

NEWS ACROSS THE GROUP

November 2020

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A message from David Brown

Dear colleagues,

We're now in lockdown in the UK for a second time this year and it may feel harder to be motivated with the cold weather and less daylight. I would like to thank you for your continued resilience in this time and I know we will get through it just as we did with the last.

Public transport remains vital for a green, sustainable recovery as we emerge from the pandemic. It is great to see that recognised, with the Government publishing a ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution. This provides an opportunity to see public transport recover, combined with active travel – walking and cycling.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put an incredible strain on the country, the economy and public transport, but tackling climate changes is as important as ever. Go North East

introduced a new fleet of electric buses this month, which will be the first time ever for fully electric buses to be in service across the region. You can read more about this on page 2.

It is essential to make sure passengers are confident and comfortable in returning to bus and rail. Studies across GTR and Southeastern have shown no evidence of Coronavirus on trains. Independent laboratory results analysed key touch points (such as handrails and buttons) over three weeks.

In addition, private operators are essential to this vital task. We help bring commercially driven innovation, as well as attracting the talent and skills needed to adapt to changing customer requirements.

We have continued hiring apprentices and focusing on our graduate scheme as we know we need innovators to

continue moving public transport forward. Southeastern was recently recognised as a Top 100 employer for apprentices in the UK, which you can read on page 2. This is a fantastic achievement, being the only train operating company to achieve this feat.

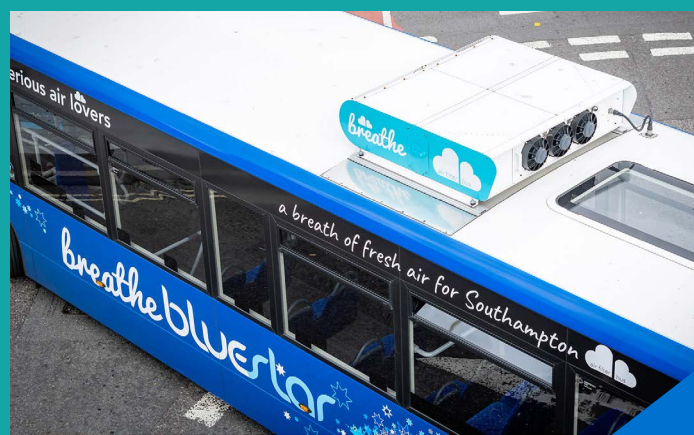
I won't sugar-coat it – these are tough times. Lockdown poses all kinds of challenges to different people – be it socially, mentally or even physically. But do keep going. You are all doing a vital job and we need to keep being there for each other.

Until next time,

David Brown,
Group Chief Executive

Award winners

Our unique air filtering buses have won a UK Fleet Champions Award in the category 'Sustainable Journeys'. This category recognises organisations who have 'done the most to reduce risk and fuel emissions'. The judges were especially impressed with the results of our 100-day trial, which saw us remove 65g of particulate matter from the air – roughly the weight of a tennis ball – while also cleaning 3.2 million cubic metres of Southampton's air.



Go North East moves to electric

A clean, green fleet for Newcastle

Go North East launched nine new electric buses at the end of November in its bid to move the region to cleaner, greener technology. The new fleet will provide 55,000 journeys per year and cover 300,000 miles between Newcastle and Gateshead. They will be stabled at the ultra-modern Riverside depot, which we opened in 2014.

We already run the largest largest electric bus fleet in the UK, with these nine new buses taking us up to 190. 70 more electric buses are set to enter service in Go-Ahead London by April 2021.

This is the first time that fully electric buses have been in service across the North East. The high-tech services will also offer free WiFi, wireless and USB charging and the introduction of tap-on, tap-off payments.



Our beliefs

One step
ahead

Watch the launch video

Apprenticeship honours



Hitting the top 100



Southeastern has received a first-of-its-kind honour from the UK Government. The National Apprenticeship Service placed the train operating company 66th on its list of the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers – out of more than 100,000 companies across England. This means it outranked major brands such as M&S and Bentley, along with many other firms who have provided apprenticeship programmes for significantly longer.

