes the preferred course of development."

Forecasting this leads to the ongoing debate around all of the finance sector on how to cost ZE vehicles. The funders who have taken a position on EVs cannot know whether they are right or wrong, says Steve - as there is no model of depreciation to base their predictions on. Infrastructure investment has to be considered too, and may or may not be covered in the lease contract. Whether the technology at the end of the lease period remains attractive to a used vehicle buyer, given the pace of change, also remains to be seen. "There are a number of factors in any scenario that emphasize the difficulty in pricing electric vehicles," Steve says. The result of this is that future technologies on lease agreements may be zero priced, and costed on a full-life basis to the operator. "That is a much trickier business model outside of London with a less predictable contract market."

Uncertainty of electric lease prices has stopped Richard from going down that route, for now. "We followed electric quite closely and had a couple of customers show an interest in it. I don't want to own an electric vehicle, and I can't lease one because of the high monthlies. It's difficult getting a customer to buy in at that price point."

Julie at Irizar acknowledges the road to zero-emission is moving quickly, and that will impact vehicle values. "Ultimately I think operators may shy away from taking on the risk. The timetable doesn't exist yet, but the funding mechanisms will have to be put in place for that shift. That's when the acceleration in purchase habits can begin. That shift will also impact the value of vehicles with older powertrains. The new technology, whether battery-electric, hydrogen fuel cell-electric or using compressed natural gas, is more expensive, needs additional infrastructure, and that may well change the way in which operators own and invest into vehicles."

The pandemic has worsened the situation, believes Richard, with nervousness around the worth even of optimal Euro VI vehicles.

Market has to stabilise

Vehicle ownership going forward is not likely to disappear. That is acknowledged. There will always be occasions where operators would prefer to own vehicles, and if it is a more viable option, it will happen. "There's still room for ownership and the advantages it brings," Julie says. "Nothing is clear cut and a lot of factors impact it. Lease is now viewed as an opportunity to reduce risk and have a regular fleet of newer vehicles."

Operators seeking to know what's right for them will need long discussions with accountants. Considerations include other investments, tax position, capital allowance, the vehicle's use over the year, and whether it might be more suitable to buy an asset than lease it. Cascading vehicles is still practical and has its advantages. No generalisation can be made as rarely does a set of circumstances ever lend themselves to a specific form of finance.

But what is unanimous is the risk currently associated with asset ownership in an unstable market. Backing your finance against a fixed term contract shifts that risk and offers some degree of financial certainty, albeit now at a higher price.



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COACH INDUSTRY HELP: 'NOT JUST ABOUT SCHOOL TRANSPORT'

routeone speaks with **MP for Blackpool North and Clevellys and former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport Paul Maynard** about coach support in 2020



Alex Crawford
/ Journalist

Blackpool is a resort inseparable from coach holidays. According to operators the industry brought 120,000 visitors and £30m to the local economy last year alone.

It is no coincidence that the UK Coach Rally found a new lease of life after being moved to the Lancashire seaside resort for the past few years, nor that 190 vehicles descended upon the town on 14 July [[routeone/News/July 14](#)] - Bastille Day no less - to protest their own discontent with the powers that be.

Blackpool's dependence on tourism has been a particular concern for its Member of Parliament (MP) and former Transport Minister Paul Maynard. For him, the Blackpool Honk for Hope protest hit home, not only highlighting the coach sector's struggles but the entire hospitality sector that relies upon it.

Following a debate on 10 September on support for the tourism industry after the coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown, Paul spoke to **routeone** to discuss in detail how Blackpool, a coach-reliant town, has been affected - and what he believes could be done to support the sector.

Built on tourism

Conversations with local coach tour operators, hotels and small businesses have revealed the spectrum of frustrations currently haunting the coach industry. It also offers a more rounded view for someone like Paul, who sees the wider economic impact of a decline in coach tourism to Blackpool. "I see the consequences for many of our smaller businesses," he explains. "The hotels and the one-man-band cafés behind them, which are reliant on the coach tours. They are all suffering equally. Which is why it's incumbent on me as a local MP to keep trying to make my voice heard."

Paul's grave concern is of course over the survivability of those businesses. For that to happen, there has to be stability, and a degree of consistency over coronavirus COVID-19 regulations. That is difficult to provide, he admits. But clarity over the regulations and how they affect tourists could be what gives visitors the confidence to travel.

"Hotel owners I've spoken to want to see confidence about the

regulations and what it means for their guests. People are not quite sure what a coach holiday experience will be like, which can be a deterrent. Guests want predictability and clarity, but even that will do no good unless there are coach operators bringing them to Blackpool."

A coach solution

Paul reveals that he has been in conversations with Sport, Heritage and Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston and Transport Minister Baroness Vere on the subject. "I have been trying to keep this issue at the forefront of their minds and make the point that this is not just about school transport," he says.

Paul disagrees with the statement made by MP for Angus Dave Doogan that suggests the government is taking the coach tourism industry for granted. It is more nuanced than that. "I think the problem is perhaps that coach tourism is an industry with specific needs, and so isn't always covered in terms of the government's wider national schemes," he explains. "Sadly, we haven't quite classified coach tourism as being part of either the hospitality or the public transport sector, so it's forced between two stalls. To that extent I think we need to look more specifically at the sector's needs."

"The coach sector after all has not been ignored as a whole - there has been work to subsidise school transport work, for example. But I think now we need to focus on the leisure side as well."

Difficulty comes from the touch and go nature of current regulations. "We had a bit of hope in the summer that things might start getting back to normal. That seems to be on the turn again," Paul adds. There is confusion in hotels over how current regulations impact guests, and traditional 'tinsel and turkey' trips that bring large numbers of pensioners to Blackpool in the off season will be difficult to sustain this year with reduced capacities on vehicles and the cancellation of Christmas markets. "There's a number of hurdles now about this new set of regulations, what that might mean in practise, and government has to look at how other regulations impact the coach sector. It must also listen to coach operators and what would actually





LEFT:
Honk for Hope highlighted the coach sector's struggles

BELOW LEFT:
Paul Maynard MP: 'Blackpool would not exist without the coach sector'

BELOW MIDDLE:
What was once a positive trip for operators became a struggle for survival on July 14

BELOW RIGHT:
Blackpool has long been a popular coach tourism destination



// I hear from operators that they put £30m into our local economy last year, and clearly we cannot survive medium term without those inputs //

make a difference for them."

Practical ways for government to aid the sector might include assistance on the financing of new coaches - not a new idea. Paul recognises the money that is tied up in leasing and finance costs in coach fleets, and that short-term distress is impacting a perfectly viable business. "This is a viable sector that will return when normality returns. We must think how we can help it survive through this period."

Tailored package

Paul's optimism for a tailored support package has withered somewhat with the recent growth in restrictions. The hospitality sector as a

whole is likely to need more support in any worsening situation and it will be harder to make the case *carte blanche* for smaller sectors that cannot operate fully at the moment.

For Blackpool, the hospitality sector at large is threatened. Shows cannot restart because of social distancing, for instance - and there are many other claims on the public purse. Those least able to restart are likely to receive the most support. Paul believes the Department for Transport (DfT) in particular can target more help at coach tour operators in addition to the support going into educational work. "While important, home-to-school work is not the meat in the sandwich of their business for most and I'm very conscious of that.

"Blackpool would not exist without the coach sector - that's what made Blackpool what it was. I hear from operators that they put £30m into our local economy last year, and clearly we cannot survive medium term without those inputs - the small businesses can't, the cafés and hotels can't. For me, it's existential for Blackpool as much as it is for the coach tour sector."

Home-to-school support has not painted a perfect picture either, with regional differences in delivering services and uncertainty over school attendance. "What I don't want the department to think is that school transport in and of itself is enough to sustain the sector. It clearly isn't, particularly in the off season."



LEFT:
Operators and businesses
want to see 'clarity'
over regulations

// I don't want the department to think that school transport in and of itself is enough to sustain the sector. It clearly isn't //

Paul's message is that everything has a ripple effect, in a sense. The survival of local economies such as Blackpool, so heavily dependent on the coach sector, is by proxy a matter than DfT can very much intervene in. DfT should take this as an opportunity and use innovative ways to support the sector. Some ideas Paul suggests include allowances for coach owners to invest in the cleanest possible vehicles.

Equally, systems need to be put in place to allow trade bodies in particular to get speedy answers from civil servants as to what new rules mean. Paul endorses the Confederation of Passenger Transport's letter to Nigel Huddleston in September, which set out clearly the risks presented by the industry's collapse.

Thinking more widely, Paul also points to the Development of Tourism Act 1969, which provided for the establishment of a British Tourist Authority and Boards for England, Scotland and Wales promoting for the development of tourism.

"This allowed for investment into council projects that would

enhance the tourist offer in a local area. If we are seeking to 'build back better', why can't we encourage the new Destination Management Organisations to resuscitate, if you like, those plans – and maybe think of how better coach parking facilities can be built in resorts?"

Inadequate parking facilities for coaches have been a 'major problem' in his constituency, Paul points out, and suggests there is now an opportunity to use existing laws to promote an improvement of infrastructure which could benefit the sector long term.

Achieving these aims does not come across as outlandish. "I can only go on my own experience as a transport minister," Paul says. "I have been Rail Minister and Aviation Minister, and my approach when we have a sector in trouble is to work with it on a plan of recovery, as to what the department can do, what other departments can do, and what the sector itself can do. Then we can start to make the case to the treasury. That would be my step-by-step approach if I had this in my ministerial interests, and that is what I encourage other ministers to do."

Identifying a problem, formulating an action plan and taking action may not succeed in getting all of a sector's wants, but it begins work towards securing some of it. Anything will help at this stage, Paul believes - but with so many competing interests all trying to make their voices heard, the coach tourism sector may find itself being out-shouted by other modes of transport with bigger costs to the department.

That's where MPs like Paul come in, that do their bit to make the voice of coaches heard in Parliament. Operators should continue to work with their own MPs to the same end.



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INVESTMENT IN PSVAR IS INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

JKT International recently took delivery of a Scania Irizar i6S built to full PSVAR specification. **Its commitment to investment in PSVAR is keeping the wheels turning during COVID-19**



Alex Crawford
/ Journalist

There's an old popular saying: You have to spend money to make money. Living by such a mantra in times such as these can be risky, but for some, investment into long-term profitability is the only way to keep a business protected.

