

Journeys taken care of

Go North East
Sustainability Report 2020





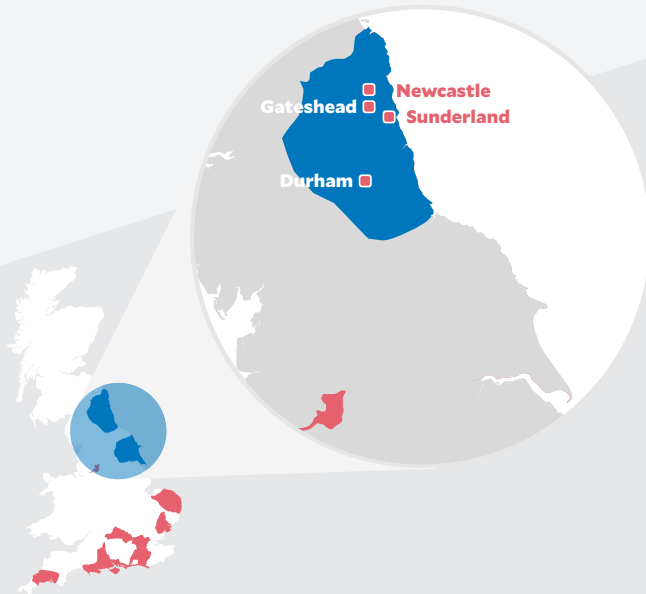
For over 100 years, Go North East has connected the region's towns and villages with the cities of Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland. We operate across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and into Tees Valley, as well as our East Yorkshire subsidiary that covers Hull, Scarborough and York. East Yorkshire is now covered in a separate report.

We are proud to employ over 2,000 local people, with around 175,000 journeys made on our bus services every day by our fleet of around 650 buses and coaches.

By providing essential bus services, Go North East helps people connect with each other and get where they want to go, enabling access to education, retail and employment.

We place great importance on partnership, adopting a collaborative approach with local governments, local communities and strategic partners, and we are committed to providing our communities with affordable and reliable transport.

Go North East is part of the Newcastle based Go-Ahead Group plc. Go-Ahead is one of the UK's leading public transport providers.



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Find out more...

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Website:
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Our reporting structure

We are committed to operating our buses in a way which helps to put our services at the heart of the communities they serve.

This report is split into six sections:

Finance

To operate our business and services in an open and transparent way

→ Read more on page 04

Safer working

To provide safe working environments for our people and our customers

→ Read more on page 05

Stronger communities

To increase positive and proactive engagement with the communities we serve

→ Read more on page 06

Happier customers

To provide a safe, reliable service to our customers

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Better teams

To constantly develop our people

→ Read more on page 10

Cleaner environment

To look at the way in which we can reduce our impact on the environment

→ Read more on page 12

Managing Director's message



2020 highlights

- £89m revenue in the North East, which includes government COVID-19 CBSSG support
- 46m journeys in the North East
- Investment into new, greener, high-specification buses to help revolutionise bus travel, as well as the region's first latest generation zero-emission, full electric buses set to arrive in November 2020
- 93% overall customer satisfaction with 93% satisfaction in Tyne and Wear and 94% satisfaction in County Durham
- New tickets and simplification of others to make travel affordable across the region
- The launch of NEbus, a collaboration of North East bus operators to call for buses to have a higher profile, and for stakeholders to recognise the huge steps forward the industry has made in recent years

“Welcome to our Sustainability Report for 2020. Key highlights in the year have included investment in high-specification buses to help revolutionise bus travel, as well as the region's first latest generation zero-emission, full electric buses set to arrive in November 2020. Substantial progress has also been made in taking stakeholder engagement and collaborative working to new levels through the NEbus operators' group.”

Martijn Gilbert
Managing Director

As I look back over the year, I can say that it has definitely been a busy and exciting year, with a number of new initiatives underway to help transform our company, but with the coronavirus outbreak it has also been an unprecedented year. I'm exceptionally proud of the way our team has handled every single aspect, pulling together with the people of the North East as one driving force.

Back in July 2019, we simplified our adult fares and ticketing zones, moving from seven zones to just four zones, creating more value for our customers by allowing them to travel further for their money from just £5.30 a day and £20 a week or less, with cheaper tickets also available in local saver zones.

Following on from the simplification of our adult fares and tickets, in September 2019 we made changes to our offering for young travellers. Anyone aged up to 25 can now buy discounted tickets when they travel with us, which helps support their mobility into further education and early employment.

We have continued our award-winning achievements with more accolades, including the Princess Royal Training Award, and we have also been involved with major regional events including the Great North Run and Sunderland International Airshow.

