

# Journeys taken care of

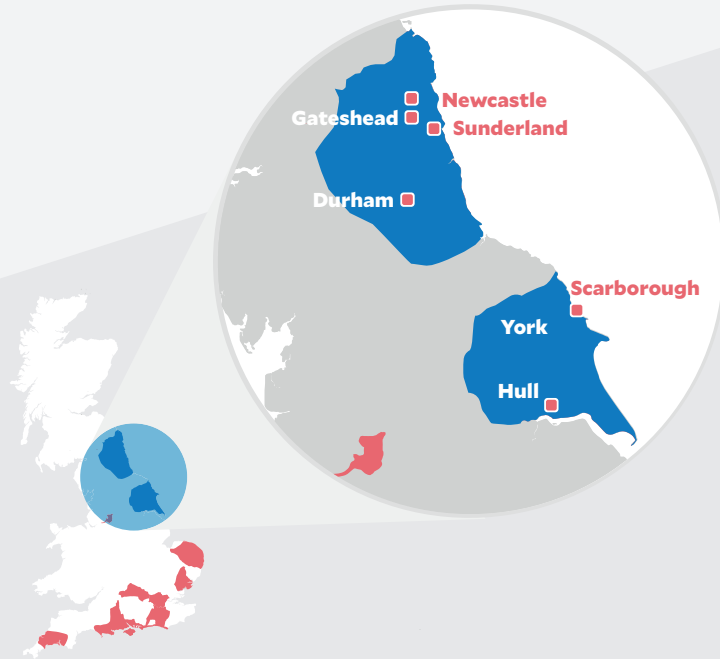
Go North East  
Sustainability Report 2019



Around 175,000 journeys are made on Go North East bus services every day to travel around our region. Travelling to work or education, to visit friends and family, to have a night out, or to visit one of the area's many tourist and leisure attractions.

For over 100 years, Go North East has connected the region's towns and villages with the cities of Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland and currently operates across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and into Tees Valley.

Go North East also acquired East Yorkshire in June 2018, and now employs around 2,100 people in the North East and 700 people in East Yorkshire. With an annual turnover of £101m in the North East and £31m in East Yorkshire, Go North East is a subsidiary of the Go-Ahead Group plc, one of the UK's leading providers of passenger transport.



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## Find out more...

### Twitter:

@gonortheast

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simplyGNE

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### Website:

gonortheast.co.uk



## 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 create better value for money for our customers.

→ [Read more on page 4](#)

### Smarter technology

To implement new market leading technology and adapt it accordingly.

→ [Read more on page 5](#)

### Stronger communities

To support the region through a number of activities and initiatives.

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### Happier customers

To gain more happy customers and reward colleagues for receiving positive feedback.

→ [Read more on page 8](#)

### Better teams

To perform all job roles and tasks competently to allow further growth.

→ [Read more on page 10](#)

### Cleaner environment

To improve air quality and encourage fuel efficiency at all locations across the business.

→ [Read more on page 12](#)

# Managing Director's message



## 2018/19 highlights

- £101m revenue in the North East, and £31m in East Yorkshire
- 63 million customer journeys in the North East and 17 million in East Yorkshire
- 92% overall customer satisfaction – with 92% satisfaction in Tyne and Wear and 93% satisfaction in County Durham
- Opening of our new £3.5m depot in Consett
- Simplification of our adult fares and tickets
- Extension of discounted tickets to everyone aged from five to 25
- Awards recognition, including the Princess Royal Training Award, The Nacro Ambassador Hub trophy and winner of the Dream Team of the Year at the North East Contact Centre Awards

“Welcome to our Sustainability Report for 2019. Key highlights in the year have included the opening of our £3.5m depot in Consett, the simplification of our adult fares and ticket zones, as well as extending our ticket discounts to everyone aged from five up to and including 25.”

**Martijn Gilbert**  
Managing Director

As I look back on 2018/19, 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.