On 1 September, Walsall-based JKT International put its sixth Scania Irizar coach into service in its 12-strong fleet. Deliveries of new vehicles during the pandemic have been few and far between – most operators have been reluctant to return existing vehicles to the road, let alone introduce new ones – but JKT Travel's new vehicle is fully specified to meet the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) and is part of a continuing effort and investment to make its fleet as fully compliant as possible.

Director Jawed Akhtar says such a commitment is helping to keep the wheels turning – quite literally – despite the ongoing economic uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. It will also, he hopes, be the key in ensuring prosperity post-pandemic.

Investing in the future

“The future is all in PSVAR,” Jawed claims, reflecting on his desire to build up the number of compliant coaches within his fleet.

PSVAR had previously not been a priority, but now it could not be more important. “Wherever you go, and whoever you phone now for work, they only want to take the vehicles on if they're equipped for PSVAR. They prefer to take those vehicles first.”

The rationale behind this investment is one that has become commonplace. Jawed bought this new Scania with ‘hope against hope’ that the investment will prove a key driver for work until normal operation can resume – that work being driven by the return of schools and rail replacement.

When the rush to begin buying PSVAR compliant vehicles picked



up pace last year, JKT had no wheelchair accessible vehicles in its fleet. Exemptions came, and “most of our jobs were exempt from PSVAR requirements,” Jawed admits. But when neighbouring operators began to bolster their fleets with wheelchair accessible vehicles, and favour was given heavily to them with each new job, JKT recognised the necessity of offering the same standard. “The situation is ongoing,” Jawed adds – all in all, JKT now runs five PSVAR compliant vehicles, including three Scania and a low-floor Autosan.

The latest model, a Scania Irizar i6S with HD bodywork, is to a fine specification. The 12.9m model is fitted with half leather seats, centre sunken toilet, climate control and passenger entertainment.

Family heritage

Jawed brings his passion for coaches from his native Pakistan. It was there that his grandfather founded the original JKT in the 1960s, otherwise known as Jari Kas Travel (95 Group). “My grandad started the company, then my dad went into it, and then we came to England to do the same. We run the coaches because we love them. You remember it from your childhood, and you want to keep the family heritage going.”

Jawed began operating taxis, eventually realising his dream of running coaches in 2006 under the same name begun by his grandfather. There is every hope to keep the business in the family and there has been a keen interest from his relatives. Jawed hopes to pass the business onto his son Ahvais Musawar and nephew, Waqas Sikander. The former is a full-time driver already with his own PSV, while Waqas has recently completed his CPC management course.

Altogether, the business has 16 drivers with a mixed fleet of 16, 53, 49 and 70-seater coaches and minicoaches. The work is carved



// We run the coaches because we love them. You remember it from your childhood, and you want to keep the family heritage going //



LEFT:
One of JKT's latest vehicles is a 70 plate Scania Irizar i6S

RIGHT TOP:
JKT International has enjoyed a close relationship with Scania over the years

RIGHT MIDDLE:
Scania UK Retail Sales Manager Lee Wale hands over the keys to grandson Muhammad Haider

RIGHT BOTTOM:
Wheelchair accessibility has allowed the wheels to keep turning



up with a favour for educational work that is also driving PSVAR upgrades. JKT is registered with and works contracts for Staffordshire County Council. "We've got a few contracts with the schools and we used to do a lot of work on the swimming trips," explains Jawed. "We're hoping they will return now that the schools are back up and running. Things are very slow at the moment."

The return of schools is crucially important for operators like JKT, where the 'normal' consists of a school service in the morning, a job in between and an afternoon return trip. "Because all those jobs have gone, there's nothing up and running in that sort of sense," laments Jawed.

But equally devastating has been the loss of all other work due to coronavirus COVID-19. In addition to the day-to-day educational work, working with schools led JKT to operating tours into Europe. There was also co-operation with the likes of private tour and excursion operators such as Solar Tours and Star Tours, all now lost. "That went completely out of the window in March," he adds.

It is a story that has repeated itself hundreds of times over in 2020. From the beginning of the national lockdown in February, at just the time when the season begins to pick up, JKT's diary became empty. Jobs with tours and schools already booked totalling between £50-70,000 were cancelled outright, and that was only for work already in the diary until mid-April.

"Our diary starts filling up from April and the work keeps coming in throughout May, June and July," Jawed explains. "Ordinarily, we would be picking up new work every week. Our turnover is £1m. This year, everything went downhill from February. The phone has not rung at all; we didn't receive any emails for future work. Everything literally came to a standstill and nothing has moved on." Jawed estimates the operator could have missed out on an additional £200,000 worth of bookings over the last few months.





LEFT:
JKT operates
a mixed fleet

The response was to take most of the fleet off the road and seek reduced cover to limit insurance costs. But from September, the fleet was able to move again with the small relief that the schools reopened. The introduction of PSVAR-compliant vehicles means the phone is now active with requests for rail replacement work. Compliance has been a key factor in keeping the wheels turning: “Even now if the rail operators phone in, they begin by asking how many PSVAR-compliant coaches I have. If I have one booked already, then they’ll ask for three,” explains Jawed.

There is something of an irony in the fact that, for all the investment in PSVAR-compliance (and Jawed is sympathetic to the rail operators, whose hands are tied on the matter), JKT is yet to hear of a single instance where one of its coaches has collected a wheelchair user. “Our coaches have been going out, meeting the requirements, but even up to now, I have had no report of any time a person in a wheelchair needed to travel in the coach,” Jawed says.

Help needed still

The business is thankful for help from government during this time. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has saved jobs and for that Jawed is grateful. But the fact remains that most of the company’s coaches remain on finance and a lack of available work still puts the business at risk. “We invested lots of money into the business because we’re hoping for the best once everything starts to move again. But if more work doesn’t come in, it might mean that we will have to close our doors.”

With furlough and finance holidays now effectively concluded,

// For all the investment in PSVAR-compliance... JKT is yet to hear of a single instance where one of its coaches has collected a wheelchair user //

many operators are finding themselves in the riskiest moment – and the mounting pressure of further national restrictions will not be helping business owners sleep better at night. Jawed suggests a government backed retrofit scheme to help existing vehicles get moving again. Equally, it may go some way to abate the damage done by depreciation of non PSVAR-compliant vehicles.

Whatever happens, JKT International is determined to carry on to the best of its ability. There is bound to be a point of no return – there always is. But with his entire family standing behind him, Jawed remains positive. His ambition to get another four coaches equipped for accessibility is a dedication to make the fleet the best it can be and protect JKT for years down the line. At this point, compliance seems the only way.

That devotion to improvement is all part of the family heritage and the love that Jawed has for the work he does. “We don’t run coaches for the sake of running them. We want them to be the best they can be,” he says.



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FOSTERING BEST PRACTICE IN THE COACH INDUSTRY

The Guild of British Coach Operators helps its members to develop their businesses while at the same time challenging what they do in their day to day tasks. Being a member comes with prestige - but is it worthwhile?



Tim Deakin
/ Editor

Coach operators have many opportunities to demonstrate their competencies and skills to potential clients. But the industry also contains an organisation that is focused on enabling its members to challenge themselves internally: The Guild of British Coach Operators.

The Guild, as it is known to members, is a who's who of some of the industry's best-known names. It includes representatives from England, Scotland and Wales. Administration is handled by Steve Whiteway. Besides having enjoyed a long career in the operating side of the industry - and the Guild - through his leadership of Epsom Coaches, Steve is President of the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT). Moreover, he is also a well-known advocate of coaching best practice.

Standards are key for existing and potential members. Those that are nominated to join the Guild are subject to an audit carried out by Lloyd Morgan. It includes an extensive assessment of compliance and many other elements of successful coach operation. Financial performance and profitability are also measured. Five years' proven operating history - including no appearances at a Public Inquiry - is mandatory to join.

Because of those conditions, the Guild is undoubtedly an exclusive institution. Its membership currently numbers around 24. That is around the right level to allow gatherings to involve everyone. Face-to-face contact is among the most valuable aspect of being part of the Guild, Steve notes.

But that does not mean that it is an old boys' club. Staff from various disciplines within its membership may participate in knowledge sharing and tailored training. Some of the individuals that get involved and contribute in that manner are younger people.

They benefit either through access to training or from attendance at meetings that are dedicated to certain elements of coach operation. The core aspects - including engineering and marketing - are represented there, but so are buses, reflecting how some Guild members have minority interests in that sector.

Guild: Standards are high but rewards aplenty

To join the Guild, an eligible operator is nominated by two existing members. Universal approval must then be gained from others. The audit then follows. That process ensures standards remain high, but no geographic limitations are imposed.

A new member does not have to be a minimum distance from another Guild operator.

routeone was recently able to speak to members of the Guild's Board. They agree that networking and collaboration are key benefits of membership, as are the training opportunities. "There is a real onus on members to get involved," says Lucketts Group Managing Director Tony Lawman.

Each member is expected to attend at least two out of three meetings. "You cannot have the kudos of being part of the Guild without putting in effort of your own," says Steve.

That effort also includes offering vehicle aid to a fellow member when needed, working together on large jobs and the sharing of best practice. As a minor example of the latter, Guild members contributed their opinions of antiviral fogging machines to a WhatsApp group. When coronavirus COVID-19 hit hard earlier in 2020, the Guild also developed a thorough checklist for vehicle layup.

// **You cannot have the kudos of being part of the Guild without putting in the effort of your own** //

Collaboration for mutual benefit

COVID-19 has given rise to a lot of discussion among Guild members. Work on spacing passengers on vehicles in an optimum manner was shared some time ago. The value of being able to talk to like-minded peers throughout the pandemic has also been



ABOVE:

Guild members are from England, Scotland and Wales, and the standards for all to meet are high

LEFT:

Staff training is facilitated by the Guild in a variety of disciplines relevant to coach operation



valuable, says Richmond's Coaches Managing Director Andrew Richmond.

While the pandemic has created a lot of stress in the coach industry, Guild members have been able to leverage its collaborative foundation over the past seven months. September's meeting looked at the future of coaching and the Guild's position in it.

