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The newspaper of Stagecoach Group

Issue 63 Summer 06

stage

London bus sold off in £264m deal

Move will allow further innovation and growth in provincial services

by Steven Stewart

Stagecoach Group has agreed a £263.6m deal to sell its London bus operations to focus on growing its provincial services in the UK.

Australia-based Macquarie Bank Limited is buying the business, which Stagecoach has operated since 1994. Stagecoach has a 16% share of the bus market in London.

It is expected the sale, which is subject to the approval of Transport for London (TfL), will be completed in around three months.

Stagecoach London operates 1300 buses and employs around 4300 staff, providing bus services under contract to TfL.

Total proceeds for the sale are £263.6m in cash, subject to adjustments

dependent on the net assets of Stagecoach London at completion.

As part of the deal, Stagecoach London will establish a new defined benefit pension scheme for its employees.

Stagecoach will initially use the proceeds from the deal to reduce the Group's net debt. The company has also confirmed it will conduct a review in the next six months to ensure that the Group is operating with an optimum capital structure.

Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: "The London

bus operations have been a highly successful part of Stagecoach's UK Bus division since 1994.

"We were approached about the possible sale of the business and, after assessing Macquarie's offer and the prospects for the London bus operations, we concluded that the disposal was in the best interests of our shareholders."

"The sale of our London business will allow us to build on our successful growth strategy outside London, where we have demonstrated our strength in delivering innovation, investment, and strong marketing."

"We will continue to look for further organic growth and bolt-on acquisition opportunities in our UK and North American bus businesses and additions to our rail portfolio."

Stagecoach has completed the acquisition of significant bus operations in Merseyside, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Tayside within the past year. The Group believes the UK bus market outside London has scope for further growth in an environment where Stagecoach can capitalise on its industry leadership, entrepreneurial flair and innovation.

Stagecoach currently operates more than 8000 buses and employs around 20,000 people at its UK Bus division, which includes 20 regional operating companies.



A capital deal: The sell-off of Stagecoach's London bus operations will allow the company to sharpen its focus on growth outwith the city.

Non-executive director joins Board



Sir George Mathewson.

Sir George Mathewson has joined Stagecoach Group's Board as a Non-Executive Director.

Chairman of The Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc until his retirement in April, Sir George (66) is currently an advisor to the Royal Bank and also a director of the Scottish Investment Trust plc.

Commenting on the appointment, Robert Speirs, Chairman said: "We are delighted that Sir George has joined the Board."

"He brings a formidable range of skills to Stagecoach Group, including substantial experience of working with major UK-listed companies."

Car and train users switch to megabus

Megabus.com USA – the recently-launched budget coach service offering fares from just \$1 – is winning over passengers from cars and trains, according to new research.

Passengers can travel on daily non-stop express coach services between Chicago and eight other Midwest cities. The network covers Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and St. Louis.

Research by Stagecoach Group has found that 45% of megabus.com passengers previously travelled by car and 24% are former train users.

A further 17% used to travel with another bus service, while 13% were former airline passengers.

The findings were included in a survey of more than 1600 megabus.com passengers in the United States, following its launch earlier this year.

The new research also found that:

- megabus.com is popular with women, who account for 59% of customers
- 94% of all passengers were satisfied or very satisfied with the service
- 97% of customers would travel with megabus.com again
- 96% believed megabus.com offered value for money fares
- most people (40%) used megabus.com for social trips.

Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: "These are impressive findings. As well as helping to cut congestion on the roads, megabus.com is already winning passengers from trains and airlines.

"We are delighted with the response of passengers to the high-quality of service and low-cost fares. Women, in particular, are responding to the safe and comfortable travelling environment on board.

"We believe there is significant potential to attract more people in the United States to the benefits of low-cost inter-city coach travel."

The North American launch followed the UK success of megabus.com, which carries around two million passengers a year on a network of inter-city services covering 40 locations nationwide.

Since its launch in the States, more than 575,000 people have visited the US secure e-commerce site, which provides full information on arrival and departure times. Passengers can quickly book their travel and purchase tickets from the comfort of their home, office or wireless handheld device.

Once Mayor into office!

Congratulations to Clive Elmore, who has been elected Mayor of Coleford in the Forest of Dean.

Clive, who currently manages day-to-day operations at Stagecoach West's recently acquired Coleford outstation, is quite accustomed to holding public office, having previously served as Mayor of Coleford up until a year ago.

