

# NEWS ACROSS THE GROUP

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## A message from David Brown

Dear all,

This month it's been great to see how many of our colleagues are supporting the vaccination effort in the UK and helping local communities.

While Go North East has provided shuttle buses to vaccination centres (page 3), Metrobus has launched a mobile vaccine service on specially adapted buses (pages 2). This is a great initiative with the NHS to target hard-to-reach communities. I know that some of our other bus companies are looking into similar initiatives in their regions. As more people get vaccinated, we look forward to restrictions easing and welcoming more passengers back on our services.

Meanwhile, our rail companies have been improving the passenger

experience. Southeastern, for example, has introduced a host of policies to help disabled passengers – including setting up a passenger accessibility panel and introducing a new mobile assistance role. This is a great step to ensure that everyone can travel on our services comfortably.

We've shown our confidence in the future by announcing that we will recruit another 1,100 apprentices this year. I recently spoke at Go-Ahead London's apprentice graduation event, where more than 150 apprentice bus drivers received their qualifications. It's a fantastic achievement for them after what must have been a strange year and introduction to Go-Ahead.

Our oldest apprentice – Bob Bryce, who's 76 and works for GTR, has

become something of a media celebrity. His story shows us all that you can continue to learn and push yourself at any age. A big well done to Bob and everyone who got involved in National Apprenticeship Week.

Looking forward, we are hopeful that shortly the government will publish a National Bus Strategy. There have been strategies for walking, cycling, rail and aviation for years so we're pleased the importance of buses is finally being recognised.

Until next month,

David Brown,  
Group Chief Executive



## We're admired...

The results are in for this year's Britain's Most Admired Companies report (BMAC) – which measures corporate reputation as judged by competitors and financial analysts. We achieved the highest score of all transport companies (including airlines) for 'Community & Environmental Responsibility' (7.4/10) and joint highest (with Easyjet and International Airlines Group) for 'Effective Corporate Governance'.

Watch the video on LinkedIn



# All aboard the vaccination bus

A vaccine is coming to you



You've heard of vaccinations in GPs surgeries, stadiums and village halls – now get ready for vaccinations on board buses. Metrobus, Oxford Bus Company and Go North East have all been rolling out roving vaccination buses to tackle hard-to-reach areas.

Metrobus launched one of the first Covid-19 Mobile Vaccination Units in January in Crawley, in conjunction with the Alliance for Better Care – who represent GPs in the area. The bus was adapted by Metrobus engineers,

by removing handrails and seats to create more room for medical staff and their equipment. The inbuilt one-way system and dual doors of the bus facilitate a one in, one out approach.

Oxford Bus Company has converted a single decker vehicle into a mobile vaccination treatment bus that can deliver up to 865 tests and 540 vaccinations a day. It was designed to help reduce waiting lists in rural areas. Dubbed 'Project Move', the bus is in partnership with agency 40two.

Brighton & Hove and Metrobus Managing Director Martin Harris said: "We are exceptionally pleased and proud to get behind the rollout of the vital NHS Covid-19 vaccination programme, especially when it helps vulnerable people and hard-to-reach communities get their vaccines."

Oxford Bus Company Managing Director Phil Southall said: "We're proud to be providing support as part of the national effort to get the whole population vaccinated as soon as possible. Whether it be taking people to vaccination centres or taking vaccination centres to people, we are playing our part in the national effort. We have up to 10 vehicles that could be converted to vaccination centres as part of Project Move and returned to service later to provide a use for our vehicles whilst services are operating at reduced levels in line with government guidance."



# Vaccine drives



Many of our **Go-Ahead Singapore** colleagues have received their first dose of the vaccination and awaiting their second. This is part of Singapore's vaccination programme for the land transport workers to be protected from Covid-19.



**Oxford Bus Company** has partnered with Stagecoach to provide direct services and improved connectivity to a new mass vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium in Oxford. Between 8,000 and 10,000 people will be vaccinated at the hub weekly. This was made possible by working with Oxfordshire County Council and with support from the Government's Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBBBSG).



**Go East Anglia** is launching a 'We're doing our best to keep you safe' campaign that is focused on sharing how they keep buses clean and safe for passengers.



**Go North East** has added two additional shuttle bus services to further improve public transport links to the vaccination centre at the NHS Nightingale Hospital North East at the Sunderland International Innovation Centre.