Back in March 2019, after two and a half years of development, we opened the doors to our brand new state-of-the-art £3.5m depot in Consett. The high-tech operation has replaced our Stanley depot, which we operated from for nearly 100 years. The new depot is home to 180 Go North East team members and 63 vehicles.

We have also 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. Our customers can now travel 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, we recently made changes to our offering for young people. 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, the Nacro Ambassador Hub trophy, and our Customer Services Team scooped the Dream Team of the Year at the North East Contact Centre Awards.

We have also celebrated internally with our Team GNE Awards and Long Service Awards. Firstly, in February, we recognised the achievements of apprentices, drivers, engineers, customer service professionals and other members of Team GNE across a number of categories. Also, at our 69th Long Service Awards, we celebrated the achievements of 55 team members, together totalling 1,935 years with us – a great achievement!

Again, we have been involved with some of the region's best events including the Great North Run and Sunderland International Airshow. At the Great North Run, our team of drivers, supervisors and engineers provided 38 baggage buses which carried over 25,000 pieces of runners' luggage and we transported over 10,000 people to the start and finish lines.

All the hard work from everyone at Go North East has also delivered a 92% overall customer satisfaction score, giving us a rating that is one of the best in the country.

### **The year ahead**

We are investing £18m in new environmentally friendly buses.

This investment consists of 54 high-specification buses in the North East to help revolutionise bus travel across the region, and also includes the region's first latest generation zero-emission full electric single-deck buses.

In East Yorkshire we will be introducing eight brand new single-deck buses and 19 double-deck buses, all meeting the highest Euro 6 environmental standards and helping keep our air clean by reducing pollution.

At Go North East we have also started to roll out a new premium brand 'X-lines' with consistent standards of high quality buses on express services, better promoting our longer distance commuting and leisure service offering. This will continue to be rolled out throughout the year.



X-lines X21, part of our new express service brand which will continue to be rolled out throughout the year.

# Finances

**Go North East makes a direct, positive contribution to the economy by providing a safe, efficient and convenient service, with a total of 63 million journeys made by customers each year, and a further 17 million journeys on buses in East Yorkshire.**

Since East Yorkshire joined the Go North East family in June 2018, we have seen our team grow from just under 2,100 team members to almost 2,800.

At the same time, our fleet of buses and coaches has increased from around 700 to over 1,000. 63 million journeys were made on Go North East services across the year, with a further 17 million journeys on buses in East Yorkshire.

Turnover in the North East has increased, with a total of £101m in revenue compared to £98m last year. Additionally, East Yorkshire turned over £31m.

## **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 changes and improvements to fares and tickets.

We have 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 has been wrapped up in a 'Better Fares' campaign, with customers now able to travel from just £5.30 a day and £20 a week, and even cheaper in local saver zones.



## Key highlights

# £132m

revenue across Go North East and East Yorkshire

# 80m

customer journeys on Go North East and East Yorkshire buses

# 2,782

average number of employees across Go North East and East Yorkshire

Our under 19 fare has remained popular and we have recently made improvements to our offering for young travellers. Previously, young people, including students and apprentices could travel at discounted rates.

As part of our '5 to 25' campaign, we have now extended the discount to anyone aged up to and including 25-year-old, 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 a whopping 43% on the equivalent adult all zone ticket prices.

# Smarter technology

Over the year, the use of our app and contactless payments on our buses have continued to grow at a substantial rate.

## Contactless

From July 2017 onwards, we have invested £1.7m in ticket machines that accept contactless payments, with great success.

22% of on-bus transactions on Go North East buses are now via contactless, with a great deal of positive feedback from customers and the media.

Messages of praise have been flooding in on our social media channels telling us how much easier it has made travelling without the need to carry cash.

Due to the successful introduction of contactless in the North East, we invested a further £700k in October to roll out contactless at East Yorkshire.

Already, over 16% of transactions on East Yorkshire buses are made using contactless and the feedback has been phenomenal.