Many congratulations, Clive!

By tyre and track is just the ticket

New deal on bus and trams opens up Sheffield

By bus, by tram, buy just one ticket – that's the simple but clever slogan behind a new integrated service in Sheffield.

Launched in May, Stagecoach's bus and tram network is delivering cheaper fares and better services to people in the city.

The company already operated Sheffield's Supertram service but the innovative integrated plan now offers a combined bus and tram network covering most major routes to and from the city centre.

It's a major boost to locals who rely on public transport after suffering four bus fare rises in the last 12 months by the dominant city bus operator, First.

The reliable, value-for-money Stagecoach network offers weekly tickets nearly 40% cheaper than prices charged by First, with Stagecoach passengers travelling on day tickets also saving around 20%.

Stagecoach passengers have the added bonus of their tickets also being valid on the company's trams in Sheffield.

A 'turn-up-and-go' package of services has buses running every 10 minutes on



This is a job for super ticket: The official launch of Sheffield's new, integrated service.

seven corridors into the city centre during the week.

The improvements follow the acquisition of Traction Group, which includes Yorkshire Terrier services, by Stagecoach last December. Vehicles on these services

are being rebranded as Stagecoach Sheffield with a new fresh livery.

Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: "For too long bus passengers in Sheffield have had to put up with poor services and rocketing bus

fares. These changes will help restore local people's confidence in the city's public transport network.

"Passengers will now enjoy cheaper prices, new routes and more frequent services. With Stagecoach buses and Sheffield Supertram, we are able to offer a comprehensive, value-for-money and integrated public transport network for people in the city. This is just the start of our vision for better services in Sheffield and we will be looking to make further improvements in the future."

Sheffield facts

- Stagecoach operates a fleet of more than 100 buses from depots at Ecclesfield in the north-east corner of the city and Holbrook in the south-east
- Sheffield Supertram is Britain's first state-of-the-art tramway, which runs 25 trams on three routes across the city
- First has more than 80% of the bus market in Sheffield.

Watching out for passengers...

Security has taken a giant leap forward with Stagecoach signing the UK's largest single order for CCTV in buses.

The £1.2m deal, with LOOK CCTV, will ensure all new buses ordered by Stagecoach in the coming year will be fitted with state-of-the-art digital CCTV systems.

And that includes the 460 new vehicles that will be bought between now and the

end of February 2007.

As well as monitoring the buses internally, the systems feature external facing cameras to check the movement of traffic and pedestrians as part of an accident prevention campaign.

Managing Director of Stagecoach UK Bus Les Warneford said the investment was part of the company's ongoing commitment

to the safety and security of passengers and our drivers.

He added: "Buses are the country's most popular form of public transport and crime on buses is extremely low. However, even the fear of crime can act as a deterrent to travel. CCTV has a proven track record of making passengers feel safe, cutting crime and anti-social behaviour and helping track

down offenders."

Andrew Prince, Managing Director of LOOK CCTV, said: "We have enjoyed a long and productive relationship with Stagecoach over a number of years. Their decision to award us this largest ever contract for CCTV is recognition of our ability to deliver cutting-edge systems and support services."

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Better, bigger and stronger... megatrains keep on growing

Stagecoach Group's innovative budget rail service, megatrains.com, is being extended across the country.

megatrains.com, which is being piloted at South West Trains, the UK's biggest rail franchise, offers tickets for as little as £1 and more than 1700 seats a week will be available on new routes.

And the growing success of megatrains.com now sees fares selling from just £1 on Virgin Trains services as well.

Ian Dobbs, Chief Executive of Stagecoach Group's rail division, said: "We are delighted to be working with

Virgin Trains to bring even cheaper fares to passengers on their inter-city CrossCountry services.

"The initial pilot routes we have launched at our South West Trains franchise have proved extremely popular, attracting new passengers to the railways and helping to make the most of the capacity on the network.

"We believe the megatrains.com concept, using flexible, value-for money pricing, has the potential to transform the way fares are managed on the rail network for the benefit of passengers and rail operators."

The expansion of megatrains follows the success of the two initial trial routes from London to Southampton and Portsmouth – launched in October last year – which have now taken more than 26,000 bookings.

Budget prices are now available on a number of off-peak services Monday to Saturday.

megatrains.com offers seats through a dedicated website and phone hotline, with the cheapest fares available the earlier customers book.

The service has proved a huge hit with customers, with the website clocking up

more than 280,000 hits in five months.