"The coach industry may never be the same again, but members still see opportunities," says Steve. "We are all in the same boat. It is possible that things overall may remain difficult into 2022. But September's meeting also looked at whether we will see a 'bounce' in 2021."

He adds that while members work together, universal agreement is not a natural product of that. Differences of opinion enable members to challenge themselves and - most importantly -

to challenge their businesses.

As an example, one Guild operator voices an opinion that the coach industry often follows trends set by airlines. They do not expect normality to return until 2024, in a worst-case scenario. That is a different potential outcome to that suggested by Steve. But it demonstrates that a variety of opinions are to be heard among Guild members.

Accounting for variety among members

A key part of the Guild is the collation of accounts from all members. The data contained within them is then anonymised and analysed and brought together in a presentation.

That process allows Guild operators to look at costs by delivering an indication of how their outgoings sit compared to their peers'. Steve notes that identifying variations in payments to suppliers

BEST PRACTICE/ The Guild of British Coach Operators



LEFT:
The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has led to a lot of constructive discussion among Guild members

is particularly important; as an example, he says that expenditure on tyres has shown some significant disparities.

"Members can see where they sit with this information," says Tony. "It prevents us from resting on our laurels and it helps us to keep a focus on cost control."

Suppliers sometimes attend meetings to present to members. Major coach manufacturers have each shared their beliefs about where the future of powertrains lies, and factory visits were undertaken pre-pandemic. Some providers of Euro VI retrofit equipment have also had the opportunity to address the Guild.

"Inviting suppliers to meetings allows members to raise a collaborative voice that helps to get sensible engagement," Tony continues. "Suppliers take the opportunity seriously. In a normal year, Guild members would typically purchase 100 new coaches between them."

Guild membership also has public benefits

While much of being a Guild member is about collaboration and refining internal processes and workstreams, participation still brings external benefits. Guild membership is perhaps not as much of a 'sticker by the door' credential as being part of some other industry organisations is, but it comes with its own element of external prestige nonetheless.

Pulhams Coaches has found that membership has been beneficial when tendering for contracts.

The Bourton-on-the-Water operator has won work with a public sector organisation and private schools where being part of the Guild has worked in its favour. Director Andy Pulham believes membership is "a good marketing tool," although he recognises that the principal benefits come internally.

"The right people are in the room at Guild meetings," he says.

// The Guild is at the forefront of thinking and development. It is usual to come away from meetings buzzing //

"The Guild has its own value that is separate to what comes through organisations such as CPT and BUSK." It attempts not to duplicate topics and material covered elsewhere, not least because CPT membership is mandatory to be part of the Guild.

Keeping a finger on a high-level pulse

Pulling together all the strands that make the Guild is its administrator. Steve took over from Richard Delahoy. Like Steve, Richard is experienced in and knowledgeable of the coach industry. He held the administrator post for 17 years before stepping down.

"We have always benefitted from having a strong administrator," says Nigel Skill, MD of Nottingham-based Skills Coaches. "It is an intense job. The administrator must understand the industry. They oil the gears of the Guild."

Nigel agrees that the training that is available is a major positive of Guild membership. But he also notes that attending meetings "is a good way to keep a finger on the pulse of high-level industry thinking."

"The Guild is at the forefront of best practice and development. It is usual to come away from meetings buzzing thanks to the mutual respect that is shown by members." At a time of such challenge for the coach industry, that such a view persists is perhaps the biggest compliment of all.



LEFT:
Fieldfisher ably serves coach
and bus operators through its
long history with the sector

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"Fieldfisher understands the business requirements and needs of coach and bus operators. That is cemented by its long-term relationship with **routeone**," says Fieldfisher Partner Andrew Sanderson.

"This offering was launched in March, just before the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic became prevalent," adds Fieldfisher Senior Associate Elliott Kenton.

"As well as benefiting from affordable fixed fee representation at Public Inquiry, operators are encouraged to consider having a third party audit their business to ensure that they have robust policies, systems and procedures in place before a DVSA inspector

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Audit from Fieldfisher delivers compliance profile snapshot

routeone Trader members that wish to take up Fieldfisher's fixed fee legal audit offer will find that it delivers a wide-reaching assessment of their systems and compliance. It will involve:

- ➔ A site visit
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- ➔ The preparation of a preliminary report based on Fieldfisher's findings to provide a snapshot of the operator's compliance profile and recommendations for future compliance.

"Within the transport world, there has been a shift from resolving matters after an operator has discovered issues within its business to ensuring that an operation is compliant throughout its life," says Andrew. That is why so many businesses have found a legal audit valuable.

As with representation at a Public Inquiry or a Preliminary Hearing, billing for a legal audit is based on the same business size demarcations outlined above. A small operator will pay £2,500; a medium operator will be charged £4,000; and a large operator will be charged £5,500.

All fixed fees for both representation and audit work exclude VAT and disbursements. The fixed fee offer for representation at a Preliminary Hearing or a Public Inquiry is available only to those businesses that are routeone Trader members at the time that the first communication from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner is received.

The small print explained

For all its fixed fee work for routeone Trader members, Fieldfisher reserves the right to derogate from the fixed fee offerings in the following scenarios:

- ➔ Where there are numerous complex issues
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- ➔ Where protracted meetings or calls are required.

For Public Inquiries and Preliminary Hearings, representation of a Transport Manager is not included in the fixed fee. If additional work to call witnesses or take statements is required, a further charge may be payable.

For audits, additional charges may apply if multiple site visits are required or if a site visit exceeds half a day, or if the operator requires a detailed review of policies, procedures, systems and controls, and/or a detailed report assessing those systems.

How to start the ball rolling with Fieldfisher

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Craig Jackson, Operations Manager, Travelstar European.

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LEFT:
Recognition as an exemplar operator from a government scheme gives advantages when bidding for contracts

EARNED RECOGNITION

Aiming for compliance and best practice? routeone examines how DVSA's Earned Recognition scheme is benefitting operators and contributing towards improved road safety



Alex Crawford
/ Journalist

For years, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) had been asked what a 'good' operator looks like. What should an operator aim towards when it came to compliance and best practice?

The result was a voluntary scheme that went above and beyond the basic standards already set out for an O-Licence. It introduced a system of reporting key performance indicators (KPIs), required one month retrospectively, to help operators keep compliance at the top of the agenda. The new scheme is known as Earned Recognition.

Earned Recognition (ER) brings multiple benefits, not least among them a joint effort towards better road safety. It has also allowed DVSA to free up its resources and focus efforts on the seriously non-compliant, helping to 'level the playing field'. This frees up time for good operators and keeps unscrupulous ones off the roads.

Be a shining example

According to ER National Account Manager Phil Breen, recognition as an exemplar operator from a government scheme gives numerous advantages, such as when bidding for contracts. Operators are published on the government website GOV.UK and a tweet from DVSA's social media channels is sent when recognition is gained.

The ER marquee can be used as an advertising medium on your premises, websites, and literature, further highlighting company prestige. A 12-month MoT exemption was even granted for ER members during the pandemic.


Perhaps best of all, as an exemplar operator, you will not be targeted by DVSA's roadside teams, nor be subject to DVSA visits or investigations by post or in person. The potential financial gains are substantial - DVSA says one operator has reported savings in efficiency by being an ER member of £12,000 per annum.

The scheme is free to join and comes with complimentary workshops where best practice and hot topics are discussed, and expert advice offered in question and answer sessions. "This is an invaluable resource and was strengthened in recent months due to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Operators often turned to my team for clear advice, and to counteract confusion around restrictions and guidance," adds Phil.

Approved systems

Every operator within the ER scheme must have an approved IT system in place to measure and report KPIs. The IT supplier market continues to grow and is helping the push towards industry digitisation. "The evidence is there that these systems improve compliance, but also efficiency," says Phil. "It therefore delivers on saving operators money, also."




LEFT:
DVSA National
Account Manager
Phil Breen

CT Plus (part of HCT Group) and Reading Buses were two of the first operators to represent the coach and bus industry in the ER pilot. Both implemented Freeway Fleet Systems' fleet management software. Freeway uses an ER module that brings together five ER KPIs that customers manage and monitor through Freeway (these include the provision of completed and signed off safety inspection records, driver defects reports and actions, plus MoT initial pass rates). Problem areas are highlighted in advance of the monthly submissions on the desktop and WebApp interfaces.

Digital data is the basis for ER reporting, and Freeway's system is simply an extension of an end-to-end maintenance automation developed by the company over the years.

Creating a paper-free digital management process removes many inefficiencies and unnecessary costs, claims Freeway Managing Director Patrick Tandy. "With this level of digitisation, live data and seamless connectivity, operators can very easily manage ER – everything they need is instantly accessible and Freeway's ER software is built-in already."

But live data has been the biggest boon, allowing for the immediate resolution of defects and missing data, he adds: "The efficiencies of management with 'live' data are, in our view, the greatest benefits of digital operation."

One tachograph manufacturer, Continental Automotive, offers a full range of data management products to assist fleets of all sizes. Its KPI reports are based on the operator's driver data for three months before the operator decides to apply for the scheme, in addition to the standard reports required by DVSA. "This allows the operator to carry out any corrective measures for the following months before any critical dashboard alerts are sent to DVSA," says Continental Marketing Manager Jackie Dougall.

Road Tech offers its Download Optimisation Technology (DOT) system that has enabled operators to avoid having drivers and staff in their depots when downloading driver tachograph card data. Vehicle and driver card data is downloaded remotely every

// as an exemplar operator, you will not be targeted by DVSA's roadside teams, nor be subject to DVSA visits or investigations by post or in person //

day and linked with the digital dashboards of Tachomaster, giving instant access to essential information. This has been especially helpful during the pandemic.

"DOT gives proactive compliance management and will help minimise infringements by alerting the Transport Manager 15 minutes before potential infringements actually happen, helping every operator including members of the ER scheme," says Road Tech Sales Manager Maureen Ballance.

There are many more products on the market with similar unique benefits.

Ongoing benefits

The DVSA ER scheme has made operators and drivers more aware in all aspects of safety and compliance, Phil concludes. "DVSA has set a clear standard of what an exemplar operator should be, the KPIs and audits means that a regular measurement has to be met, that naturally drives compliance and keeps operators focused," he explains.

ER continues to grow in scope, and Phil says DVSA is listening to its members' thoughts on how the scheme can be made even better.