In August 2019, we played a key role in the launch of 'NEbus', the reinvigorated operators' association of local bus companies including ourselves, Arriva North East, Stagecoach North East and a number of smaller operators.

NEbus was launched to call for buses to have a higher profile and for stakeholders to recognise the huge steps forward that the industry has made in recent years. As already done in places like Brighton, Harrogate, Nottingham, Oxford, Rossendale, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton and others, NEbus aims to work more collaboratively in partnership with authorities to enable local bus services to be even more successful in supporting the economy of the North East.

We have also continued with the roll out of our premium 'X-lines' inter-urban brand, with consistent standards of high quality buses on express services, better promoting our longer distance commuting and leisure service offering.

X-lines services now connect much of the region's towns and villages with the cities of Durham, Sunderland and Newcastle.

In February 2020, we hosted the Go-Ahead Group's 'Women in Bus' gender diversity conference as part of our commitment to get more women working in the industry - with a target of increasing female representation in bus across the whole of Go-Ahead Group from 11% to 20% by 2025.

Throughout the year, we've championed the great women we have working here in the North East, from apprentices to drivers, and admin staff to senior managers, all with the aim of encouraging more women to consider public transport as a career.

In March, as everyone knows, the coronavirus outbreak had a substantial impact on the amount of people using public transport, with only key workers and essential travel permitted as per government guidelines.

As we started to move out of lockdown, we've seen numbers start to increase and we're now well underway with a number of initiatives to get people out and about travelling again, reconnecting with the faces and places they love.

New buses that were ordered prior to the COVID-19 crisis have also started to arrive, with significant improvements to Consett as part of the £4.5million investment in the area.

Electric buses are also set to arrive in November and they'll be the first fleet of zero-emission buses in the region.



X-lines buses for Consett, our latest instalment in the roll out of our premium express brand

Finances

In February, we welcomed a new Finance Director, Erik de Greef, to help drive forward our growth and continuous improvement strategy.

Erik brings a wealth of experience, having previously worked as commercial Finance Director at FTSE 100 company, Sage.

Erik was also formerly Head of Group Financial Planning and Analysis at the Sunderland headquartered pan-European transport operator Arriva and started out his career as a trainee auditor with KPMG.

Creating better value for our customers

Over the year, there has been a focus on creating better value for our customers with a number of improvements to fares and tickets.

In 2019, we simplified our adult fares and tickets, by reducing our seven zones structure to just four zones, as well as reducing a number of prices. This was wrapped up in a 'Better Fares' campaign, with customers able to travel from just £5.30 a day and £20 a week, and even cheaper in local saver zones.

Our under 19 single fare remained popular and we made improvements on our offerings for young travellers.

As part of our '5 to 25' campaign, we extended the discount to anyone aged up to and including 25 year olds, helping people travel cheaply through their education and into early employment, before the transition to adult fares and tickets.

The extension allows those aged between five and 25 to buy a day ticket for just £4.50 or a weekly ticket for £17, saving up to 43% on the equivalent adult all zone ticket prices.



Key highlights

£89m

revenue at Go North East
(includes government COVID-19 CBSSG support)

46m

customer journeys on Go North East buses

2,000

average number of employees across Go North East



Safer working

At Go North East, we're proud of the safe working environments we provide our colleagues, as well as making sure our buses are as safe as possible for our customers.

In March, as lockdown hit and regulations were introduced, we acted swiftly for both the benefit of our colleagues and customers.

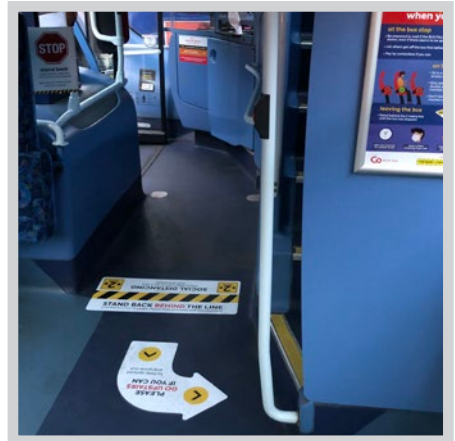
One-way systems and extra measures to ensure social distancing were introduced, allowing our team members to work safely across their locations.

Additional cleaning regimes of vehicles were brought in at depots, with touch point cleaning also introduced at main interchanges across the region.

Drivers and support teams were also issued with additional PPE, including face coverings, hand sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes.

Driver protection screens were also enhanced on cabs to help protect both team members and customers.

Home working for office-based colleagues was also facilitated and encouraged.