“The award adds to our great reputation as a company that cares about its colleagues,” commented Southeastern’s Apprenticeship Quality Assurance Manager, Kerriane McMahon.

“Apprenticeships are such an effective way to nurture the next generation of colleagues on the railway – supporting talented people to reach their full potential and progress in the business, whilst gaining high-quality knowledge and skills. We’re looking forward to building on the success we’ve achieved so far and welcoming even more apprentices to our teams in the months and years to come.”

Lest we forget

Commemorating those who made the ultimate sacrifice

In 1920, the body of an unnamed British soldier was brought to London by train after being discovered in the aftermath of the First World War. He became a symbol to all the unnamed faces who were killed in the war and is buried alongside some of Britain's greatest historical figures at Westminster Abbey.

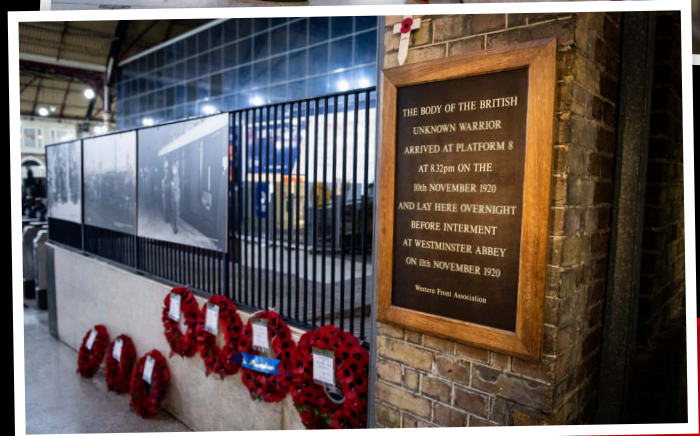
GTR and Southeastern colleagues came together with Network Rail in November for special ceremony to mark 100 years since the Unknown Warrior arrived at Victoria station.

To recreate the moment, the Victoria team welcomed a Southern train with a poppy livery onto Platform 8 at 20:32 – the exact time and place where the Unknown Warrior arrived, marking 100 years to the minute. Colleagues ceremonially guarded the poppy train to lay wreaths.

Southeastern's Managing Director David Statham also flew the flag for Southeastern at the annual memorial service at Dover's cruise terminal, which marks 100 years to the day since the Unknown Warrior's passage through the then-Dover Marine station.

"This year's ceremony was much smaller than previous events for obvious reasons – and was very different from the major event we'd planned before the pandemic," commented David, who has attended the event for the past six years. "It was really important to commemorate those colleagues who made the ultimate sacrifice in both World Wars, and the Covid tribute was our way of remembering them, in the most challenging of circumstances."

Our bus companies marked Armistice Day and Remembrance Day across the country. Many of our bus drivers pulled over at 11am to observe the two-minute silence. Go North East had a special bus emblazoned with poppies also out on the route.



Our attitudes
Down-to-earth

A productive visit

A welcome visitor to Loyang

Go-Ahead Singapore welcomed Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Transport, Mr Chee Hong Tat to its Loyang bus depot in November. Colleagues had a good exchange about the challenges they have faced during the COVID-19 situation and how they are proud to be working in the public transport industry and derived great satisfaction from their work.

Bus Captain Mentor Khatijah shared how drivers have adopted the use of technology for simpler daily work processes and time savings. Teams in Go-Ahead Singapore are committed to embark on the journey to go digital and develop their competencies further.



Select committee scrutinises contracts

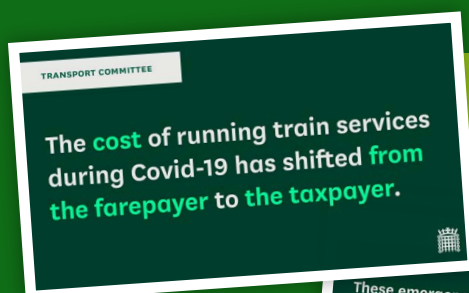
Go-Ahead appeared before MPs this month

Go-Ahead's Chief Strategy and Customer Officer Katy Taylor appeared before the Transport Select Committee this month, alongside other senior managers from Abellio and First Group.