## Key highlights

**22%**

on-bus contactless transactions

**155,000**

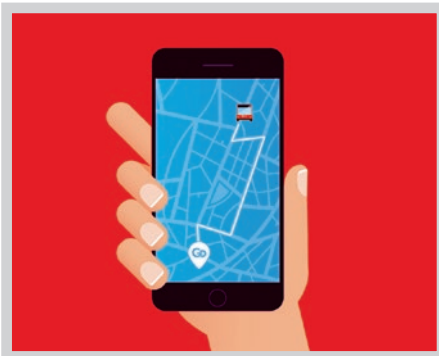
app downloads

**61%**

increase in app revenue

**10%**

of all ticket revenue comes from the app



## App

The app helps customers plan journeys, see live bus times and buy mobile tickets for their journey.

Its popularity has increased somewhat since its initial launch in January 2018.

By the end of 2018/19, there had been 155,000 downloads and sales on the app have increased by 61%, and now accounts for 10% of all ticket revenue.

# Stronger communities

**This year at Go North East, we were proud to be involved with a number of activities in the community, with the most notable being the Chatty Bus initiative.**

The Chatty Bus initiative is in response to the Government's loneliness strategy, with research undertaken by ComRes on behalf of Greener Journeys showing that three in ten Britons go at least one-day-a-week without speaking to anyone close to them, and almost two in three people admit to feeling lonely, particularly younger people.

The poll of 2,000 people also highlighted that a third of those surveyed deliberately catch the bus to have some human contact while two thirds of bus users believe the bus creates strong community ties, so we knew there was more they could do to help.

A series of Chatty Bus Days have followed, where 'Chatty Bus Champions' board a selection of our busiest routes throughout the day, striking up conversations with people that have taken a badge to say they would like to chat with someone.

Keeping the atmosphere fun, the team use a range of games and ice-breakers, or simply just have a good old natter.

Through our Chatty Bus Champions, we want our passengers to have a fun and engaging journey – be that through taking part in a quiz, playing a game on one of our convenient upper deck tables or having a chat with their neighbour. The whole point is to make everyone feel happier as a result of being on the bus.

Overcoming loneliness improves the health and wellbeing of our local residents and as such, we believe this is a campaign we should all get behind.



Chatty Bus – an initiative that was launched by Go North East to help tackle the loneliness epidemic

Across the three events so far, over 750 people took advantage of the new initiative and we have received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback.

Chatty Bus has also been fully embraced by other operators across Go-Ahead and we're all fully committed to continuing the initiative, with further events and activities to come on a regular basis.



## World Transplant Games

As the world's transplant athletes headed to the North East, their journeys to their training and competition sites were made easier thanks to a partnership with Go North East.

The competitors, team delegates, and the volunteers to support the World Transplant Games, were all able to travel on our buses with their event accreditation.

Graham Wylie, Chair of the World Transplant Games NewcastleGateshead 2019, said: "We are extremely grateful for Go North East's support of the World Transplant Games, as great public transport plays a huge part in a successful event. Allowing free travel on bus services through the North East is a great help to us as we transport 2,300 participants, their supporters and volunteers around the region.

"The Games is an inspiring event that celebrates a second chance of living life to the full and raises public awareness of organ and tissue donation. We have received amazing support from businesses which will help us to deliver the best World Transplant Games ever in NewcastleGateshead."



Graham Wylie, Chair of the World Transplant Games NewcastleGateshead 2019, with Mark Ellis, Development Manager at Go North East.



## Awards

### Princess Royal Training Award

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

### Dream Team of the Year

Our Customer Services Team won the award at this year's North East Contact Centre Awards. Our 14-strong team beat three other finalists, including two from multinational companies, Sage and AXA, and UK train operator LNER. Described by judges as 'a real credit to our industry', the multi-skilled team was praised for its 'phenomenal can-do attitude in the most demanding circumstances'.

# Happier customers

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

## **92% customer satisfaction**

Once again, we scored highly in the independent Autumn 2018 Bus Passenger Survey, with our customers giving us an overall satisfaction rating of 92%.

This rating remains consistent with previous years, and contributes to the combined Go-Ahead achievement of being awarded the highest score of a large bus owning group.