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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE CAN HELP US COPE WITH THE NOW

Planning ahead can be challenging in times of crisis. But reliable, efficient and clean transport is integral to our future



Martyn Bellis
/ Business Development Manager

Earlier in the year I wrote about the future of transport for our industry. Many businesses in our sector are still recovering from the impact of the pandemic and adjusting to new patterns of customer behaviour.

Our industry has shown impressive resilience despite the enormous setbacks of the crisis and its aftermath. That's why I still want coach and bus operators to look to the future, and to get back on track to where they were headed before all the disruption.

A greener future

The future needs of this industry remain unchanged - we are all working towards a greener, cleaner environment for our cities and passengers.

Electric vehicles have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 50% compared to equivalent conventional petrol and diesel vehicles over the lifetime of their use.

A growing number of transport operators

are therefore moving away from traditional diesels and investing in 'greener' buses.

Given the high emissions of diesel-fuelled commercial vehicles, this will have significant benefits for reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality. As well as contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions, electric buses are also quieter and provide a smoother ride than their diesel counterparts.

'E-mobility solutions that work'

The growth in electric vehicles, charging infrastructure and energy management is transforming the way vehicles are powered and how people and goods are moved.

Siemens is at the forefront of this development, working with Siemens Financial Services (SFS) and other technology vendors to implement e-mobility solutions that work in practice.

Intelligent charging infrastructure, from Siemens Smart Infrastructure, connect grids with charging infrastructures and buildings, communities and cities.

Successful e-mobility solutions integrate into smart grids to make the most of local and renewable energy sources, while always ensuring continuity of supply. The

process can be complex and must meet the increasingly stringent regulatory challenges of environmental protection, resource efficiency and CO₂ reduction.

In the end the public expect charging to be effortless and fast.

Financial support is here

Innovative finance solutions have been developed to enable operators to sustainably invest in low-emission technology, including associated infrastructure, even in times of economic uncertainty and reduced passenger numbers.

Instead of viewing costs of vehicles in isolation, operators can work with financiers who analyse the whole fleet, building a collaborative, consultative approach towards energy efficient technology as it continues to develop. This sort of approach is only available from a financier, such as SFS, with direct expertise in the field.

Generalist financiers and banks are unlikely to understand the application of the technology and the benefits it can bring.

At SFS, we want to help the coach and bus community keep the wheels moving and emerge from this time stronger.



Giti aims new tyre at small bus markets

Giti Tire is targeting small buses that are used on urban stop-start duties with its GAU867v1 all-position tyre at the size of 215/75 R17.5.

The product is designed for hard use, with robust sidewall scrubbing protection to defend against curbing and abrasions.

It also has deep sidewall wear indications to show the correct time to rotate or demount the tyre.

Mileage and regular wear have been improved with the use of Giti's latest casing construction. The tyre is 3PMSF certified and it complements earlier GAU867v1 tyres in 22.5in size.

/FIND OUT MORE

www.giti-tire.eu

SmartAnalytics delivers driver insight, data

SmartWitness has launched SmartAnalytics. It is a driver behaviour analytics product that is powered by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to provide "better insights and actionable data" for fleets.

SmartAnalytics is an upgrade to any SmartWitness

video telematics product. AI and machine learning allow large amounts of data to be processed and contextualised to create a better understanding of driver behaviour - such as recognising when harsh acceleration has been used through necessity.

That allows a reduction in costs and an increase in safety, says SmartWitness.

/FIND OUT MORE

www.smartwitness.com



Air sterilisation unit developed by Valeo

Valeo has developed what it says is "the world's most powerful" air sterilisation system for coaches and buses.

Designed to be compatible with all those vehicles regardless of whether they are air-conditioned or not, Valeo claims that the device eliminates more than 95% of viruses - including

COVID-19, bacteria and mould - in a single airflow cycle.

It is available as a standalone "solution box" or it can be directly integrated into the air-conditioning unit, where fitted. UV rays work as both a bactericide and as a germicide and can kill microbes such as viruses and pathogens. The rays stop those microbes from spreading and can be used as an alternative to other disinfection methods, including

chemical products, adds Valeo.

The UV light source is provided by a leading expert in the technology. Valeo's solution also includes a "light labyrinth". It prevents UV rays from spreading outside the metal box, ensuring that passengers are never exposed to them. Only the air circulating within the box

is purified by the light.

When the system is brought to the UK, Valeo will market it both as original equipment and as a retrofit unit.

/FIND OUT MORE

www.valeo.com





'It is essential that the brake discs are thoroughly checked'

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRAKE DISC AND HOW TO CHECK THEM

Inspecting brake discs and having the right ones is key to the braking performance of your vehicles.

Imperial Engineering shares its best practices

The brake disc, or rotor, is one of the most important elements that makes up the air disc brake assembly, in fact it is the largest part. The disc provides the contact surface for the brake pads, for the generation of friction for the braking system, so it needs to be able to withstand a large amount of pressure and heat.

Usually made of cast iron and a specific mix of metals, brake discs are mounted directly to the hub assembly via a bolt-on connection or splined design.

Discs on buses

Due to the intense heat the discs are exposed to, most of the discs for PSV applications are ventilated to optimise the flow of air to assist the cooling process. Cooling is very important and prevents potential damage to the disc and other components of the brake assembly, as well as reducing the risk of brake fade.

From a maintenance perspective, the most common reason for a brake disc change on buses operating in urban areas, where there is high demand on the braking system,

is wear. Although heat cracks can happen, it is less common in this type of operation due to consistent operating temperatures, unless a fault with the brake assembly occurs.

Inspection is a must

During routine servicing, it is essential that the brake discs are thoroughly checked and the following areas are recommended for inspection in the course of routine servicing or brake pad changes:

- ➔ Check the condition of the contact surfaces of the disc viewed from the underside of the vehicle and through the wheel assembly where possible, looking for heat cracks, unevenness, large grooves, discolouration (blue) and heat spots across the surfaces.
- ➔ Brake disc thickness checks must be carried out on a regular basis. On vehicles with 19.5" and 22.5" wheel assemblies, new brake discs measure 45mm and the lowest allowable worn thickness is 37mm. At 37mm the disc must be changed, as running brake discs below this minimum thickness increases the risk of brake disc fractures.
- ➔ During brake pad changes, rotate the brake disc and inspect the cooling channels/pillars for any cracks or a high amount of corrosion, as cracks forming through the cooling channels/pillars can cause brake discs to fracture under high braking.

When a brake disc requires changing, selecting the correct high-quality replacement is important, as poor-quality brake discs can affect the braking performance and wear characteristics.

Imperial Engineering has a wealth of disc brake system knowledge and offers a portfolio of brake discs to match every operator's needs. We provide a full range of OE brake discs from Knorr Bremse, Wabco and Meritor, plus the well-respected Winnard brake disc range.

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CRONER-I: HELPING TO ADDRESS INDUSTRY HR QUESTIONS

Business advice specialist Croner-i's latest webinar aims to demonstrate the company's ongoing support for coach and bus operators

On 8 October, business and legal specialist Croner-i hosted a webinar session in co-operation with **routeone** discussing the human resources (HR) issues currently affecting the transport industry.

Andrew Willis, Head of Legal at Croner-i, and HR expert Amanda Chadwick answered questions relating primarily to the recent announcement of the government's Job Support Scheme (JSS) and how it relates to redundancy and furlough.

JSS will follow the conclusion of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) on 31 October, and be open from November 1 to the end of April 2021. All employers with a UK bank account and UK PAYE scheme can claim the grant. There is no need for the employer or employee to have previously used CJRS.

Under JSS, for every hour not worked by the employee, the government and employer will contribute one third towards the usual hourly wage for that employee, with the final third sacrificed. Government contributions are capped at £697.92 per month. While it will not apply to employees undergoing redundancy processes, it will be possible to consult with staff on redundancy and make a JSS claim during the same period. Employees subject to JSS must have been on the company's payroll with real time information submitted at least since 23 September.

According to Mr Willis, the most important thing to pick up is the mix between JSS and its operation and redundancy. "Until now, under the furlough scheme, it's been possible as long as employees saw out their notice to recover notice pay. That will not be possible under JSS. It is therefore important to think about resourcing on a mid-term and short-term basis."

Once the road towards redundancy is started, notice pay will not be able to be reclaimed under JSS. Operators may wish to consider voluntary changes to terms

and conditions with employees which may provide a better alternative to JSS.

There is limited guidance on the scheme and Croner-i is awaiting more detail from the Treasury. Communication is important and Ms Chadwick encourages operators to be honest with staff. Explaining the scheme in basic and understandable terms will be beneficial. Any change in an employee's terms and conditions must be confirmed in writing.

Ms Chadwick further urges operators to never guess on matters that affect them, particularly redundancy – and to ensure that advice is written down and any changes to employees' terms and conditions is documented. "Follow the procedures. Exhaust every other reason before you go through redundancy and document it, because this is the case you will rely on throughout the whole redundancy process.

This is your evidence and proof you've gone through the fair procedures."

routeone subscribers can access a light version of the Croner-i service for ongoing support, where free guidance is available on compliance and legislation, including JSS.

Adds Mr Willis: "The purpose of this scheme is to support what the Chancellor calls 'viable jobs', and we are getting closer to the point where hard decisions will have to be made in some businesses. Operators who have to consider redundancy must bear in mind that redundancy and JSS do not mix very well, and redundancy and notice payments will not be supported by JSS."

Ms Chadwick encourages operators to take advantage of the Croner-i advice line and its team of legal experts. "We want to make every business commercially viable, and do so fairly while supporting staff at the same time."

// We are getting closer to the point where hard decisions will have to be made in some businesses //



The Job Support Scheme will follow the conclusion of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and open from November 1 to the end of April 2021.