## The year of the Ox

### Celebrating Chinese New Year

Our operating companies celebrated Lunar New Year at the beginning of February. Go-Ahead Singapore welcomed distinguished guests to its Loyang depot. This included the Minister for Trade and Industry Mr Chan Chun Sing, Senior Minister of State for Ministry for Transport and Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mr Chee Hong Tat and Executive Secretary of the National Transport Workers' Union, Mr Melvin Yong. They distributed red packets and oranges and exchanged greetings with colleagues.

Meanwhile, Go-Ahead London colleague Hoo Tang shared his experiences of Lunar New Year in the UK on the company's social media. He said "It's the start of a new year and we celebrate for a more prosperous and better year to come. We always give red envelope gifts to kids and usually enjoy parade line dancing shows."



Our attitudes  
Down-to-earth

## Weathering the storm

### Working through a landslip

Torrential rainfall, freezing temperatures and more than a dusting of snow are all major headaches for the operational railway – with a number of weather-related incidents affecting older infrastructure this winter.



Southeastern had more than its fair share of challenges, that has triggered extended line closures for essential repairs. As ever, the whole railway family pulled together to head off any major disruption, with swiftly-organised replacement transport getting key worker passengers where they needed to be. With the restoration work set to last for generations to come, the railway's resilience is assured for the remainder of the pandemic and beyond.

Our attitudes Agile

## Snow is falling

### Enjoy these cold winter snaps

It's been a cold few weeks up in East Yorkshire, with bus colleagues taking these great photos of buses in the snow. Meanwhile, Travel Centre Advisor Abigail Thompson organised the distribution of unclaimed lost property to a homeless shelter. In the last few weeks she's taken some warm winter coats, tinned food such as soup, and a tent (which was left on a National Express coach!) to drop off at the local shelter.

Our attitudes  
Down-to-earth

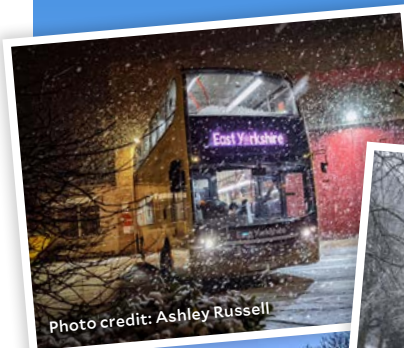


Photo credit: Ashley Russell



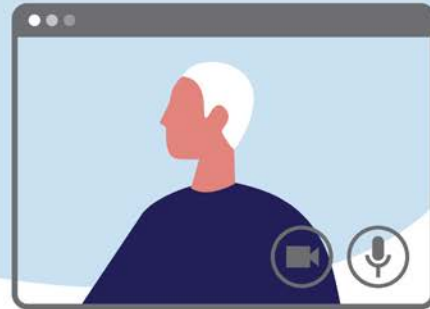
Photo credit: Richard Grantham



Photo credit: Beverley Westwood and James Wordsworth

## TIME TO TALK DAY

### 4 February 2021



### Mental health shouldn't be stigmatised

Go South Coast supported this month's 'Time to Talk' day to encourage colleagues to stay in touch with one another.

Nikki Honer, Head of Marketing for Go South Coast said: "We know how challenging the past year has been for our colleagues, with many continuing to work throughout – providing vital bus services for key workers across the region.

"Staff engagement has always been important to all of us at Go South Coast – and it's now more

important than ever. With this in mind, we're making sure colleagues know we're thinking of them – and that we're proud of the huge efforts they have made to keep the region moving.

We're also asking them to check on a workmate they may not have spoken to in a while, whether that is due to them not meeting up in the canteen, or whether they may have been furloughed.

Time to Talk Day was the ideal time to double check that colleagues are

happy, and make sure they know they have our full support to help get them through these difficult times."

Our attitudes Agile

## Mental health matters

### How we're helping colleagues across our bus companies

We are training a mental health first aider in each of our UK and Irish bus companies as part of our commitment to colleagues' mental health. We want to ensure that mental health is discussed openly across our companies and that you understand what resources and support are available.

Brighton & Hove Buses kickstarted its mental health initiative in 2020, putting forward more than ten colleagues for mental health first aid training. These colleagues have played an instrumental part of supporting the city's bus workers during the pandemic.

As of February 2021, in-house mental health first aider training has been completed by participants at the Oxford Bus Company, Go South West, Go South Coast, Go-Ahead London, Go North West and Go-Ahead Ireland. Go North East and Go East Anglia will soon be going through the training.