The Transport Select Committee – a cross party working group of MPs that scrutinise the Department of Transport – questioned rail operators on Emergency Measures Agreements (EMA) and Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMA). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, rail usage has significantly declined, having never gone above 40% of previous levels since March. This means that costs are shifting from the farepayer to the taxpayer, in line with the government's commitment to keeping public transport services going.

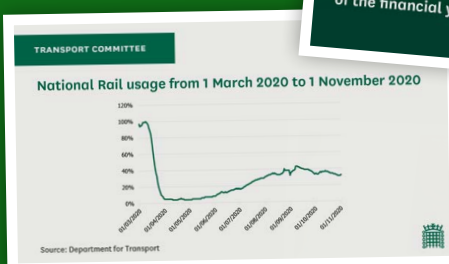
In the session Katy emphasised the importance of bringing customers back to rail for a green recovery, as well as the role that private operators play through innovating and responding to customer demand. Fares and ticketing reform was also covered – Katy highlighted that our companies have the technology in place for the DfT to approve flexible ticketing aimed at journeys to offices.

Afterwards the MPs grilled Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris and senior DfT Rail officials Pete Wilkinson and Neil Hart, calling on them to make the ERMA agreements public, and to spell out their plans for closing the gap between rail costs and revenues.



Images from Transport Select Committee's Twitter account

These emergency measures have cost the Government £4.2bn since March and another £3-£5bn is expected to be needed by the end of the financial year.



Driving diversity in engineering

GTR's drive to be more inclusive

The engineering sector is currently experiencing a shortage of skilled professionals and a lack of representation from the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community.

GTR hosted an online event in November in collaboration with the Association for Black and Minority Ethnic Engineers to promote diversity in engineering. Only 9% of UK engineers are from

BAME backgrounds, compared to 30% who have graduated with an engineering degree.

Steve Lammin, Engineering Director at GTR, said: "It's a really exciting but difficult time right now for young people trying to take their first steps into employment. Our engineering apprenticeships offer the chance to learn on the job, earning a real salary to achieve a nationally-recognised qualification. For us, it's not about previous knowledge or experience, just commitment, enthusiasm and a willingness to learn."

Our beliefs

One step ahead



The unsung heroes of bus

Bus planning can happen even at your living room table

Go North East celebrated its planners and schedulers on Transport Planning Day this month. Its team of four schedulers, led by network design manager Graham Hill, are responsible for creating timetables for customers and duties for colleagues.

They have had to be even more flexible this year due to the impact of the pandemic. Schedules are constantly needing to be changed – sometimes on a daily basis – to react to changing circumstances, customer demand and meeting social distancing regulations.

The team also have had to adapt to home working – keeping in touch through video conferencing and the roll out of some new IT to support the critical link between the plan and what is happening on the road.

"It's only right that we praise the hard work of our scheduling team on Transport Planning Day," said Martijn Gilbert, managing director at Go North East. "They're the ones behind the scenes that have enabled our frontline colleagues to transport people across the region throughout the pandemic, from key workers to those making essential shopping trips."

Two Go-Ahead colleagues were also finalists for CitySwift's 'Joe Wood Scheduler of the Year' award. Chris Suggit from Metrobus and Andrew Eyles from Go South Coast were recognised for their hard work, with Go North East's Managing Director Martijn Gilbert sitting on the judging panel.

Our attitudes
Down-to-earth



Leading the way on accessible transport

Ensuring transport is available to all

Transport must be available and accessible for all people. Brighton & Hove Buses were recently one of only two public transport providers in England to be given the 'Highest Leader' status under the Department for Transport's Inclusive Transport Leaders scheme.

The scheme is open to all transport operators across bus, rail, air, freight and ferries. The aim is to make travelling accessible for all disabled people by 2030 under the government's Inclusive Transport strategy.

Brighton & Hove Bus Managing Director Martin Harris said: "We are genuinely heartened to receive this recognition but we see it much more as a testament to the hard work and commitment of the many disabled groups and disabled people we have worked with over the years. We thank them for their help and support.