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£23,995+VAT
T: 07896 260408



2015 ADL Enviro 200: MMC, 4, auto, 41 seats/29 standees, low carbon vehicle, 10. 8m, E-Leather seats, MOT'd Sep 2021, av. 290,000 miles, DDA compliant, wood effect flooring, Mobitec destination (full blind in rear), Synetics CCTV. Euro VI
EPOA
T: 01698 792800



2008 ADL Enviro 400: digi tacho, Cummins/ZF gearbox, 70 seats with seat belts in red fan trim. 8 camera CCTV system, Hanover front side and rear Led displays. Good condition. MOT until August 2021.
£44,995+VAT
T: 07896 260408

AYATS

2001 Ayats Atlas: 53 seater recliner, MAN engine, fully automatic, air conditioned, CD/Video player, toilet, lapbelts, large luggage lockers, recently refurbished. Euro IV
£15,000+VAT ono
T: 07885 201349
E: raykboaches@aol.com



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BOVA

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E: admin@hunters-coaches.co.uk

BRISTOL

1969 Bristol RE ECW: Owned since 2017, Gardner 6HLX engine with 5 speed semi auto box, 38 seats with 6 tables. Not currently in MOT, recent tyres all round, bodywork is not concourse but it's a good working example (as pictures show).
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DAF

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IRIZAR

2014 Irizar i6: 53 seats + crew seat, 3 point seatbelts, centre WC, AS-Tronic gearbox, air con, tinted double glazed windows & curtains, LED interior lighting, MOT expiry - September 2021 240,427 kms (149,395 miles). Euro V
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2017 Irizar i6: 85,905 miles (138,250 kms), 53 seats + crew, 3 point seatbelts, seat back tray tables, AS-Tronic gearbox, air con, tinted double glazed windows & curtains, LED interior lighting, MOT expiry - December 2020 (due to get a 12 month extension). Euro VI
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2016 Irizar i6: 12. 9 metre, 3 point seat belts, ZF Astronic auto gearbox, MOT Sept. 2021. Immaculate condition. Mileage 145,000km. Any sensible offer considered. Essex. Euro VI
£120,000+VAT
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2015 Irizar i6: DAF. Owned by us from new, 245k km, MOT 2nd March 2021, AS-Tronic gearbox, air con, Webasto, DVD etc, huge luggage space, drivers bunk, 13. 8M 61 seat exec. Euro V
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2018 Irizar i6s: 10. 8m - December 2018. Only covered 21,000 kms. 38 seats + guide in Ultra Leather. WC and small servery with hot drinks machine, also comes with 4 x AD Coach Systems Corian tables to set up as 30 seats + 4 tables in VIP format. Euro VI
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2005 Iveco Daily: 40C. 14, 16 seat mini bus, very good condition for year. Electric side step. 6 good Bridgestone tyres, new fuel pump fitted, MOT til 22/04/2021. Only 2nd owner from new, owned last 9 years. 2 keys. Only 226,000 kms from new.
£2,750+VAT
T: 01767 677395
E: saffordcoaches@btconnect.com



2018 Iveco Ferqui: (68) 33 Seat minicoach, 3 point belts, full leather, automatic, mileage 31,000 kms, full history, excellent condition, low mileage. **Euro VI**
£69,500+VAT
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E: paul@mch-coaches.co.uk



2008 Iveco Plaxton Paragon: Air conditioning, ZF Auto, CCTV & MOT'd. Euro IV
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1992 Leyland Olympian: Tri Axle, Dennis double deck, short engine overhaul, ZF Gearbox: well maintained, surplus to requirements, no MOT at present. Choice of 92 or 102 seaters.
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2006 Mercedes-Benz Ferqui: Toro 815. 28 Seats, manual. MOT March 2021, radio / PA / DVD. Mileage approx. 215,000. Euro IV
£12,500+VAT
T: 01359 240291



2013 Mercedes-Benz Noone Turas 800: Manual gearbox, 33 Seats + crew seat, tinted windows + curtains, air con, MOT expiry September 2020, 235,781 kms (146,508 miles). Euro V
£37,995+VAT
T: 0800 731 4378
E: sales@goldenboy.co.uk



2013 Mercedes-Benz Noone Turas 800: 33 Seater, MOT till March 2-21. Plug door, large boot, automatic, air conditioning, DVD player, CCTV. Euro V
£37,500+VAT
T: 01322 448862
E: steve@abbeytravel.com



2014 Mercedes-Benz Noone Turas 800: manual gearbox, 29 seats + crew seat, tinted windows + curtains, air con, MOT expiry March 2021, 219,424 kms (136,344 miles) - July 2020. Euro V
£37,995+VAT
T: 0800 731 4378
E: sales@goldenboy.co.uk



2015 Mercedes-Benz Noone Turas 900: auto gearbox, 33 leather seats + crew seat, tinted windows + curtains, air con, alloy wheels, MOT expiry September 2021, 194,381 kms (120,783 miles). **Euro VI**
£57,995+VAT
T: 0800 731 4378
E: sales@goldenboy.co.uk



2004 Mercedes-Benz Optare Nouvelle 2: 33 Seater, 04 plate, MOT March 2021, interior seats grey.
£7,000 ono
T: 01572 755999



2001 Mercedes-Benz Plaxton Beaver 2: 32 belted seats, 814D Bus Coach, PSVAR compliant, PSV MOT expired, tachograph, rear mounted wheelchair lift. Able to do service work, schools, rail replacement or private hire.
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E: sam@travelcornwall.uk.com



2003 Mercedes-Benz Plaxton Cheetah: 33 Seats, manual gearbox / analogue tachometer 423,000 kms, recently retrimmed. No AC but has forced air blowers, MOT 18th January 2021.
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E: Andy.Bates@chalkwell.co.uk



2006 Mercedes-Benz Plaxton Cheetah: (55) 814D. Automatic. 29 seats with 3 point seatbelts, crew seat, tidy inside for year, large luggage capacity. Automatic Allison gearbox, Chassis excellent condition with many new parts. Euro IV
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2015 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: Well maintained. Colour white. Royal blue interior, reclining seats, pale blue moquette. USB ports for passengers, extended boot for extra luggage space. **Euro VI**
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2014 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: 513 CDI Automatic Treka built welfare/accessible minibus. 1 owner from new, genuine vehicle, front entry, nearside power door. Euro VI
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2010 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: Coach conversion. 16 Seater, automatic, air conditioned, large boot.
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T: 01322 448862
E: steve@abbeytravel.com



2008 Mercedes-Benz Sitar Beluga 2: 27 seats, manual. MOT August 2021. digi tach, seat belts, air con. DVD & fridge.
£10,995+VAT
T: 01392 872900
E: dave@dartline-coaches.co.uk



2018 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: 515 CDI. 18 seater inc driver, one owner, UNVI conversion extended with large boot, full A/C, panoramic windows, leather seats, USB sockets, fridge, media system, PA, rev camera. **Euro VI**
£42,000
T: 07973 826304
E: james@mcneecocoaches.co.uk



2015 Mercedes-Benz Plaxton Cheetah: XL, 35 reclining seats + crew. 35 recliners + crew. Auto, alloy wheels, low mileage, electric window and blind, air con, multifunctional steering wheel, drives like new, full professional respray in metallic, new PSV test, huge boot, outstanding condition. **Euro VI**
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E: info@parnellcoaches.co.uk



2010 Mercedes-Benz Sitar Beluga 2: White, 29 reclining seats + crew, 3 point belts, manual gearbox, air conditioning, PA system, curtains, radio and CD player. Large boot and side lockers. MOT till 28th March 2021. Odometer 400,065 kilometres. Euro V
£32,995+VAT
T: 07475 058174
E: info@m25minibuses.co.uk



2006 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: Treka Conversion, 16 seats. Choice of 2006 manual gearbox or 2002 Auto. Wheelchair lift. MOT expired.
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E: sam@travelcornwall.uk.com



2009 Mercedes-Benz Plaxton Cheetah: 33 seater + crew, air con, auto, drives well, 3 point belts throughout. PSV tested.
£22,999+VAT
T: 07790 966667
E: info@parnellcoaches.co.uk



2013 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: 516 CDI Monaco 16 seat minicoach. 63 Reg (DOFR: 20. 11. 2013) 7 speed auto, 208532 miles, MOT 19. 11. 20, coach rear and boot. Eberspacher A/C, privacy glass, Euroliners, 16 black leather reclining seats, Amtico floor, multi media: Freeview TV and DVD. **Euro VI**
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2016 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter: Full leather interior, reclining seats, side privacy glass, panoramic glass roof, curtains, fridge, USB ports passengers, radio, CD, DVD player, auto gearbox, PA system, FSH Mercedes, large boot space. This vehicle is immaculate. **Euro VI**
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E: contact@unitedexecutive.co.uk



2007 Mercedes-Benz Plaxton Cheetah: 816, 33 seater, late 2007, new shape. 6 speed manual, new 12 months PSV MOT.
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2005 Mercedes-Benz Sitar Beluga 2: Vario, 33 seats, very clean interior, 12 months MOT and Lec. Resprayed in the last 12 months and new Euroliner wheel trims. Fully serviced and maintained, inspection welcomed. Euro IV
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E: steve@abbeytravel.com



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2004 Mercedes-Benz Sitar Beluga: 29 seat midi coach + courier seat all with 3 point belts. All the usual extras, very well maintained and in excellent condition. Test 13. 04. 2021. Analogue tachograph - 31-10-2023. Private plate included in the sale.
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2017 Mercedes-Benz Tourismo: RHD-M 12. 96m. For sale on behalf of a UK based finance company. Sat Nav, foot rests and seat back tables, durabrite alloy wheels, central sunken toilet with servery, driver rest area, Bosch audio/visual system.
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2015 Mercedes-Benz Tourismo: Centrad CCTV installed. ZF Auto gearbox. Will come with 12 months MOT. **Euro VI**
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2017 Mercedes-Benz Turas 900: Well maintained vehicles. Colour white. Interior blue part leather / material reclining seats. Curtains. Tiptronic gearbox. USB ports for driver and passengers. **Euro VI**
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2007 Mercedes-Benz UNVI Cimo: 10. 22. Excellent Interior, air conditioning, radio. Manual large boot and side lockers. Owned for the last 10 years. MOT 03/21. 205,344 kms. Only selling due to change in contracts, vehicle has been well maintained. Worth a look. **Euro VI**
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2015 Mercedes-Benz UNVI Voyager GT: GT. Auto, 30 two-tone leather recliners with 3 point belts, fridge, air con, DVD, 240 volt sockets, electric windows etc, large boot and side lockers, drives well, low mileage, very tidy coach, sold with 12 months PSV Test, px available. **Euro VI**
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2003 Mercedes-Benz Vario: 814 Medio 29 seater. Manual gearbox, air conditioning, DVD player, plug door, MOT Sept 2021, LEZ end Sept 2021.
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E: liam.mccoll@mccolls.org.uk