The budget rail service follows the huge success of Stagecoach's market leading low-cost inter-city coach service, megabus.com, which now has a national network covering 40 UK cities and carries around two million passengers a year.

And the rail initiative just seems keep going from strength to strength, winning a national award for innovation.

megatrains.com was a category winner at the Railway Industry Innovation Awards, winning the Ian Allan Publishing Award for Innovation in Marketing.

'The megatrains concept has the potential to transform the way fares are managed for the benefit of passengers and rail operators'

Ian Dobbs

Hovercraft plan ventures Forth

• 150-passenger link could run from Kirkcaldy to Leith from late 2007

• Trial planned for September 2006 to test innovative proposals

Radical new proposals for a cross-Forth hovercraft link between Fife and Edinburgh have been unveiled.

Stagecoach believes a 150-passenger hovercraft running between Kirkcaldy and Leith could put long-standing proposals for a cross-Forth link back on track.

Research suggests regular services could be operational by late 2007 and plans are already being drawn up for a trial later this year.

Scottish-based marine consultant Alistair Macleod has carried out detailed exploratory work on behalf of Stagecoach and a service could run on a similar timetable to that proposed for a ferry.

While the service would require initial public subsidy, a hovercraft would significantly cut the infrastructure costs of current ferry-based proposals.

A Stagecoach Group spokesman said: "A cross-Forth link can deliver significant transport, economic and social inclusion benefits and we are very excited by the potential of a hovercraft.

"We are seeking the support of all parties involved in making a cross-Forth link a reality to back a hovercraft trial later this year. If successful, this innovative solution could be



Venturing Forth: A computer-generated image of the type of hovercraft proposed for the cross-Forth service.

delivered in as little as 18 months, with significantly less cost to taxpayers than ferry-based alternatives."

Stagecoach has earmarked the BHT150 hovercraft, manufactured by Isle of Wight-based Hoverwork Limited and incorporat-

ing the latest diesel engine technology, as a potential craft for use on the planned service.

A similar craft is being operated by Isle of Wight-based Hovertravel between Ryde and Southsea. The company's hovercraft services have successfully carried 21 million passengers in the past 40 years.

Stagecoach has identified the site of its former bus depot in Kirkcaldy, just off the A921, as a potential departure point on the Fife side of the Forth. As well as having easy access to the estuary, it is close to a main dual carriageway, has space for maintenance and is an ideal location for a park and ride facility.

On the Edinburgh side of the Forth, a potential landing point has been pinpointed at a beach area on the East Sands of Leith. The area, which is owned by Forth Ports, is close to the site for the new National Library of Scotland.

A hovercraft operation would require a concrete ramp and relatively low-cost waiting facilities at either side of the Forth, which would be significantly cheaper than the cost re-developing Kirkcaldy harbour and other infrastructure work on the Edinburgh side

related to a fast ferry link.

The crossing time between Kirkcaldy and Leith would be approximately 20 minutes and the craft, with normal operating speeds of around 35 knots, could run in sea conditions with waves of up to two metres.

Stagecoach has written to Forth Ports, Edinburgh City Council, Fife Council, the Forth Estuary Transport Authority and the Scottish Executive seeking their backing for a three-day hovercraft trial in September. The trial would use a smaller BHT130 hovercraft, currently being constructed on the Isle of Wight.

If you have been involved in a project aimed at improving performance then we'd like to hear about it.

Your On Stage contact is listed on p2.



A shore bet: The former bus depot in Kirkcaldy that has been identified as the potential departure point.

Soccer school children have a ball

Stagecoach has once again demonstrated its support for the local community by providing free transport for Swindon Town FC's Soccer Schools for children aged five to 15.

Around 2000 children enrolled on the courses held during the Whitsun holidays, and they were transported from the County Ground to Dorcan Technology College by two new Trident double-deckers purchased for the forthcoming Chippenham-Swindon service.

Commenting on the partnership, Clive Maguire, from Swindon Town's Football in the Community team, said: "The short trip to and from the venue on the buses added to the excitement of the day for our soccer-mad children."

Paul's triumph behind the wheel

Congratulations to Paul Ward for driving away with Stagecoach North West's Driver of the Year title.

Paul, from Chorley Depot, faced stiff competition, especially from Peter Nowak, from West Cumbria, who was second, and third placed Sarah Helm, from Preston. The trio now goes forward to represent the North West in the national finals in Blackpool in September.

