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A message from David Brown

Dear all,

It's been a busy and exciting month. The highlight in the UK was the launch of the National Bus Strategy by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

We have battled for many years to get the Government interested in buses. We now have a strategy for a vital yet neglected mode of transport with a serious intent to reverse the decline in passenger numbers. Go-Ahead has been vocal in calling for a National Bus Strategy and we're pleased that many of our suggestions were taken on board.

The Strategy will create opportunities to bring about faster, more frequent and greener buses. It will also bring some challenges around new ways of working with our local authority partners, but we will build on our collaborative approach and continually focus on providing the services that best meet the needs of our customers.

In other news, this month we announced the Group's half year results. We are continuing to demonstrate strong fundamentals, with 90% of our revenue being secured through contracts. The long-term success of our business involves growing our customer numbers, and we look forward to welcoming more passengers back as restrictions ease across the globe.

In the same week as our results, children returned to school in England. Once again our companies pulled out the stops to ensure that sufficient drivers and vehicles were in place. Our customers' and colleagues' health, safety and wellbeing continue to be our top priority, and we will continue to take all the necessary measures to ensure that passengers – including pupils – can travel to school safely.

This month also saw International Women's Day. You may have seen Natasha Smith, an apprentice assessor from Go-Ahead London on social media showing her 'day in the life'. Kirstie Bull, an operations Manager at Brighton & Hove Buses, also discussed her experiences for the CPT blog.

Meanwhile, Southeastern received national media coverage around Mother's Day when it revealed mother and daughter Cynthia and Vicki McGarry are both training to be train drivers at the same time. A lovely story.

Until next month,

David Brown,
Group Chief Executive

Half Year results

We revealed our half year results on 11 March 2021, reporting a resilient first half performance in challenging conditions. David Brown and Elodie Brian presented the results via video link and hosted a live Q&A with analysts. Initial feedback indicates that confidence in a post-Covid recovery is growing, especially as we forecast pent-up demand for leisure travel.



Go-Ahead reacts to National Bus Strategy



Buses are now in the spotlight

This month the UK Government launched its first ever National Bus Strategy. There has been a strategy for walking, cycling, rail and aviation for years but this is the first time that buses have had a dedicated strategy.

Prior to the announcement we published a video on our expectations. In the video Chief Executive David Brown, Go North East Managing Director Martijn Gilbert, Go South West Managing Director Richard Stevens and Go-Ahead Chief Strategy & Customer Officer Katy Taylor broke down why buses are important.

People with easy access to public transport have more chance of getting a job and are much less likely to be socially isolated and lonely. By working in partnership with local authorities, private companies can respond to demand effectively, delivering better services for all.

A full double-decker bus can take as many as 75 private cars off the road, so the benefits of buses in cutting pollution and reducing traffic jams are as clear as daylight. As a nation, we need to finally move on from the myth that bus use is only for those who can't afford a car."

David and Katy appeared on numerous programmes to discuss the strategy, including BBC Radio and Sky News.



[Click here to watch the full video](#)

Following the announcement, David Brown said:

"It's the right time to have a national strategy for buses. Bus usage has been in decline for seven years and if Britain is serious about becoming a carbon neutral nation, we urgently need to halt that decline and persuade people to leave their cars at home.

In order to do that, buses need to be quick, reliable and convenient. That means giving more bus priority including precedence for buses at traffic lights and tackling rush hour gridlock.



Celebrate with pride

Thinking back on LGBT+ history

Throughout February colleagues across Go-Ahead engaged with LGBT+ history month.

Go North East hosted a live talk with the National AIDS Trust, while three colleagues participated in videos to talk about their own experiences. The company also hosted a LGBT+ History Month quiz with live bingo, featuring local drag queen Mutha Tucka.

Meanwhile, Southeastern hosted a range of colleague events to reflect on the long journey taken by the railway's LGBT+ community. This included a first-of-its-kind webinar that was hosted by LGBT+ History Month co-founder Sue Sanders, as well as a stereotype-busting poster series starring one of Southeastern's proud LGBT+ colleagues, Dave Drewry.