2014 Optare Solo: 31 Seats, 64 plate, SR service bus, long MOT, Mercedes running gear, VGC.
£43,500 on
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2012/2016 Optare Solo: Choice of 3. SLIM Low Floor. 27/30 Rescraft CT lite belted seats plus 3 x tip ups trimmed in brown/cream e-leather. Belted drivers seat (3 point) trimmed in brown e-leather. 300,000 / 400,000 miles good condition long MOT Choice of 3. Euro V
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T: 01368 865500
E: gary@eveinfo.co.uk

SCANIA



2006 Scania Irizar Century: Auto, 70 seats, new MOT, A/C, new repaint, VGC.
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2012 Scania Irizar i6: Hospitality VIP coach. Sale on behalf of a UK finance company following end of lease. For further details please call or email.
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E: Andy.Bates@chalkwell.co.uk



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2007 Scania Irizar PB: ZF Auto, 49 leather seats, crew seat, ZF Auto gearbox, centre toilet, A/C, servery, fridge, double glazed tinted windows, curtains, MOT 07/04/2020, 645,000km.
£17,000+VAT
T: 01555 759354
E: info@photoflashtravel.co.uk



2011 Scania Plaxton Panther: K360, 49 Seats, WC, PSVAR compliant, hanover destinations, ramp just loler tested, MOT until November 2021, 8 camera CCTV, Essex number plate to be retained, Euro V
£64,995+VAT
T: 07896 260408

SETRA



2009 Setra 415 GT HD: Owned by us since 2013, 49 seat exec with lap belts, ZF AS-Tronic gearbox, 640K km, air conditioning & Webasto pre heating, MOT - 30th November 2020, Euro V
£31,500+VAT ono
T: 01926 813192
E: mat@travelcatteralls.co.uk



2006 Setra 415 GT HD: AS-Tronic, 51 seater, full executive, WC, water boiler, DVD with 2 screens, A/C, recent MOT, new coach forces sale. Good all round working condition. Call Mike.
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T: 02380 172035
E: mike@pegasuscoaches.co.uk

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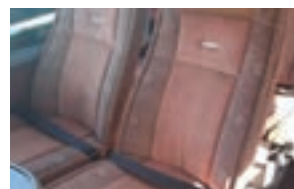
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2011 Setra S416 GT HD: One owner, 48 recliners (spare seats available), centre toilet, air cond, fridge, hot drinks, DVD/CD/RADIO/PA, new clutch & clutch pack, only 280k kms, MOT 2021, Euro V
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T: 07737 477800
E: adrian@gardinersnmc.co.uk



2007 Setra S416 GT HD: 48 seat exec coach. Seats: 48, interior colour: bronze, gearbox: manual, MOT: 12 months, mileage (kms): 625,000. Drinks machine, toilet, wheel trims, lovely machine, any test drive. Euro IV
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SOLBUS



2008 Solbus Soltour: Executive, 2 Seater recliners + courier, MOT May 2020, Cummings engine, fully automatic, air conditioned, CD/Video player, toilet/servery, 3 x point seat belts, large luggage lockers, comfortable coach, 2 x passenger doors, Euro V
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E: raykboaches@aol.com

TOYOTA



2011 Toyota Optimo V2: 22 seats midi coach + courier seat all with 3 point belts. This vehicle is in immaculate condition throughout and would compliment any fleet. Tested 25-11-2021. Digital tachograph 24-09-2023, Euro III
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E: whitegatetravel@btinternet.com



2008 Toyota Optimo: 22 Seats, A/C, MOT October 2020, 130,000 miles, Euro IV
£10,000+VAT
T: 01359 240291

VANHOOL



2008 Van Hool T9 Alizee: Alizee, ZF Auto, 49 recliners, leather headrests & piping, centre sunken WC, A/C, fridge, hot drinks, MOT 10/2020, clean & tidy, Euro V
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T: 07734 477800
E: adrian@gardinersnmc.co.uk



2005 Van Hool T9 Alizee: B12M, Leather head rests, recent full interior re-trim. Analogue tach, rear toilet, air con. We can offer home 2 school contracts (AM & PM runs) in the Dehnam and Chalfont St. Giles Area potentially in addition to the vehicle sale. Euro IV
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E: sales@imperialcoaches.co.uk



2016 Van Hool TX16 Alicron: DAF/ZF AS-Tronic, 53 recliners, centre toilet, boiler, fridge, air cond, alloys, bunk, MOT 2021, choice of 2, part ex welcome. Call Adrian. Euro VI
£164,500+VAT
T: 07738 477800
E: adrian@gardinersnmc.co.uk

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2014 Van Hool TX16 Astron: (64) Auto, 55 part leather seats (including driver and courier), Mid continental door, sunken toilet. Low mileage. MOT until November 2021. Excellent condition. Euro VI
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T: 01977 661214
E: info@shawsofwhitley.co.uk



2016 Van Hool TX17 Astron: (66 Plate) DAF, TX17, 59 recliners, centre sunken toilet, boiler, fridge, climate control, alloys, CCTV, drivers bunk, approx 250k kms, MOT 10/2021 & choice of 2. Euro VI
£144,500+VAT
T: 07736 477800
E: adrian@gardinersnmc.co.uk

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2019 VDL Futura FHD 2: 2 x Identical 61 seat coaches, Air con, centre sunken toilet, 3 point seat belts, alloy wheels, on board hoover.
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E: david@allanscoaches.co.uk

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1999 DENNIS TRIDENT



Cummins C series engine, Hanover LEDs, PSVAR compliant with seatbelts fitted, new MOT.

2008/9 ENVIRO 400s



Cummins ISC engine, ZF gearbox, 10.2m long, 65 seats as dual door or can be 72 seats once converted to single door, Euro 4, PSVAR compliant.

2004 DENNIS TRIDENT



Voith 4 speed gearbox, PSVAR compliant, 76 seats, low height.

2005 VOLVO B7RLE's



ZF automatics, 12m long, 40 seats, PSVAR compliant.

2011 VOLVO B9TL's



Wrights Gemini bodies, 10.8m, 73 seats, seatbelts can be fitted, Euro 6 compliant with exhaust traps, dual door also available.

2005 VOLVO B7TL



Alexander body, ZF gearbox, 62 seats, PSVAR compliant, new MOT.

2010 ENVIRO 200S



Allison gearboxes, Euro 5, PSVAR compliant, 29 seats as dual door or 36 seats once converted to single door.

2002 52 PLATE VOLVO B7TL



ZF gearbox, Hanover LED's, PSVAR compliant.

2004 SCANIA OMNICITY



42 seats, March 2021 MOT, PSVAR compliant, Hanover LEDs.

2008 58 PLATE ENVIRO 200s



41 seaters, 11.3m long, Cummins 6 cylinder engines, Allison gearboxes, PSVAR compliant.

2013 ENVIRO 400



Euro 6, ZF gearboxes, 65 seats as dual door or can be 72 seats as single door, PSVAR compliant

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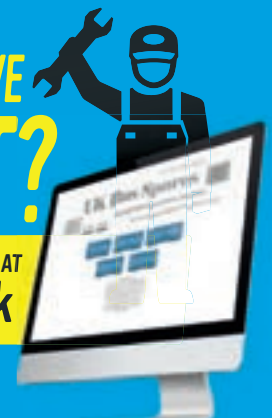
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£55,500
T: 02380 172035
E: mike@pegasuscoaches.co.uk



Volvo Jonckheere: BX62 BCO. MOT until 09.10.2021. Well looked after, clean and tidy. Low mileage 300,000, A/C, toilet. Always used on private hire. Euro V
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2004 Volvo Sunndegui Sideral: B12M. 52 seats, good seats, A/C, in good condition, white exterior blue interior, MOT March 2021, 3 point belts, alloy wheels.
£15,000+VAT
T: 01572 755999



2004 Volvo Berkhof Axial 50: Berkhof Axial 50, I-Shift, 53 seats, B12M, A/C, EminoX, 12 months MOT, Webasto, DVD monitor. Good all round condition, new analogue tachograph fitted. Private plate to be removed. Euro IV
£15,500+VAT ono
T: 01767 677395 / 07974 237804
E: saffordcoaches@btconnect.com



1999 Volvo Plaxton Excalibur: B10M, ZF Auto gearbox, MOT Oct 2020, good runner, ideal contract vehicle, *sensible offers* considered. Euro IV
£9,000+VAT ono
T: 01554 759888
E: info@1stchoiceltd.co.uk



2003 Volvo Plaxton Paragon: B12M. Excellent condition for age. New clutch fitted 2019. MOT until 27/07/2021.
£12,000+VAT ono
T: 01389 722981
E: liam.mccoll@mccolls.org.uk



2012 Volvo Sunndegui: B9R, I-Shift, 55 reclining seats, 3 point seatbelts, toilet, servery. MOT October 2020, owed by us from new.
£53,000+VAT
T: 07771 622188
E: sales@threestarcaches.com



2014 Volvo Caetano Levante: Be ready for PSVAR with a choice of 4 2014 Caetano Levante Volvo B9R with I Shift Gearbox. 48 seats, or 46 seats plus 1 wheelchair space. Fitted with leather seats with seat back tables and nets, air con, CCTV, WC, 240V power sockets. Euro V
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E: gavin.bennett@bennettscoaches.co.uk



2003 Volvo Plaxton Panther: Auto, 57 seats + driver with 4 point seat belts, LEZ, B12B, red fan moquette with cream leather headrests, A/C, MOT April 2021. Hanover front, side and rear destination. Selling due to fleet upgrade. Price excludes number plate.
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2001 Volvo Plaxton Premiere 350: B10M. LEZ compliant, MOT November 2020, 70 Cogent seats with 3 point belts, ideal contract vehicle. Radio/CD player, 6 speed manual gearbox. *Sensible offers* considered. Euro IV
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E: info@1stchoiceltd.co.uk



2013 Volvo Sunndegui: B7R, auto gearbox, 38 reclining seats, 3 point seatbelts, toilet, USB points, MOT April 2021, owned by us from new.
£60,000+VAT
T: 07772 622188
E: sales@threestarcaches.com