Other runners-up were Wayne Hold and Andrew Killshaw, both Morecambe; Andrew Stewart and David Richardson, both West Cumbria; and Ray Jones, Barrow.

Extra trains for airshow

South West Trains has strengthened services by adding extra carriages to help passengers attending the Farnborough Airshow.

Some services will be making additional stops at Farnborough Main to help the crowds on their way, while there will be a special early morning train on the weekdays travelling direct from Waterloo.

Trains to and from Basingstoke will also be strengthened to accommodate extra passengers.

Coach USA throws another hot event

With the management team serving up the burgers, Coach USA's annual employee barbecue couldn't fail to be a sizzler of an event.

Staff took it easy for the day at the Elizabeth depot in New Jersey, while senior members of the team cooked up a feast fit for a king.

It followed on from the success of last year's event – held to thank all Olympia Trails, One and Independent Bus employees for their hard work during the year.

District General Manager John Emberson, General Manager Jim Rutherford and Maintenance Manager Al

Koval were overseeing the cooking, which was carried out by the facilities office staff, while Video Technician Ronald Curry was on hand as the DJ to make sure the day went with a swing.

Guests included Director Roger Bowker; Chief Operating Officer of US Operations Dale Moser; Vice President of Maintenance Rich Vihonski; and Don Carmichael, Vice President of Operations.

Southern District Administrative Assistant Angela Venice said: "Although the weather wasn't as hot as the grill, the rain couldn't dampen the spirits of our employees and a good time was had by all."



Staff tuck in at the Coach USA barbecue.

Eco-friendly Lions roar into action

Green buses set new standards for UK

New buses taking to the road in September will be among the UK's most environmentally friendly.

They will feature state-of-the-art exhaust gas re-circulation (EGR) engines and are based on the MAN Lion City

model, with a striking new design and interior.

The new 43-seater buses, which will be introduced on Stagecoach's Ayr-Girvan-Stranraer service, are the result of a £1 million investment venture with the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, the regional transport partnership for the West

of Scotland.

Les Warneford, Managing Director of Stagecoach UK Bus, said: "We have invested more than £150 million in new vehicles for the UK over the past three years as part of our drive to make our operations greener and attract more people to public transport."

It is the first order with East Lancashire Coachbuilders Ltd. The Blackburn-based manufacturer will supply the bodies and MAN will produce the chassis for nine Neoman 18.240 single-decker vehicles.

The Barrow depot currently operates a number of vehicles manufactured by East Lancashire Coachbuilders, which were ordered by Cumbria County Council. However, the new buses are the first ordered directly by Stagecoach to its own specification.

The announcement comes only three months after Stagecoach Group placed £50 million of orders with four other vehicle manufacturers for more than 460 new buses for the UK.

Vehicle manufacturers Alexander Dennis, Optare, Plaxton and Volvo are already supplying a total of 13 single-deckers, 160 double-deckers, 165 midibuses, 95 minibuses and 31 coaches, which will be delivered by the end of February 2007.

The Strathclyde Partnership for Transport is one of seven partnerships established under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 covering the country.



Dart-ing here and there!

Around £700,000 has been invested in seven new Dennis Dart buses for Stagecoach South.

The easy access single deckers, which complement the existing 75-strong fleet, have been earmarked for the improved service that covers Aldershot, Ash, Frimley Park Hospital, Camberley, The Meadows and Yateley.

The new additions enabled increased frequency between Yateley and Camberley as part of the region's Quality Bus Partnership scheme.

Yateley residents can now catch a bus to The Meadows and Camberley every 15 minutes, each day. From Camberley, the service continues to Frimley, Ash and Aldershot every half hour, giving direct access to Frimley Park Hospital.

The improvements follow a successful joint bid between Stagecoach and Hampshire County Council, supported by Surrey County Council, for £228,000 from the Department for Transport's Kickstart initiative.

Hampshire has also invested £200,000 in bus stop and infrastructure improvements between Yateley and Blackwater, while Surrey has undertaken improvements to Route 3 bus stops in its region.

Stagecoach South Managing Director Andrew Dyer officially launched the buses in Yateley, alongside Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Transport, Councillor Tim Knight, and Surrey County Council's Executive Member for Transport, Councillor Helyn Clack.



Three and easy: The new Darts receive their official launch.