"They are the ones who have helped us make our services more accessible. It is their voices that have informed every area of the way we deliver our services, including training our bus drivers and customer service colleagues, the vehicles we buy, the way buses are designed and how we provide information to our customers."



A new partnership

Improving connectivity and frequency for passengers in Oxford

Thames Travel, part of the Oxford Bus Company, has partnered with Milton Park – a prestigious science and technology business park. Together they will provide an enhanced network that includes other local and regional bus services.

This partnership has created 15 new jobs at the company's Didcot depot. The new partnership will also involve creating a new 'Didcot Zone' to facilitate subsidized bus travel for those who live and work in Milton Park.

Phil Southall said: "We are very proud to be working with Milton Park to improve bus service provision to the site, as well as working with Oxfordshire County Council on network development using housing developer contributions. The new network will improve connectivity and frequency of services to create an unrivalled bus service in this fast-growing area of Oxfordshire."

Mayoral visit



An important visitor to Sutton

Go-Ahead London colleagues at Sutton garage received a visit this month from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Sutton.

On the especially chilly day, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor toured the garage to meet and greet colleagues, where they delivered a personal thank you to every person for their dedication to the people of Sutton during the pandemic, acknowledging the challenges that came with the crisis.



Supporting Trans Awareness

Creating a more inclusive culture



Go North East showed support for Trans Awareness Week (13-19 November). The company has recently launched an equality and diversity initiative – known as One Team GNE, which brings together colleagues to look at how they can foster a more inclusive and supportive team culture.

As part of One Team GNE, there are groups specifically looking at issues relating to both gender equality and the LGBTQ+ community in the company.

One of the first actions that this colleague-led initiative have decided to take forward is the creation of a specific company policy to support transitioning colleagues. Alongside this, the LGBTQ+ working group are planning some activities in the new year to raise awareness of trans matters.

Go North East is also currently reviewing their forms – both internal and external – to make sure that gender-neutral pronouns and titles are included, as well as looking at other ways they can be more inclusive across the company.

Martijn Gilbert, Go North East's managing director, said: "I welcome this next step to create a policy for supporting our trans colleagues, with input from colleagues across our company. Our One Team GNE Champions are already showing their enthusiasm for making our company a more inclusive and supportive place to work. We are proud of all our team, and want to make sure that all colleagues feel like they matter equally."



Helping Children in Need

Raising money for young ones in need

Team members from Go North East switched their usual uniform for fancy dress and yellow clothing to raise money for BBC's Children in Need. Team members also took part in the 'Act Your Age' challenge, with activities relating to the number 107 – the number of years that Go North East has been serving the region.



Activities included a 107-second plank, a 107-metre egg and spoon race, 107 exercises in one go, and bus driver Anna Bilski, from the company's Consett depot, took things to the next level by running 107 kilometres in a single day.

Family matters

From dad to daughter

Lycia Estrochio is following in her father's footsteps to join Swindon's Bus Company. Originally from Goa in India, her father Luizito moved to the UK in 2010, before becoming a bus driver in 2014.

Lycia initially applied to Swindon's Bus Company and was offered a place on the bus driving training course in early 2020 – but the first Covid-19 lockdown forced her application to be put on hold. With unwavering enthusiasm, she was offered the position again in October, and jumped at the chance.

"I was hugely impressed by Lycia's dedication," said Swindon's Bus Company operations manager, Paul Coyne. "After her practical training, she passed her PCV test in just two weeks. The manner in which she applied herself to her training has been outstanding. I wish her every success in her new career."

Dad, Luizito, is delighted by his daughter's progress: "I'm very much looking forward to Lycia following in her grandfather's and my footsteps – and upholding the good name of our family, as well as that of Swindon's Bus Company," he said.



The Santa bus goes digital



Donating to good causes across Brighton

Father Christmas has decided to spread the cheer virtually this year. Brighton & Hove and Metrobus' online 'Santa bus' is raising money for 12 local charities and community groups this Christmas. Donations are coming through a GoFundMe page, and the company is also selling limited edition Santa Bus festive face coverings.