Keeping mum

An extra meaning to 'railway family'

Cynthia and Vicki McCarry have made Southeastern history by being the first mum and daughter to train to be drivers at the same time.

Cynthia has worked at Southeastern in various roles since 2003, while Vicki joined in 2012 as a Passenger Host and On-Board Manager. They started their train driver training in August and September 2020.

Cynthia said: "I'm really enjoying training to be a driver and to do it alongside Vicki makes it even more special. I'm immensely proud of her and humbled to see her following in my footsteps to take on a lifelong career in rail. We're a very close knit family with my other daughter's husband also working for Southeastern at Ebbsfleet and Stratford, so doing this training together just gives us more to talk about around the dinner table!"



Our attitudes
Down-to-earth

Celebrating women

This month saw International Women's Day, with all our companies getting involved and sharing stories.

Sanitary support

Ten Southeastern locations are offering free sanitary products for colleagues. This is part of a 'Take One if You Need One' trial. It is offering eco-friendly pads and tampons in colleague bathrooms, as well as bespoke toolkits that provide female-focused advice for team members.



CLICK HERE to read the blog



Changing the game

Kirstie Bull, an Operations Manager at Brighton & Hove Buses, wrote a blog entry for the CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport) for International Women's Day. She discussed how we need to see more women driving buses, and the difficulties she has faced through the years – such as 'canteen talk' and how shift work can deter female applicants.

Macho men

A white paper report has revealed that two-thirds of women felt that the transport industry has a macho culture, and 70% of women believe the industry has an image problem. It is integral for us to be an inclusive, modern and forward-thinking business. At Go-Ahead we must focus on addressing these changes and continue to listen to women's experiences at every level.



A day in the life

Natasha Smith, Apprentice Assessor at Go-Ahead London, gave an insight into her role for International Women's Day. In the two-minute video she shows what it's like to be an assessor and why she wears a uniform, even when she's working from home.

CLICK HERE to watch the video



A flabbergasting find

How GTR reunited a grandfather with his childhood teddy bear

A small station in East Sussex turned out to be a treasure trove of historical artefacts. GTR contractors unearthed a strange hoard of abandoned objects at Bishopstone station, including 1950s electric equipment, 1970s car parts, a 1980s skateboard, fishing parts and vintage wooden skis.

The find appeared on the local news, which came to the attention of Guy Wright – a grandfather from the nearby town of Newhaven. His father had sold newspapers and fruit and vegetables from a railway station shop in the 1970s.



After contacting the Friends of Bishopstone station (the community partnership group), he was reunited with long-lost objects such as a tuck box, a teddy bear and the skateboard.

Barbara, the chair of the community partnership group said: "When Guy walked in and saw what we had it was like he was going back into his childhood. And then he spotted the bear. It was quite emotional – for both of us."



Our attitudes
Down-to-earth

A storied bus

Celebrating the community

Stories of hope, kindness and humanity have been brought to life on the sides of 24 new Brighton & Hove buses. The company went on a mission to find and celebrate people in the community. 15 people were chosen from the many nominations put forward.



Some of the people chosen were involved with supporting disabled families, others with keeping the city's tap water clean. Some run football sessions for disabled children while others connect isolated people or battle homelessness.

Brighton & Hove and Metrobus Managing Director Martin Harris said: "I've heard so many incredible stories of altruism and compassion

in this city over the years and felt it was time to recognise and celebrate the people behind those stories.

Even in the darkest of times, there are people who buoy up those around them with their life-changing work. It is a real privilege to share these touching stories more widely with everyone in Brighton and Hove and I applaud their efforts."



Our attitudes
Collaborative



Lest we forget

Remembering those who worked for us

Plymouth Citybus has restored and remounted a commemorative 'Death in Service' plaque that remembers our employees who died during the Second World War.