Stronger communities

This year at Go North East, we were proud to be involved with a number of activities in the community, but nothing makes us as proud as looking back to see how our colleagues, customers and the rest of the region has united as one driving force against the coronavirus outbreak.

Throughout lockdown and beyond, we've been involved in a series of activities to help put the smiles back on people's faces.

Our team has raised well over £10,000 for various local charities and causes, all nominated by our workforce, with people coming together to help the NHS and a whole host of other organisations.

We've had the children of colleagues and drivers draw rainbow images that have featured on our buses to show our appreciation for all NHS staff, key workers and even our own team members.

We also carried out a number of 'Clap for our Carers' activities across the region to recognise those working so hard to fight the virus.

In addition to this, over bank holiday weekends we encouraged team members to wear bright, colourful clothing to champion key workers and those on the frontline. This helped add a bit of cheer in what truly were unprecedented times.

Team members at our Consett depot even took this a step further, creating a heart-warming, fun video explaining life on the buses.

The video showed colleagues dancing to Madness song 'House of Fun' and Queen's hit



Photo taken by one of our customers of bus driver Andrew Wade wearing fancy dress over the Easter weekend

'I Want to Break Free', but also came with the important underlying message of asking people to stay at home to protect the NHS and other key workers.

This resulted in a letter of praise and appreciation from Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham, Sue Snowdon, and feedback across social media and beyond for all of our activities was hugely positive.

Toiletries for the NHS and local hospitals

To help the NHS during the crisis, we also used our fleet of buses as a distribution network, encouraging people making essential journeys to pack a bag of toiletries and other items and bring them to one of our buses so we could distribute them.

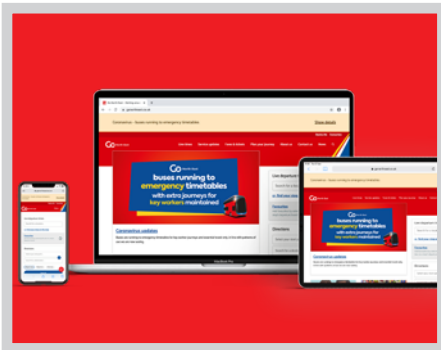
New website to improve customer confidence

We also brought forward the launch of our new website to help key workers and those making essential journeys, with a whole host of new and improved features, which we've continued to work on.

The new site includes live times and interactive maps, improved journey planning and displaying of timetables, better service updates, plus the ability to favourite bus stops, timetables and journeys for quick and easy access.

The improvements didn't end there. In readiness for non-essential travel to resume, we worked with tech partner CitySwift to develop 'When2Travel', a dynamic colour-coded online timetable tool to help passengers plan journeys at quieter times.

This allowed customer to see a forecast of how busy their bus was going to be, supplemented by a live 'how many seats' feature which we also added to our site to show in real-time if a bus is 'quiet', 'moderately busy' or 'busy', allowing our customers to travel in confidence and to maintain social distancing.



Awards

Princess Royal Training Award

We received a royal seal of approval for our unique Bus Driver Routeway training programme, which helps unemployed people get back into work. Of the 250 learners who have undertaken the programme, success at interview rose from 27% to 76% and learners gaining employment increased from 9% to 44%.

Nacro Ambassador Hub trophy

We received the Nacro Ambassador Hub trophy for going the extra mile to help excel disadvantaged young people's education. The 'inspire' sessions offer 15 to 18 year olds, who live in some of the most deprived areas of the North East, the opportunity to get hands on experience with us. To date, every youngster that has taken part in the visits have all progressed to higher education or employment.

Engineer of the Year at the routeone Awards

Colin Barnes, our engineering director, was named 'Engineer of the Year' in October, with judges noting that "he has so much 'oomph' it is unbelievable."

Starting out as an apprentice aged just 17, Colin has worked his way up and credits Go North East for being a company that really does value and invest in its people.

Happier customers

Bus travel in the North East was given the thumbs up, with our customers reporting steady increases in satisfaction across a number of areas in the latest Bus Passenger Survey from the Transport Focus watchdog.

93% customer satisfaction

Once again, we scored highly in the independent Autumn 2019 Bus Passenger Survey, with our customers giving us an overall satisfaction rating of 93%.

The figure improves upon the previous year, with an increase of 1% as well as individual improvements in County Durham and Tyne and Wear, with latest scores at 94% and 93%, respectively.

The survey revealed steady increases in satisfaction across a number of areas of Go North East services – including satisfaction with on-bus journey times, the information provided in the bus and the comfort of the seats, among others.