The survey revealed steady increases in satisfaction across most areas of Go North East service – including waiting time, bus stop information, availability of seating and on-board comfort.

Punctuality scored the biggest win for us, with a 6% year-on-year improvement. Other factors highlighted positively include the safety of

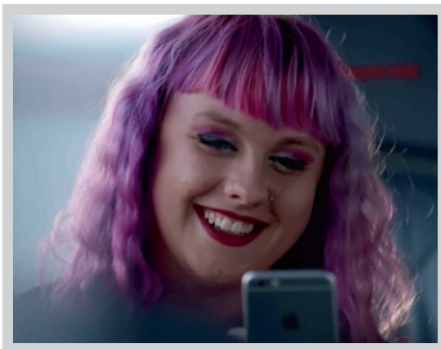
driving and bus journey time, with 91% of passengers reporting their satisfaction on each subject.

The report follows another year of investment to improve the customer experience, including the introduction of simplified fare structures and on-bus contactless payments.

Our MD, 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 service that meets all of our customers’ needs, and we’ll use the results to further improve on our customer experience, so we can deliver on our vision of ‘journeys taken care of.’”

- 83% satisfaction with punctuality – 6% up on previous year
- 81% satisfaction with waiting time – 2% up on previous year
- 91% satisfaction with on-bus journey time – 2% up on previous year
- 86% satisfaction with comfort of the seats – 2% up on previous year
- 91% satisfaction with the safety of driving – 1% up on previous year
- 91% satisfaction with available seating or space to stand – 1% up on previous year
- 83% satisfaction with bus driver helpfulness and attitude – 1% up on previous year
- 78% satisfaction with importance placed on social and environmental responsibility – 2% up on previous year





## Customer feedback



“Massive shout out to your driver on the 10X – always chatty, pleasant and truly looks after your customers. #NotAllHeroesWearCapes”

10 July 2018



“The driver on the 21 is a credit to you. After a terrible morning he really brightened up people’s days all by being dressed up as Santa and whistling Christmas songs as he drove. Merry Christmas!”

14 December 2018



“Finally made it on the Toon Tour today! Great day out. Thanks Dan for making a fuss of Spencer – you are a star!”

1 September 2019



Connect with us on social media:

Twitter: @gonortheast

Facebook: simplyGNE

Instagram: @gonortheast



“The driver on the X21 bus number 6318 is an absolute credit to your Company! What a star! It was 10.10am on Low Fell. He was wonderful with my three-year-old twins. They now only want to catch his bus! Great service.”

21 October 2018



“I’m on the Angel 21 bus from Chester-le-Street to Eldon Square and wanted to give some praise to your driver. A young man with autism was on the bus and was very upset because he had broken his lanyard that was holding his bus pass. The driver calmly parked up at a suitable stop and spoke to the young man and even gave him his own lanyard as a replacement. He was so kind and compassionate when some people may have seen it as an annoyance. He was super!”

11 March 2019

# 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 driving buses, 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 from 11% to 20% of the bus workforce 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 front-line 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, so there are great opportunities for women to work in our bus businesses.



Lisa Ellerington, a proud member of Team GNE

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. Go-Ahead has recently 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.

## Long Service Awards

We place the utmost importance on making sure our people are happy and contented in their roles.

Earlier this year, at our 69th Long Service Awards, we celebrated the achievements of 55 team members, together totalling 1,935 years with us.

Ian McPherson, our Stores Supervisor, was the star of the awards. After half a century working for Go North East, and talking of his future plans Ian said: "Although I realise I can't work forever, I'm currently fit for my age and would find it hard to leave. If I didn't love my job I would have left a long time ago."

## Team GNE Awards

We also place importance on recognising the achievements of colleagues who go above and beyond the call of duty to deliver exceptional service to our customers.

In February, over 170 team members joined together in Newcastle for our Team GNE Awards to celebrate the achievements of apprentices, drivers, engineers, customer service professionals and other members of Team GNE.