GTR and Southeastern have established mental health programmes, with Southeastern leading the way in the rail industry, with more than 20 fully trained mental health advocates.

Sam Facey, Go-Ahead's Head of Zero Harm said: "The pandemic has hit mental health hard across the country and it's difficult to find someone who hasn't been affected. It is our duty as an employer to ensure that our colleagues know what support is available."

"By training a representative in each of our bus companies as a mental health first aider, we can start to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health by providing practical and emotional support."



Our beliefs  
One step ahead



# Happy Mondays

## A bright way to start the week

The ongoing lockdown – on top of dark nights and some seriously challenging weather – has made the past few months harder than most, with the light at the end of the tunnel not so easy to spot on some days. To help colleagues tackle the tension, Southeastern created the concept of ‘Monday Motivation’ – a ten-week series of activities and health tips, exploring a different topic at the start of each week.

With a network-wide Bake Off and Pancake Day challenge already done and dusted, there’s been a real culinary flavour so far. There have been topics focusing on dancing, pets, and a virtual treasure hunt is set to come.



# All electric route

## Overcoming obstacles to drive innovation

Go-Ahead London has launched a fully electric route from Northumberland Park garage. However, the first night didn’t quite go to plan when the electric charging system displayed 21 chargers offline. With all 19 vehicles on the

184 being electric, a shortage of charge would have put the whole route in jeopardy.

Thankfully the Northumberland Park managed to get it all resolved by the morning, working through the night to solve challenges that might have caused a huge delay to the service.

Peter Russell, General Manager of Northumberland Park said of the unusual launch, “I am used to sharing the news about a Northumberland Park implementation proudly, sharing how smoothly the first bus took off for the first time ready for customers, but we had serious issues to overcome with the charging system this time round. It is truly a time a to celebrate when a new route joins the company, but we must never underestimate the hours and hours of countless hard work put in by colleagues at the garage prior to the first day of operation. A big well done to the whole team”.



# A luxury ride

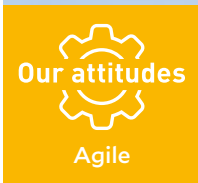
## Travelling in style

Go North East has introduced luxury coaches on its ‘X10 express’ route, which runs between the cities of Middlesbrough and Newcastle. The executive coaches come with free WiFi, contactless payment, USB charging, luxury reclining seats, next stop announcements and an accessible seating area.

The route is both cheaper and more luxurious than the train, with a return ticket costing just £8 between Middlesbrough and Newcastle, and unlimited travel available for £8.50 a day or £35 a week. The journey time

from Middlesbrough to Newcastle is also comparable with the train when you consider the city centre bus stops on offer, compared to the walking time from rail stations to town and city centres.

Stephen King, commercial director at Go North East, said: “These coaches provide extra comfort and a first-class travel experience, running fast and direct along the A19. They will also play an important part in delivering congestion-busting low-carbon travel to help support the economic recovery of the region.”