2013 Volvo Plaxton Panther: B9R, 50 Half-leather with 3 point seatbelts, centre toilet, cooler, boiler, A/C, DVD/CD/Radio/PA, alloys, 654k kms, MOT 07/21, very clean. Call Adrian. Euro V
£54,950+VAT
T: 07735 477800
E: adrian@gardinersnmc.co.uk



2006 Volvo Plaxton Profile: B7R. **LEZ** Compliant EminoX System fitted, 57 seat standard coach with DVD and hot water outlet. Lapbelts. MOT'd until 03/03/2021 - 787,655 kms but still in use. Number plate to be retained. Contact Glen/Mark. Euro IV
£19,995+VAT ono
T: 01525 376077
E: info@marshalls-coaches.co.uk



2015 Volvo Sunndegui SC5: 41 seater, choice of 2, low mileage, excellent condition. One owner, excellent condition. Full service history, POA. **Euro VI**
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2017 (17) VOLVO B8R PLAXTON LEOPARD
Euro 6, I-Shift, MOT Mar 21, 150,000 kms (approx), 72 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Courier, A/C, Aisle Carpet, Wired for CCTV, Reverse Cam, Inswing Door, Tubular Mirrors, AEBS, LDW, Luggage
£149,950 + VAT



2015 (64) VOLVO B11R JONCKHEERE JHV
Euro 6, I-Shift, MOT Jan 21, 370,000 kms (approx), 53 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Leather H/rests, Courier, Full Carpets, A/C, Centre WC, Boiler, Fridge, 2 Monitors, Wired for CCTV, Reverse Cam, Inverter, Large Luggage, Alloys
£99,950 + VAT



2012 (12) VAN HOOL TD921 ALTANO
Euro 5, DAF, AS-Tronic, MOT Jan 21, 530,000 kms (approx), 57 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Full Leather, Doors to Racks, Wood Floor A/C, PSVAR Ready, 1 W/ chair Space, Rear Floor WC, 2 Boilers, 2 Fridges, 4 Monitors, Wired for CCTV, Quad Cam, Power N/S Centre Door, N/S Kerb Lights, Huge Luggage, Trims
£89,950 + VAT



2012 (61) VOLVO B9R CAETANO LEVANTE
Euro 5, I-Shift, Various MOTs, 1,800,000 kms (approx), 48 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Full Leather, PSVAR, 1 W/Chair Space, Magic Floor Lift, LED Dests, Wood Floor, A/C, Rear Floor WC, 1 Monitor, Wired for CCTV, 240v Sockets, Power Lockers, Large Luggage, Alloys
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2018 (68) MERCEDES SPRINTER 0.516 CDI MELLOR STRATA
Euro 6, Auto, MOT Nov 20, 125,000 kms (approx), 21 Seats, 3 Point Belts, PSVAR Compliant, 1 W/Chair, Manual RAMP, LED Dests, Wood Floor, Pre-Heater, Wired for CCTV, Reverse Cam, Multi Media System, On Board Advertising Monitor, Power Sliding Door, Driver's Screen, Digi Tacho, Balance of Warranty
Choice of 3
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Euro 4, Cummins, Voith Auto, Various MOTs, Various Kms, 57 Seats, All Ages 3 Point Belts, PSVAR, 1 W/ chair, Manual Ramp, Dest Displays, Wired for CCTV, Reverse Cam, Digital Tacho
Choice of 3
£17,950 + VAT



2004 (04) SCANIA N94UB EAST LANCs OMNICITY
Euro 3, 230 BHP, ZF Auto, MOT Oct / Dec 20, 33 Seats, 21 Standees, PSVAR, 1 W/Chair, Manual Ramp, LED Dests, Wired for CCTV, Suspension Lift / Lower, Assault Screen, Tacho, 10.6m, ex Nottingham City
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2017 (17) TEMSA MD9 MAX
Euro 6, Cummins, ZF Auto, MOT Nov 20, 150,000 kms (approx), 39 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Leather Piping & H/rests, Sideshift, Courier, A/C, Fridge, 1 Monitor, Power N/S Rear Door, LDW, AEBS, Luggage, Trims
£99,950 + VAT



2015 (65) KING LONG XMQ6900
Euro 5, Cummins, ZF Auto, MOT Jan 21, 220,000 kms (approx), 31 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Two Tone Leather, Side Shift, Courier, A/C, Centre WC, Boiler, Fridge, 2 Monitors, Reverse Cam, Power Centre Door, Luggage, Trims
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2014 (64) MERCEDES BENZ SPRINTER 0.516 CDI NOONE TURAS 500
Euro 6, 6 Speed Manual, MOT Dec 20, 380,000 kms (approx), 16 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Two Tone Leather, 4 Tables, 240v, USBs, Full Carpets, A/C, Power Plug Door, Reverse Cam, Large Luggage, Euroliners, Recent Re-Con Engine
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2001 (Y) VOLVO B10M MK IV PLAXTON PARAGON
ZF Auto, MOT Mar 21, 53 Seats, Lapbelts, Courier, Doors to Racks, Forced Air, Rear Floor WC, Inswing Door, Tubular Mirrors, Front Dest, Split Windscreen, Large Luggage, Trims
£13,950 + VAT



2010 (10) MERCEDES BENZ TOURISMO
Euro 5, ZF Auto, Various MOTs, 600,000 kms (approx), 49 Luxline Seats, Lapbelts, Leather H/ rests, Courier, A/C, Centre WC, Boiler, Fridge, 2 Monitors, Wired for CCTV, Power Centre Door, Large Luggage, Alloys
Choice of 4
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2010 (10) VOLVO B12B PLAXTON PANTHER
Euro 5, I-Shift, MOT Aug 21, 760,000 kms (approx), 53 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Leather Piping & H/rests, Courier, A/C, Centre WC, Boiler, Fridge, 2 Monitors, Reverse Cam, Centre Cont Door, Large Luggage, Trims
£39,950 + VAT



2005 (05) VOLVO B12B 9700 PRESTIGE PLUS
LEZ, I-Shift, MOT Nov 20, 775,000 kms (approx), 49 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Re-Trimmed, Leather Piping & H/rests, Sideshift, Courier, Doors to Racks, Aisle Carpet, A/C, Centre Sunken WC, Boiler, Fridge, 2 Monitors, Power Centre Door, Central Locking, Alloys
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2005 VOLVO B12BT VAN HOOL T9 ACRON
Euro 3, I-Shift, Various MOTs, 1,000,000 kms (approx), 61 Seats, Lapbelts, Leather Piping & H/ rests, Courier, Doors to Racks, A/C, Power N/S Centre Door, Reverse Cam, Huge Luggage, Alloys
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2015 (65) MERCEDES BENZ ATEGO 1218L PLAXTON CHEETAH XL 36 SEAT MIDICOACH
 Euro 6, Powershift, MOT Oct 20, 225,000 kms (approx), 36 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Two Tone Leather, Courier, Aisle Carpet, Air Con, Wired for CCTV, Rev Cam, Large Luggage
Choice of 2
£65,950 + VAT

2011 (11) MERCEDES BENZ VARIO 0.816D PLAXTON CHEETAH 29 SEAT MIDICOACH
 Euro 5, 6 Speed Manual, New MOT, 450,000 kms (approx), 29 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Courier, Air Con, Wired for CCTV, Front LED Dest, LED Rear Lights, Large Luggage
Choice of 2
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2008 (08) VDL SB4000 BERKHOF AXIAL 50 57 SEAT EXECUTIVE COACH
 Euro 5, ZF Auto, MOT Mar 21, 900,000 kms (approx) 57 Seats, Lapbelts, Leather H/Rests, Courier, Air Con, Centre WC, Boiler, Fridge, 2 Monitors, Wired for CCTV, 12.9m, Large Luggage, Alloys
Choice of 2
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2008 (08) MERCEDES BENZ TOURISMO 36 SEAT VIP CORPORATE EXECUTIVE COACH
 Euro 4, AS-Tronic, MOT Nov 20, 675,000 kms (approx), 36 Luxline Seats, Lapbelts, Two Tone Leather, Sideshift, Courier, 5 Tables, Air Con, Centre WC, Centre Kitchensette, Microwave, 2 Fridges, Hot & Cold Water, 6 Monitors, Multi Channel Headphones, 240v, Wired for CCTV, Power Centre Door, Central Locking, Large Luggage, Alloys
£34,950 + VAT



2006 (06) SCANIA K114EB BERKHOF AXIAL 50 57 SEAT EXECUTIVE COACH
 Euro 4, 380 BHP ZF Auto, New MOT, 1,250,000 kms (approx), 57 Seats, Lapbelts, Re-Trim, Leather H/Rests, Courier, Air Con, Centre WC, Fridge, 1 Monitor, Wired for CCTV, Front LED Dest, 12.9m, Large Luggage, Trims, No AdBlue, Recent New Engine
£24,950 + VAT

2006 (06) VDL SB4000 VAN HOOL T9 ALIZEE 51 SEAT EXECUTIVE COACH
 Euro 3, ZF Auto, MOT Oct 20, 700,000 kms (approx), 51 Seats, Lapbelts, Leather Piping & H/Rests, Courier, Air Con, Rear Floor WC, Boiler (U/S), Fridge, 1 Monitor, Wired for CCTV, LED Dest, Rear Cont Door, Digi Tacho, Large Luggage, Trims
£21,950 + VAT



2005 (55) VOLVO B12B PLAXTON PANTHER 70 SEAT COACH
 Euro 3, I-Shift, MOT Dec 20, 1,450,000 kms (approx), 70 Seats, 3 Point Belts, Courier, Air Con, Wired for CCTV, LED Dest, LED Rear Lights, Large Luggage, Trims
£22,950 + VAT