The importance of social and environmental responsibility and the satisfaction of the temperature inside the bus improved the most, both increasing by 5%. Other factors

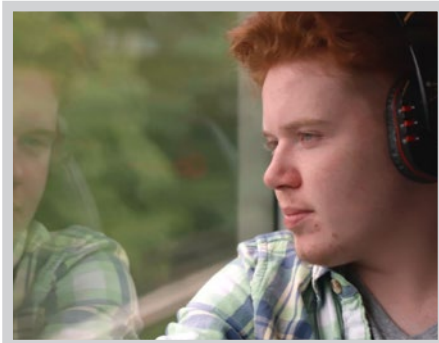
highlighted positively include the safety of driving, which increased by 2% to 93%.

The report follows another year of investment to improve the customer experience, including the introduction of simplified fare structures and new state of the art buses.

Our Managing Director, Martijn Gilbert, said: “As the region’s largest bus operator, we place huge value on passenger satisfaction, so we welcome this research. Put simply, our towns and cities would grind to a halt if everyone who got the bus was in a car. That means we have a responsibility to provide a reliable, convenient and comfortable service, and it’s something we take very seriously.”

“We continually strive to offer a good value for money service that meets all of our customers’ needs, and we’ll use the results to further improve on our customer experience.”

- 83% satisfaction with the importance of social and environmental responsibility – 5% up on previous year
- 85% satisfaction with the temperature inside the bus – 5% up on previous year
- 86% satisfaction with the amount of personal space – 4% up on the previous year
- 93% satisfaction with the safety of the driving – up 2% on previous year
- 90% satisfaction with personal security whilst on the bus – up 2% on previous year
- 90% satisfaction with provision of grab rails – up 2% on previous year
- 92% satisfaction with on-bus journey time – up 2% on previous year
- 77% satisfaction with information provided inside the bus – up 1% on previous year
- 92% satisfaction with the availability of seating – up 1% on previous year
- 87% satisfaction with the comfort of the seats – up 1% on previous year





Customer feedback



“Just before 12pm at Whitley Bay, one of your drivers saw an elderly lady who had fallen over and couldn’t get back up and went to assist. This lady could’ve been stuck if it wasn’t for him.”

6 December 2019



“Well done to the driver who picked up a 12 year old girl on his journey last night and all seemed well until she told him she was on the wrong bus. She was very upset and had no way of getting in touch with her parents as her phone had died. He informed me he was taking a little detour so he could get her home safely. What a lovely thing to do. Huge well done.”

4 December 2019



“I was driving down past the school about 10.30am this morning and an elderly woman was waiting on the opposite side of the road, but no cars were letting her cross to get the bus. The bus driver noticed, pulled the bus over then crossed the road to her. He then linked her arm, walked her across the road and got her on the bus safely. Hats off to him! It was so nice to see him caring and making sure she was okay and made sure she never missed her bus.”

21 October 2019



Connect with us on social media:

Twitter: @gonortheast

Facebook: simplyGNE

Instagram: @gonortheast

Better teams

Recently, our parent company, the Go-Ahead Group launched a campaign to encourage more women to apply for jobs in the industry.

The roles we're looking to recruit more women in include bus drivers, maintaining vehicles and managing depots.

In addressing the long-standing lack of gender diversity in public transport, Go-Ahead is taking steps to encourage women to take up positions in its bus companies. Its efforts include:

- Setting a company-wide target to increase female representation of the bus workforce from 11% to 20% by 2025
- Establishing a 'Women in Bus' employee network, open to all, to support, develop and empower female colleagues
- Creating female-focused recruitment campaigns, open days and training opportunities
- Continuing to build its high quality bus driver apprenticeship programme

Go-Ahead employs 14,000 people in its UK bus companies. Historically, very few women have worked in frontline roles in public transport – an issue common across both bus and rail. Go-Ahead's companies are implementing recruitment campaigns and creating initiatives to showcase opportunities, with the aim of doubling the number of women in their workforce over the coming years.

Women and men of all ages and backgrounds travel on our buses. We want our workforce to reflect the diversity of our passengers and communities they serve and there are great opportunities for women to work in our bus businesses. Equality is at the heart of our



culture and we are committed to attracting more females into roles throughout the business.

We place a premium on an inclusive and diverse workforce and research has shown that women are more likely to aim high where they can see women in leadership positions. Not too long ago, Go-Ahead appointed Elodie Brian as its first female Chief Financial Officer, so we are challenging stereotypes and leading the way in securing skills from the widest possible talent pool.

Go-Ahead's 'Women in Bus' network will provide visible role models to colleagues, and create a forum for women to raise issues, share experiences and support each other.

In February, we hosted the 'Women in Bus' conference in Newcastle.