# Books from buses

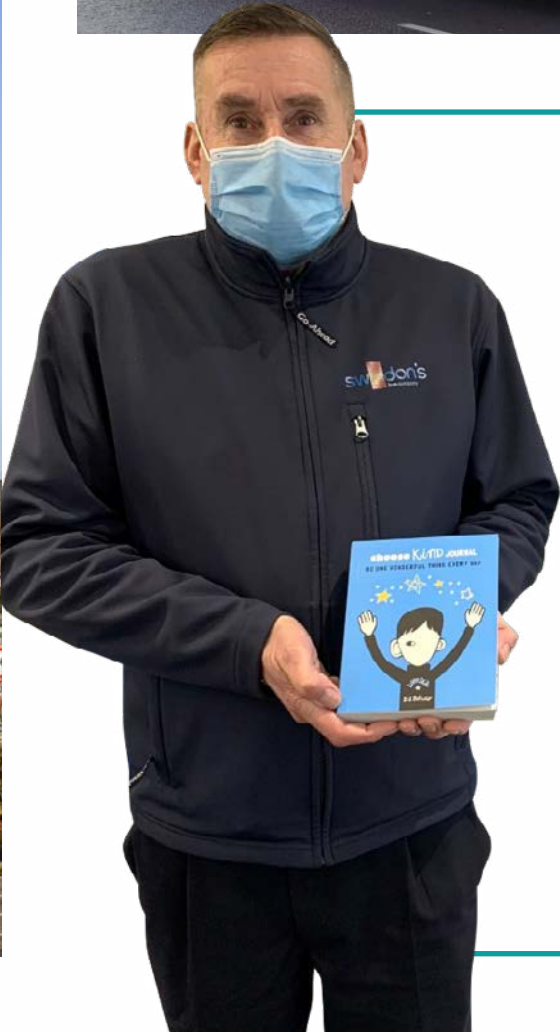
## Encouraging young ones’ imagination

Swindon’s Bus Company has teamed up with Swindon Stories to distribute a special book to children in the town. Run by the National Literacy Trust, Swindon Stories has taken delivery of some ‘Choose Kind’ journals, which have been donated so that local youngsters can write their thoughts and make a commitment to do one wonderful thing everyday.

Swindon Bus Company’s General Manager said: “Swindon Stories received a number of journals as a donation, and asked us if we could help get them to as many children as possible. We’re very conscious that the nation is currently in lockdown,

and people should only make essential journeys, so we came up with an idea.

“We placed 90 copies of the journal at the Swindon’s Bus Company travel shop in Fleming Way. We invited parents to reserve a slot and come and pick up a book whilst they were in the immediate area for their shopping. We ensured social distancing for those who are interested. The mental health of our youngsters is so important at this very challenging time, and anything that we could do to help was worth doing.”





# Investing in Apprenticeships

## Welcoming more apprentices on board

We will hire more than 1,100 apprentices in 2021, including 700 bus driving apprentices and engineers at Go-Ahead London. This news came in advance of National Apprenticeship Week, where many of our companies got involved in sharing stories from our apprentices across the business.

At Go-Ahead London, more than 100 drivers graduated through the scheme and were presented with awards. At the virtual ceremony, apprentices heard from Managing Director John Trayner, who himself started as an apprentice. He spoke about his family's career in buses and how it influenced him.

Go-Ahead Chief Executive David Brown also congratulated the apprentices in a video, discussing how bus driver apprentices had made a real difference throughout the pandemic. Meanwhile, Chemaïne Russell won Apprentice of the Year while Cally Meagar won the Outstanding Customer Service Award.

Over at GTR, 76-year-old apprentice Bob Bryce appeared on TV and in newspapers to share his story.

He started his career in the railway in 1999 and is now a passenger host and team leader at Luton station. He's currently completing his Level 3 Supervisor apprenticeship.

He said: "I was hesitant to do the apprenticeship at first because of my age – I left school over 60 years ago without any qualifications! It's been hard at times to get back into the routine of learning again.

"I was really enjoying the physical lessons where you learn as part of the group but because of the pandemic everything had to switch to becoming virtual, which was another challenge I had to overcome."

"If I'd had my time again, I would've got a job in the railway as soon as I could. It's a job for life and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn new things at my age. I don't want to retire anytime soon! I want to keep my brain active and working and I would encourage anyone in later life to consider an apprenticeship because you're never too old to learn something new."

### ★ ★ ★ CONGRATULATIONS ★ ★ ★



Chemaïne Russell



Bob Bryce



Simone Axten

## Game changer Drive a train from home



Southeastern made its first foray into the virtual world last month, as its flagship Highspeed fleet took on a starring role in a hotly-anticipated video game. An update for Dovetail Games' Train Sim World 2 – available on PC, XBOX and PlayStation – showcases the company's Javelin trains in all their splendour, allowing fans to pilot the fleet across a virtual version of the network.

Featuring state-of-the-art graphics and true-to-life track, signalling and stock, it's taken the sim gaming world by storm – with real-life Drivers even queuing up to take a turn at the controls. "Whilst it's a lot harder to train as an actual Driver, taking twelve months, this offers a great snapshot of the experience," said Highspeed Driver Trevor Ottaway "The scenery is incredibly accurate, too – the overbridges and platform buildings look just like the real thing!"

Our attitudes  
Down-to-earth

## Brand the Bus

### Oxford Bus Company crowns this year's winner

Oxford Bus Company has confirmed children's brain tumour charity Blue Skye Thinking as the winner of its eagerly contested Brand the Bus competition. The charity has been invited to work with Oxford Bus Company to design a bus wrap featuring the brand colours, logo, and messages of the organisation.

It was selected by a judging panel from a top ten group of good causes which had earned the most public votes from 23 original entries. 7,165 unique online votes were cast for the entries made by charities and good causes, almost 1,000 more votes than in the previous year's competition.