Embodying our visions, beliefs and attitudes, the categories at the awards were Team GNE Star, Charity Star, Excellence in Customer Service, Apprentice of the Year, Engineer of the Year, Driver of the Year, the Leadership Award, Team of the Year and Depot of the Year.

Star of the awards was Gary Wheatley, Service Delivery Supervisor from Chester-le-Street depot, who won the Team GNE Star award, for his efforts to keep services running while battling the Beast from the East. His commitment, which included shovelling snow to clear Pelaw Bank, saw Gary receive the most individual nominations in the history of the awards.



## Key highlights

# 1,935

years of service by 55 team members celebrated at our Long Service Awards

## All employees



● Male: **89.8%**  
● Female: **10.2%**

## Senior management



● Male: **62.5%**  
● Female: **37.5%**

## Gender pay gap



Mean pay for men is **2.2%** higher than that of women, compared to the national average of **17.2%**.

# Cleaner environment

**Go North East and East Yorkshire celebrated Clean Air Day on 20 June 2019 with the announcement of a combined £18m investment in environmentally friendly buses.**

## Clean Air Day

Go North East announced a £12m investment in the North East, consisting of 54 high-specification buses to help revolutionise bus travel across the region.

The order from Go North East includes the region's first latest generation zero-emission full electric single-deck buses, with nine now confirmed from the world's largest electric bus manufacturer, Yutong, as well as 34 of the latest low-emission Euro 6 engine double-deck buses and 11 single-deck buses from UK based manufacturers.

The buses will feature comfortable high-backed seating, modern coffee shop style interiors



Concept of one of Go North East's new environmentally friendly Euro 6 buses.



Concept of one of East Yorkshire's new environmentally friendly Euro 6 buses.

with tables, at-seat USB charging points, free Wi-Fi and next stop audio and visual passenger information systems.

East Yorkshire's £6m investment included eight brand new single-deck buses and 19 double-deck buses, all meeting the highest Euro 6 environmental standards and helping keep our air clean and free from pollution.

Our MD, Martijn Gilbert, said: "We have worked with the manufacturers to develop a class leading specification that will help revolutionise local bus travel on our services, helping to make them an even more viable alternative to many car journeys.

"If we are serious about improving air quality then we have to properly embrace public transport and tackle rising congestion. These buses represent a major investment from us as we continue to play our part in supporting the mass mobility and connectivity of the communities we serve by providing high quality, dependable and green public transport services."

# Key data: Go North East

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
<b>Cleaner environment</b>			
Carbon emissions per vehicle mile (kg)	1.49	1.51	1.52
Carbon emissions per passenger journey (kg)	0.85	0.88	0.85
<b>Happier customers</b>			
Customer satisfaction (%)	92	93	91
Regional bus punctuality	91.4	91.2	90.8
Passenger volume growth (%)	2.6	(3.7)	(2.7)
<b>Safety</b>			
Bus accidents per million miles	18	15	16
RIDDOR accidents per 100 employees	0.1	0.4	0.45
Fleet with CCTV (%)	100	100	100
<b>Accessibility</b>			
Bus fleet which is DDA/PSVAR compliant (%)	100	100	99.5
<b>Better teams</b>			
Number of employees <sup>^</sup>	2,782	2,051	2,050
Employee engagement (%)	56	61	54
Absenteeism rate (%)	3.5	3.6	3.4
<b>Diversity</b>			
Female employees (%) <sup>^</sup>	10.2	8.9	8.5
<b>Smarter technology</b>			
Total app downloads	155,000	53,000	Old app (not comparable)

## Key

<sup>^</sup> Includes Go North East and East Yorkshire  
 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](http://go-ahead.com)

## More information

You can find out more about Go North East by visiting our website [gonortheast.co.uk](http://gonortheast.co.uk) and more information on how Go North East manages sustainability can be found by visiting: [go-ahead.com/sustainability](http://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 1 July 2018 to 29 June 2019.

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

[go-ahead.com/sustainability](http://go-ahead.com/sustainability)

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Bureau Veritas UK Ltd  
August 2019