The Santa Bus initiative has raised more than £300,000 for local charities over the past 16 years, mostly through street collections. The bus is a familiar sight in the run up to Christmas, being decked out with fairy lights and playing festive music.

The 12 local charities include Brighton Black History Group, LGBT Switchboard, the Motor Neurone Disease Association and Carers Support West Sussex.

Partners in line

Bringing communities together

The newest Community Rail Partnership (CRP) on the Southeastern patch made its official debut this October, with the launch of the 1066 Community Rail Line. Running from Hastings to Tonbridge. The new line is the eighth in the line-up for the wider Southeast community rail partnership, who won a share of a major £400k funding investment earlier this year.

Southeastern's Community Relations Manager Matt Fraser said: "CRPs are invaluable in helping us ensure that local communities get the most from their railways. We look forward to seeing the benefits the group's wealth of experience will bring, which will prove invaluable as we begin our support for two brand new CRPs elsewhere in Kent."



Praise for drivers

Customer service matters to the community



Two Morebus drivers have been praised by elderly passengers in Hampshire. Simon Rhodes and Dawn Griffiths were both nominated to receive Great British Breakaway stays, as part of Almarose Hotels' NHS 1000 Night Giveaway.

The pair drive on Morebus' 'Cango' community bus service, which provides a lifeline for many of those who live in the area.

"These services are absolutely vital to those who may otherwise find it difficult to travel – with many of those using the Cango being those with concessionary passes," said Morebus general manager, David Heckles. "Without it, many would be unable to go about their daily business. Even more than that, the bus service plays a key role in social inclusion here. Without the wonderful efforts of drivers like Simon and Dawn, a significant number of people would find it difficult to get out-and-about."

"I would like to thank Dawn and Simon for everything they do. They thoroughly deserve to be spoiled with a couple of nights away, courtesy of Almarose Hotels, once we emerge from lockdown."



Collaborative



Down-to-earth



NHS WE THANK YOU

Key workers supporting key workers

Harnessing humanity and innovation



Angie Doll,
Managing Director of
Southern and Gatwick Express

Facilitating the return to public transport in a safe and convenient way

At GTR, we have embarked on a mission to fundamentally and irreversibly change our business for the better. The group-wide priorities in response to Covid-19 – to support colleagues and customers, to play our role in society and to protect our business – have, alongside GTR's brand ethos of "We're with you", created a galvanising sense of purpose for that mission.

Together, we were proud to support key workers to get to work and do the incredible job they do. And our colleagues – key workers themselves – are inspiring with their proactive and adaptable response to supporting passengers.

When the crisis hit, our people were motivated and empowered to take initiatives to support colleagues, customers and wider society. The effect of this was rapid innovation and delivery: five redesigned timetables; transformed cleaning; even better internal communication; accelerated adoption of new internal and customer-facing digital tools; proactively sourced stakeholder feedback; and, projects to support the most physically, mentally and economically vulnerable people.

The value of our services is more evident than ever but confidence, economy-wide, has taken a knock. Communication – by which I mean listening – is key. Since the outbreak of the virus, we have listened to our teams and passengers to better understand what more we could do.

Our passenger panels demonstrate that customers know we are safe. This perception is backed up by studies from the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and our own independent testing. As ever, the harder job is convincing those who aren't travelling.

Even before the second lockdown, the rebound between weekday and weekend is instructive. The fact that weekend travel, despite all the restrictions and ongoing concerns about Covid-19, had returned to half of pre-covid levels is heartening and reveals confidence.

Meanwhile, the crisis has shown that working from home can be highly efficient, and it seems clear that many will retain this new format to some extent and we need to adapt to provide alternative interpretations of 'the commute' based on passenger needs.

Five days of travelling, all in the peak, will no longer be the only option; some will move to fewer days, or off-peak commuting. There will be greater demand for choice and flexibility and we will be seeking to offer that service, creating the right product to welcome customers back to rail.

If Covid-19 has shown us anything, it's that our colleagues are motivated to ensure public transport unlocks all the opportunities it offers for our passengers' and communities' futures.