80% of the conference attendees were female from nearly 50 representatives from Go-Ahead's bus operations across the UK.

The conference included presentations on research into what attracts candidates into roles in the bus profession, sharing of best practice from across the Group's bus companies and discussions on how vacancies can be better advertised to a wider audience.

This included an interactive session where attendees hit the streets of Newcastle and Gateshead in small teams to make some vox pop videos about the important role buses play in the communities they serve and how roles in the bus industry have real purpose, making a difference to local people and the economy.

We already have a number of women working in roles across our company, including in engineering, support and driving roles.

There are some great opportunities working for us and providing bus services makes a real difference to the communities we serve, helping people access employment, education, healthcare, leisure and more. Driving a bus, for example, is something that colleagues often tell us is far easier than they ever imagined. It's a great industry to work in and we are looking forward to welcoming more colleagues to our team as a result of the 'Women in Bus' network.



Women in bus

20%

our target for female representation across Go-Ahead Group bus operations by 2025

Overall employees gender diversity



● Male: **90.3%**
● Female: **9.7%**

Senior Management gender diversity



● Male: **75%**
● Female: **25%**

Gender Pay Gap



Mean pay for men is **4.5%** higher than that of women, compared to the national average of **16.2%**

Cleaner environment

At Go North East, we've invested millions of pounds into new buses, and refreshed others, to ensure that they're clean, safe and comfortable.

X-lines

We have continued to roll out our premium X-lines brand on our express routes, with buses at our Consett depot being the latest to become part of the brand, thanks to a £4.5million investment.

This will be closely followed by our X1 service, with a £3million investment and other areas to come in the near future including Hexham.

Cleaner, better buses

We're excited to be welcoming our first set of electric buses, with nine due to arrive later in the year for services around Gateshead and Newcastle.



An electric bus on trial, ahead of nine arriving later this year



A Go North East X-lines bus outside Sage Gateshead

These new electric buses, with an investment figure of £2million, have been supported by top-up funding from the Government's Ultra Low Emission Bus Fund, with a view to purchasing more in the future.

The buses will form a key part of ongoing efforts to improve air quality and will be the first latest generation full electric buses capable of all-day service to operate in the North East.

We've been extensively trialling various electric bus types as the technology continues to evolve, with more expected to follow ahead of similar investment on other routes in the coming years.

170 extra clean Euro VI standard, low emission buses have also joined our fleet in recent years and there are more on the way as we continue our work to ensure that our buses provide a clean, safe and efficient way of getting around our region as the economy recovers, helping to ease congestion and improve air quality.

Key data: Go North East

| | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 |
|--|---------------|---------|---------|
| Cleaner environment | | | |
| Carbon emissions per vehicle mile (kg) | 1.45 | 1.49 | 1.51 |
| Happier customers | | | |
| Customer satisfaction (%) | 93 | 92 | 93 |
| Regional bus punctuality (%) | 91.2 | 91.4 | 91.2 |
| Safety | | | |
| Bus accidents per million miles | 15 | 18 | 15 |
| RIDDOR accidents per 100 employees | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| Fleet with CCTV (%) | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Bus fleet which is DDA/PSVAR compliant (%) | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Better teams | | | |
| Number of employees | 2,000 | 2,086 | 2,051 |
| Turnover rate (%) | 12.3 | 12.9 | 12.6 |
| Absenteeism rate (%) | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.6 |
| Female employees (%) | 9.7 | 10.2 | 8.9 |
| Technology | | | |
| Total app downloads | 91,790 | 155,000 | 53,000 |

Key

RIDDOR – Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations at workplaces
 DDA/PSVAR – Disability Discrimination Act and Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations



For information on the full Group data, please visit our corporate website: go-ahead.com

More information

You can find out more about Go North East by visiting our website gonortheast.co.uk and more information on how Go-Ahead Group manages sustainability can be found by visiting: go-ahead.com/sustainability

If you have any comments, views or ideas on how we might improve, or have any thoughts on other issues that we should address in this report, please write to:

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Summary Verification Statement from Bureau Veritas UK Ltd

Bureau Veritas UK Ltd (Bureau Veritas) has provided verification for The Go-Ahead Group plc (Go-Ahead) over selected sustainability indicators contained within the Group's Annual Report. The information and data reviewed in this verification process covered the period 30 June 2019 to 27 June 2020.

The full verification statement including Bureau Veritas' verification opinion, methodology, recommendations and a statement of independence and impartiality can be found on the Go-Ahead Group website:

www.go-ahead.com

go-ahead.com/sustainability



Bureau Veritas UK Ltd
October 2020

Designed by:

designportfolio