Bob Warwick-Pengelly at Plymouth Citybus used his expertise to restore the plaque to its former glory and it now proudly sits outside the entrance to Go South West's training facility at its Head Office in Milehouse, a suburb of Plymouth.

2021 marks 80 years since the Plymouth Blitz. This caused extensive destruction and devastation, including the bombing of the Milehouse depot.



A long service

Celebrating nearly 50 colleagues

Go-Ahead Singapore colleagues were rewarded for their dedication and commitment at the company's Long Service Award ceremony. 49 colleagues have completed between 10 to 40 years continuous service in public transport.

The company is proud to have such loyal and committed people and their contributions are nothing less than a mark of passion, perseverance and dedication.



Paw-fect helpers

Providing puppy training on buses

Go South Coast brand Bluestar has teamed up with Guide Dogs to provide vital bus travel experience for puppies in training.

The Southampton operator previously offered free travel across the city for staff, volunteers and their canine trainees, to give pups a chance to get used to hopping on-and-off buses. Now, restrictions during the pandemic have prevented this crucial aspect of their education.

Nikki Honer, Go South Coast's Head of Communications said:

"We were contacted by the charity, Guide Dogs, who were concerned that they couldn't progress travel training for puppies in Southampton during the Covid-19 pandemic - so we came up with an idea to help."

"They rely heavily on these special dogs to help them go about their daily lives, and we are delighted to be able to help. We wish all of the puppies much success as they continue their training."



A surprise present

A kind gift for London colleagues

At the beginning of March, Go-Ahead London's Stockwell Garage received a parcel sent from residents and children who live in Tooting, South London. The parcel contained several cards and treats, some of which were handmade, thanking and commending the G1 drivers who serve the area.

The G1 is a long, technically difficult route. It runs through residential areas, serving schools and hospital, while catering to vulnerable passengers. Colleagues at Stockwell really enjoyed the surprise treat, issuing a social media thank you to the residents.



Away we go

Another launch for our newest electric garage

Go-Ahead London successfully launched its 456 route from Northumberland Park this month. Northumberland Park is our newest electric bus garage, which will even feed back energy back to the National Grid. The new route runs on residential roads that were not previously served by buses.

The launch was successful, despite a blip where the buses initially didn't show on the internal app. Operations Director David Cutts and Area General Manager Trevor Johnson both congratulated the team for a job well done and a smooth transition.



Honey, honey

A busy bee travels a long way

Did you know that Oxford Bus Company makes its own in-house honey? Beehives were originally set up in 2017 as part of the company's commitment to biodiversity. Colleagues across the Group have been sharing their purchases over Twitter.

Martijn Gilbert, Managing Director of Go North East, posted a Tweet of him enjoying his honey on his morning toast. Meanwhile, Craig Virco's honey had travelled all the way to Ireland. The Forward Allocator at Dublin Commuter posted a picture outside a bus, asking if this was the furthest the honey had travelled.

Has anyone from Germany, Norway or Singapore ordered a pot? Let us know at communications@go-ahead.com



Truly excelling



Customer service comes out on top

Go-Ahead Singapore colleague Tay Yu Ying has proudly won the STAR award at the company's Excellent Service Award ceremony. Yu Ying has been a Customer Service Officer for three years, working at the Pasir Ris interchange passenger office. One of her daily duties involves helping people find lost property.

She says: "I feel that helping people is a part of my life. I have personally experienced difficult times when I needed help. After being on the receiving end, it is a really nice feeling to know that I can pay it forward!"



Bus travel rocks

Shining stones for drivers

Go East Anglia's recent 'Bus Travel Rocks' campaign has unveiled a few local artists. The campaign asks residents to leave colourful rocks at their bus stop to thank our key workers.



Helping the community



Go South West supports the elderly

Plymouth CityBus is supporting the community by donating 500 day vouchers to Age UK volunteers. It has already donated 1,000 vouchers since the start of 2020.