The company has also awarded the space on a bus rear for branding to second placed Abingdon Riding for the Disabled Association, a charity that enriches the lives of disabled adults and children via horses.



## Peddle power Paul to ride across Britain

### Cycling for a good cause

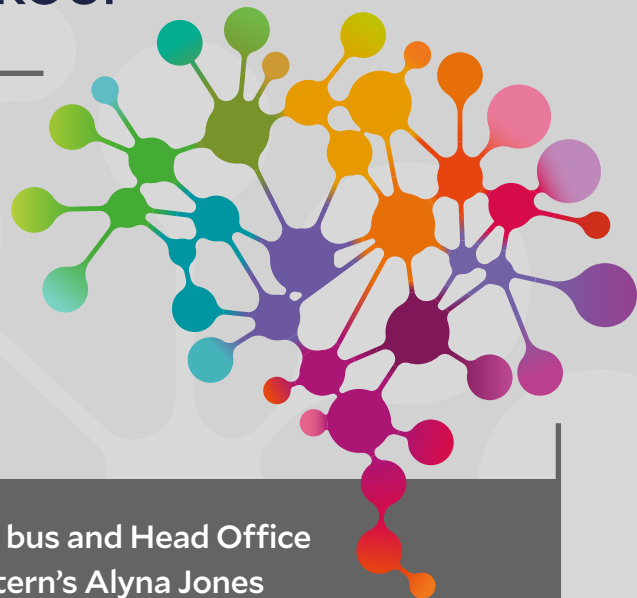
Konectbus driver and keen cyclist Paul Goldsmith has signed up to complete the 2021 Deloitte Ride across Britain – cycling from John O'Groats to Lands End. He will cover the 980 miles in just nine days while raising money for Prostate Cancer.

He said: "Towards the end of April 2020 I started getting out on my road bike again. It was a few miles to start with, then 300 miles in May. June saw me do over 500 miles and in July I did my first 100-mile day bike ride. By September I managed over 2,500 miles and lost over 1.5 stone in weight (21lbs/9.5kg) and the miles kept clocking up as the months go by."

Our attitudes  
Agile



# Coping through Covid



**In March we will be rolling out pulse surveys across UK bus and Head Office to find out what you think on a regular basis. Southeastern's Alyn Jones discusses how giving feedback is essential for us helping you.**

This has been an extremely challenging time for everyone, and of course, unlike anything we've ever experienced before.

Keeping our colleagues safe and well, and feeling engaged and supported, has been a top priority throughout – on top of the basics of creating a Covid-secure workplace, we've worked hard to keep colleagues well-informed, and to ensure their questions and concerns can be heard. Providing individual support for colleagues self-isolating or shielding has also been a huge piece of the puzzle – with our Keeping in Touch scheme creating lasting friendships through regular chats and phone calls.

Aside from the physical health risks of Covid, the mental health impact has been staggering – colleagues' anxiety levels have naturally been heightened, and this of course has had a knock-on effect on mental wellbeing in general.

We're fortunate to have a wide range of support services in place – such as our peer-to-peer Mental Health Advocates programme, and a close relationship with our Railway Chaplain – which have been able to support a huge number of colleagues through these challenges. To give you an idea of the scale, we carried out over 1,200 mental health interventions through signposting in 2020, with all signs pointing to an equally busy 2021.

To support these more formal pathways, we've also introduced a number of everyday resources in response to pulse survey feedback – from virtual workshops and webinars, to fact sheets on key health concerns, and on-demand yoga and mindfulness sessions. We continue to collaborate both internally and externally, to find new ways to engage with and support colleagues as the pandemic continues. Our latest initiative, weekly

'Monday Motivation' emails, provide a little light relief through the latest lockdown.

It's still too early to know the long-term impact of Covid on colleagues' wellbeing – but it's clear that mental health will continue to be affected for years to come, with anxiety and depression both on the rise.

We also expect to see an increase in longer-term physical health conditions, perhaps as a result of lack of exercise or a poorer diet than usual – putting people at increased risk of things like heart disease and diabetes. In addition, people may not have seen their GP throughout the pandemic. This means that new health conditions could go undiagnosed until later down the line – in the case of cancer, this could have devastating consequences.

It's vital that we encourage colleagues to get any concerns checked out – as well as re-introduce our own health fairs and health check roadshows, as soon as it's safe and practical to do so.