2004 (04) VDL SB4000 VAN HOOL T9 ALIZEE 49 SEAT EXECUTIVE COACH
 Euro 3, ZF Auto, New MOT, 600,000 kms (approx), 49 Seats, Lapbelts, Leather Piping & H/Rests, Courier, Rack Doors, Air Con, Rear Floor WC, Wired for CCTV, LED Dest, Digi Tacho, Rear Cont Door, Large, Luggage, Trims, 3 Blown Windows
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2004 (04) VDL DB250 WRIGHT ECLIPSE GEMINI 70 SEAT PSVAR COMPLIANT BELTED D/D BUS
 Euro 3, Voith Auto, New MOT, 70 Seats, 12 Standees, 82 Capacity, Lapbelts, Re-Trim, PSVAR, Manual Ramp, 1 W/Chair, LED Dest, Wired for CCTV, Rev Cam, Low Bridge Warning, Digi Tacho
Choice of 2
£19,950 + VAT

2003 (53) VDL DB250 WRIGHT ECLIPSE GEMINI 70 SEAT PSVAR COMPLIANT BELTED D/D BUS
 Euro 3, Voith Auto, MOT Oct 20 / Feb 21, 70 Seats, 12 Standees, 82 Capacity, Lapbelts, Re-Trim, PSVAR, Manual Ramp, 1 W/Chair, LED Dest, Wired for CCTV, Rev Cam, Low Bridge Warning, Digi Tacho
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- 2016 Mercedes Indcar Next, Euro 6, 33 reclining seats, 3 point belts ,courier seat, air conditioning, DVD & monitor, large luggage lockers, interior red & grey [part leather] exterior white.
- 2015 VDL FHD2 122.365, Euro6, automatic with intarder, 55 reclining seats, Air conditioning, DVD + monitor, cool box, power operated continental door, interior red, exterior white
- 2015 Volvo B8 Sunsundegui, euro 6, 41 reclining seats, three point belts, courier seat, DVD & monitor, cool box interior autumn tints, exterior white
- 2013 Van Hool Astromega TDX27, automatic with intarder, 85 reclining seats, courier seat, three point belts, position for one wheel chair, toilet on lower deck, two tables, water boiler, fridge ,air conditioning, DVD & monitors ,interior blue & tan, exterior red & white
- 2012 Volvo B9 Caetano Levante, I shift with intarder, 70 seats, three point belts, wheel chair lift, position for one wheel chair, air conditioning Interior Autumn tints, Exterior blue

- 2011 Volvo B13BT Van Hool Acron, wheel chair lift through front door [DDA1 Specification] 53 reclining seats, courier seat, toilet, continental door, air conditioning
- 2007 Volvo B12B Plaxton Paragon, I shift transmission with intarder, 57 reclining seats, courier seat, air conditioning, low mileage, interior red, exterior white & maroon
- 2006 Bova Futura FHD 127, 53 reclining seats, courier seat, centre toilet, continental door, air conditioning, cool box, water boiler, DVD & monitor, interior red & grey, exterior white, red & blue
- 2005 Volvo B12BT Jonckheere Mistral, 53 reclining, courier seat, toilet, continental door, air conditioning, DVD & monitor, water boiler, interior red, exterior white
- 2005 Bova Futura FHD, 51 reclining seats, courier seat, centre sunken toilet, continental door, DVD & monitor, air conditioning, water boiler interior red ,exterior white, choice of two
- 2004 Bova Futura FHD, 70 seats, three point belts, Automatic transmission, interior blue, Choice of two
- 1999 Volvo B10M Plaxton Premier 3500 ,70 seats with 3 point belts, air conditioning, Interior red, exterior white

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STAGECOACH APPOINTS NEW UK MD CARLA STOCKTON-JONES

Carla Stockton-Jones has been appointed as Stagecoach's new UK Managing Director (MD).

It is believed the appointment makes her the first woman to head a major private sector multi-modal public transport operation in the UK. She will report directly to Stagecoach Chief Executive, Martin Griffiths and take responsibility for over 8,000 vehicles and 24,000 staff.

Carla joined the company as Regional Director South of England in February this year, after holding senior positions with Sky since 2012. She was made interim Managing Director in July, following the retirement of Mark Threapleton.

As interim MD, Carla led Stagecoach's business transformation plans and coronavirus COVID-19 recovery strategy. This has included engagement with the Department for Transport over the sector's transition out of the pandemic.

Martin Griffiths says: "Carla has a proven track record in retail and service roles across a range of highly competitive sectors. She has a passion for delivering large-scale transformation programmes, fostering innovation and motivating teams to deliver



results. These qualities will be invaluable as we look to deliver a more agile business supported by a talented and diverse team.

"I'm confident that with our strong leadership and committed frontline people we can come through the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are in a strong position to maximise the significant opportunities for public transport as part of a green recovery, delivering safer, healthier and more prosperous places for people to live."

Adds Carla: "I'm proud to be heading the UK business as Stagecoach marks 40 years of keeping Britain connected. Stagecoach, its people and its services have made and continue to make a hugely positive impact on our economy, in our communities and in protecting our environment.

"Partnership is more important than ever if we are to give our communities the

green transport connections they need.

I'm absolutely committed to working closely with national government, the mayors in our biggest city regions, and our local authority partners and other stakeholders to make that happen.

"I'm also looking forward to continuing the work underway to ensure the business has the right shape so we can unlock new opportunities. I want to make the most of the diverse talent we have across Stagecoach, bring a fresh perspective to the business and ensure we are 100% focused on our current and future customers."

Carla has worked as a member of the Maggie's cancer care board since 2016, helping to raise awareness and funding for the charity to achieve its vision of having a care centre attached to every UK NHS hospital.

OBC Brand the Bus competition returns for third year running

The Oxford Bus Company's (OBC's) annual Brand the Bus competition is back by popular demand for a third year running.

The event sees representatives of good causes competing for public votes to have one of OBC's buses decorated in their own logo and branding, which will then be operated on its city services.

Entrants should submit a short video or PDF presentation on why their particular charity or cause should win. 10 will be shortlisted according to public vote and examined by a judging panel, with the winner invited to design the bus livery.

Runners-up will receive support via digital on-board bus advertising.

Says Phil Southall, Oxford Bus Company Managing Director: "Our Brand the Bus competition has become a popular part of Oxfordshire life and provides excellent support to deserving good causes.

"The transport industry is facing significant challenges due to coronavirus

COVID-19, but we felt it was important to continue the Brand the Bus competition this year, at a time when good causes need more support than ever before. One of our core values is being socially responsible and central to this is giving something back to the communities we serve, and this competition has proved to be a great way to do that."



NCT MANAGING DIRECTOR MARK FOWLES TO RETIRE NEXT YEAR

Mark Fowles, Managing Director (MD) of Nottingham City Transport (NCT) will retire in April 2021, the business has announced.

Mark has been in the bus industry since 1984. He began his career on the National Bus Company's senior management training scheme and joined NCT in 1994 as deputy MD. There he represented NCT in the consortium to win the contract to operate Line One of the Nottingham Tram network.

In 2001, Mark became MD of Nottingham City Transport and assumed the role of Chairman of the Arrow Consortium, which re-introduced trams to the city in 2004.

NCT says it is an understatement to say Mark "revolutionised public transport in Nottingham", and that his effort and

passion was instrumental in transforming NCT into a "thriving beacon of public transport".

Mark says: "I have really enjoyed my time at NCT, joining initially to see the tram through to breaking ground and staying on to change both the culture and performance of NCT.

"It should be the ambition of any leader that during their stewardship, they move the organisation forward. I would like to think that I have done so with NCT. I believe that for the future, NCT will need to adapt its style of management to accommodate the changing exterior environment and this is a long-term process that should be managed from start to finish by a new, cohesive team.



"I have every confidence that those members of the senior management team who remain after my departure are more than capable of managing, adapting and taking NCT forward to even greater success."

Rosso unveils tribute bus to Manchester's COVID-19 heroes

Rosso and parent company Transdev have teamed up with the *Manchester Evening News* to create a special liveried 'Greater Manchester heroes' bus in honour of the city's NHS teams and key workers.

Transdev has introduced its 'heroes' liveried buses throughout the pandemic, celebrating local community workers.

As with its other tribute vehicles, the bus is decorated with images of NHS staff, firefighters and other key workers nominated

by friends, relatives, and their representative organisations.

Operations Manager at Rosso, Phil Harris, says: "As key workers ourselves, our drivers and support teams know first-hand how important it is to keep on serving local

people by helping others who need to make a journey, including to and from work or to pick up food or access services.

"We know there are many unsung heroes doing all kinds of jobs right now, and so we decided to recognise them."



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SUPPORT NEEDS TO REMAIN FOR THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY



As the industry continues to seek and rally support, unity is the only way forward for coach and bus



Steve Whiteway
/ CPT President

None of us, not least the government, could have envisaged that six months after the lockdown, we seem to be little further forward in fighting COVID-19.

The welcome measures put in place to sustain the economy were only designed for a few months as we all hoped this terrible virus would, by now, be in retreat. Surely, the limits of the government's capacity to help are now in sight.

Uncertainties for all

From the industry's point of view, we hoped this would be a short-term blip for a few months and things would get back to normal. The bus sector saw an almost immediate reduction in passenger numbers and therefore revenue, but this is only to be expected when everyone is told to stay at home.

The uncertainty has been even worse for the coach industry. We should not forget our suppliers either, as without demand there is no need for supply. We are all suffering, as are thousands of other industries, with very few sectors having benefitted.

Advocacy is everything

With all this in mind, we must be realistic that bespoke support for the coach industry is unlikely to be forthcoming and, despite the often-envied support for the bus industry, that sector is far from out of the woods either.

However, CPT will continue to press for help across the board with the support of the industry. We simply must capitalise on the increased awareness of our industry that has been so apparent over the summer. Politicians know much more about our sector, especially coach, than ever before. That can only be a good thing.

CPT and its members have been at the front and centre of the campaign to raise awareness and the conduit through which individual member companies have been kept informed and advised, by experts in their field.

That is priceless and, while the situation is as bad as any of us can remember, it would have been so much worse without CPT's support and direct line into government.

'The only way forward'

Whether you run one vehicle or many hundreds, the unified voice that CPT represents

is the only way forward for an industry that must now seek the opportunities ahead. And, as it has always done, be there when needed, resilient and ready to pick up where it left off - battered but not beaten.

The whole industry needs to get behind the campaign to raise the esteem in which the coach and bus industry is held, led by a strong and united trade association with the backing of every operator and supplier.

Will you back our industry to enhance your future?

// Politicians know much more about our sector, especially coach, than ever before. That can only be a good thing //



The backing of every operator and supplier is needed

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