The impact of Covid-19 means that many older people feel isolated or lonely. Age UK supports these people through socially-distanced visits and phone calls.

Lynne Hodgson, Interim Deputy Chief Executive at Age UK Plymouth are extremely grateful to

Plymouth Citybus for their generosity in providing free dayrider travel vouchers for the Charity's volunteers. Many people have been kindly offering their time to help older people in our communities who are struggling with loneliness and feelings of isolation. As a charity, we rely heavily on volunteers to help us deliver vital services to thousands of older people across the city and this wonderful contribution from Citybus will make a real difference."



Roving vaccine centres



Surrey's first Covid vaccination bus has opened its doors

Metrobus now has two vaccination buses in operation. The first bus was launched in February in Crawley and was the UK's first mobile vaccination unit.

Brighton & Hove and Metrobus Managing Director Martin Harris said the bus company had received several enquiries from hospitals, GPs, and bus companies about setting up similar projects in other parts of the country since the arrival of the first vaccination bus in February.

Martin said: "That is what makes this joint project so exciting, because it can go on to benefit other communities in the UK. We are proud to have worked in partnership with the Alliance for Better Care and local councils to roll out the second vaccination bus, which forms part of the great work already done by the NHS Coronavirus vaccination programme."

Metrobus Night Controller Duncan Rolls also got his vaccine on the bus last month: "The bus was laid out really well. You get on via the front doors, get the vaccination in the wheelchair area and go down the ramp by the exit doors. It was quick, easy and, most of all, it was safe for people who are shielding or have health issues."



As the world changes, some things remain vital – and listening is one of them

Tom Moran – Managing Director, Thameslink & Great Northern gives his thoughts to this month's News Across the Group



If there's one thing I've learnt across my career, it's that you can never spend too much time listening to customers, colleagues and stakeholders. It was essential when I joined the railway in 2019 and, if anything, it's become even more important as we've navigated our way through the pandemic. That's why I spend as much of my time – socially distanced at the moment, of course – out and about across our network visiting stations and depots, and talking to the customers, councillors and businesses that make up the communities we serve.

Listening helps shape our purpose and creates a common commitment. I've never seen this better demonstrated than during the UK's incredible delivery of the London 2012 Olympics, which I was lucky enough to be a part of. As a keen runner, and proud resident of north-east London, those Games continue to inspire me. They showed how properly engaging with everyone affected by the Games – plus clear goals and an immovable deadline – focused heads and inspired hearts. I like to think that the incredible way in which Thameslink and Great Northern, and the rail industry as a whole, has responded to the COVID-19 crisis is just as good an example of how listening, combined with a business that has true leaders everywhere you look, can help you achieve great things.

Why will listening be so important in the future? It's simple. While 'brilliant basics' will always be important, customer expectations are changing. Our own research and London Travelwatch's new report, *The Journey Ahead*, confirms visible cleaning of trains and stations will remain a much bigger priority than it was before the pandemic. We don't just need to keep our trains clean and safe, customers need the reassurance of seeing us do the extra cleaning.

Listening helps in other areas. The £15m Passenger Benefit Fund has already improved over 250 GTR stations, based on what passengers and stakeholders said mattered most to them. From community artwork at Camberwell to electric vehicle charging points at Hatfield, demonstrating 'you said, we did' shows our customers we are listening and that coming back to the railway is the right choice for them and their families. It's also shown 'we're with you' to our frontline colleagues who've been doing such a fantastic job over the last year.

I'm really optimistic about the future of rail. If we keep listening to our customers and our colleagues, I don't think we can go far wrong.



London 2012 Olympics



Transport Secretary Grant Shapps opens rail's largest Electric Vehicle charging hub at Hatfield Station



GTR-Groundwork partnership planting programme begins

James Newell (left), Executive Director of Groundwork East, and Tom Moran, Managing Director of Thameslink and Great Northern, at Radlett to start the network-wide landscaping programme