Holidays trim the summer timetables

Quicker journey times are on the cards for Manchester passengers thanks to the school summer holidays – which means a longer lie for Stagecoach customers.

Because the roads are quieter, the buses are leaving later in the mornings and arriving at their final destination at the usual time or, on some routes, slightly earlier.

To reflect the change, Stagecoach has introduced a new summer timetable as of June 12, which will run until September 1.

The times have changed on a number of services and mainly affect weekday rush hour journeys.

Network Manager John Young said: "This is the third summer we have adjusted our timetables to reflect the fact that the roads are quieter at this time of year. Feedback from our customers has been extremely positive on these seasonal changes, which are now well established.

"As road conditions and unpredictable congestion is an increasingly serious issue for us all during the rest of the year, we have added so much extra time into our schedules that to not review this during the summer months would be unworkable.

"The new times will reflect the faster journeys that are possible, which, for most of our customers, means buses set off a little later in the mornings and arrive at the destination at the same time. On the afternoon and evening services, the opposite usually applies – buses set off at the same time but passengers will get home quicker."

Stagecoach has produced a selection of posters, leaflets and timetables, which are being circulated on the buses to inform everyone of the change.

Keeping UK business on the right track

Respected trade journal Business Travel World (BTW) has named Virgin Trains within the top 50 people and things that have done most to influence business travel over the past 12 months.

BTW says the introduction of the Pendolino fleet in 2003 was the beginning of a new age of business rail travel with the market returning to West Coast routes because of the high-quality offering on board.

The move to rail is reflected in the rail/air market on the prestigious Manchester to London route. In September 2004, Virgin Trains had just 40% share compared with 60% in March 2006. Passenger volumes on its West Coast franchise moved up 21.6% in the last financial year ending March 2006.

BTW is a magazine containing news, views, forecasts and features on the business travel market and is aimed at the buyers of business travel.



Two young visitors enjoy the fun at Carlisle's open day.

Depot opens its doors

The people of Carlisle had a behind-the-scenes look at Stagecoach North West at an open day held at the town's depot.

Engineering Manager John Gibb and Assistant Operations Manager Bryan McFarland and their staff were on hand to ensure a fun time was had by all.

A range of events and attractions was laid on, with the chance to have a photograph taken in front of a bus with a destination blind of your choice proving particularly popular. Charity stalls and the opportunity to view and travel on many vintage buses added to the fun.

New deal is just the ticket

A £2.3m deal has been signed with the world leader in integrated fare management systems for the supply of electronic ticketing machines for Stagecoach Scotland.

The agreement will see ERG Transit Systems (UK) Ltd rolling out around 1600 ticket machines across Scotland this year.

ERG's TP5000 Electronic Ticketing Machine and TRACS Depot software, including wireless LAN capability, were selected after an extensive appraisal process of all potential vendors.

The ERG Group is a world leader in the development and supply of integrated fare management and software systems for the transit industry, and for its smart card systems and services.

Benedito's a top man

A Coach USA driver's superb driving and excellent customer service skills have made him a big hit with the passengers.

Benedito Carvalho has been commended for his dedication to passenger safety after receiving hundreds of thank you letters from satisfied customers travelling to and from Newark Airport.

Newark Airport Express General Manager Jim Rutherford said: "Benedito is one of our Newark Airport Express drivers. He goes above and beyond the call of duty on a regular basis and is a favourite with all our customers thanks to his kindness and dedication to safety."

Rising costs fail to block growth

Stagecoach handles the pressure to deliver strong results

Stagecoach has posted a strong set of full-year results in the face of rising cost pressures.

Despite huge fuel cost increases over the past 12 months, the Group profit before tax (excluding disposed New Zealand operations) for the year to April 30, 2006 was £115.0m – up from £104.9m in the previous year.

Stagecoach achieved a fourth year of successive earnings growth and cheered investors with a 12.1% increase in the full-year dividend.

The excellent financial performance comes on the back of a string of awards for Stagecoach, with the company being named Bus Operator of the Year and its South West Trains business voted Rail Operator of the Year.

Key highlights of the results were:

- Headline earnings per share up 11.6%
- Revenue from continuing operations up 8.2%
- Group operating profit up from £153.1m to £156.6m (pre-intangibles and exceptionals and excluding disposed New Zealand operations)
- 2.1% like-for-like passenger volume growth at UK Bus (excluding London and megabus.com)
- Passenger revenues at UK Rail up 5.7%
- £66.7m of revenue and profit share payable to Department for Transport
- Strong revenue growth in North America – overall US\$ revenue up 11.0%
- Improved performance and revenue growth at Virgin Rail Group
- Good progress on renegotiation of West Coast franchise



On track: Stagecoach Group Chief Executive Brian Souter with Chairman Robert Speirs (left) and Finance Director Martin Griffiths.

Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: "The Group has achieved another strong set of results, delivering continued organic growth in our bus and rail operations in the UK and North America. Despite continued cost pressures, this has been a very successful year for the business."

"Our strong track-record of investment and innovation is attracting more people to public transport, particularly in our bus operations in the UK. The planned sale of our London bus business will allow us to concentrate on our successful growth strategy in our

UK Bus businesses outside London.

"Excellent operational and financial performance in our UK Rail division means we are well placed to submit a strong bid for the new South Western rail franchise. In North America, we have made further progress by growing revenue and passenger volumes in both our scheduled and leisure operations."

"The Group will continue to look for further organic growth and bolt-on acquisition opportunities in our UK and North American bus business and opportunities to grow our rail portfolio."

'The Group has achieved another strong set of results, delivering continued organic growth in our bus and rail operations'

Brian Souter

On route to innovation award

A pioneering North East bus service is up for honours at the National Transport Awards.

Hybrid engine-powered service Quaylink, launched in July 2005, has been short-listed for Most Innovative Transport Project – Private Sector in the awards.

Quaylink serves the thriving 'quayside quarter' of Newcastle/Gateshead, which has seen an explosive rise in new developments and attractions over the last decade with the introduction of The Sage, The Baltic, the award-winning Millennium Bridge and countless

upmarket properties, hotels and leisure venues. The area has over 60,000 visitors on average every week and Quaylink runs from Gateshead to Newcastle, linking all the main tourist attractions on the route.

Commercial Director Robin Knight said: "This project was the result of a very successful partnership between local authorities, councils and ourselves. It has attracted a lot of attention in the North East and we are hoping to bring the award back to the region. It truly is an innovation and everyone has worked extremely hard to bring it to fruition."



Cutting edge: The innovative Quaylink service.

Services on the up and up

Punctuality up, passenger numbers up, complaints down – these improvements by Virgin Trains are revealed in a new official report.

Improved timekeeping by both Virgin West Coast and Virgin CrossCountry is revealed by the Office of Rail Regulation in the National Rail Trends yearbook, covering the 12 months to March 2006.

The report shows that in the final quarter of 2005-06, the Public Performance Measure (PPM) for Virgin West Coast improved to 89.3% from 74.7% since the same quarter of the previous reporting year, and Virgin CrossCountry, Britain's longest distance operator, improved to 86.4% from 82.7%.

In the year to March 2006, passenger journeys on Virgin West Coast increased by 21.6 per cent to 18.5 million and Virgin CrossCountry continued its steady improvement of recent years to achieve 20.6 million passenger journeys, an increase of 7% on 2004-05. Fewer complaints were received from customers.

Light up – and lose £50

Stagecoach West Scotland is getting tough with smokers who flout the law and light up on board.

In a joint operation with local environmental health officers, spot checks are being carried out on all service buses – and customers caught smoking will be slapped with a £50 fine.

George Connell, Traffic Manager, said: "Since the introduction of the smoking ban on March 26 we have worked with the authorities to help ensure customers comply with the legislation.

"We have had some difficulties on certain routes, but we are confident that issuing fixed penalty notices to offenders will help eradicate this problem, allowing passengers to travel in a smoke-free atmosphere."

Councillor Jim O'Neill, Chair of East and North Ayrshire Council's Community Services, added: "I am sure this initiative will help to extinguish the last of the rogue smokers who are showing no consideration."



Give me a D: The launch of the £1m Kickstart initiative.

Kick-starting growth

A £1 million Kickstart initiative has been launched on a key cross-town route at Cheltenham Racecourse.

The new D service increases the bus frequency and is the first initiative of its kind in Gloucestershire.

A door-drop teaser campaign targeting 15,000 homes, a half-price megarider promotion, and local press advertising encouraged an uplift of almost 30% in just three weeks, while the three-year patronage growth target is 35%.

Speaking at the launch of the Gloucestershire County Council and Stagecoach in Cheltenham initiative,

Councillor Stan Waddington said: "I am delighted to support this new and improved bus service, bringing a better bus route to local people, linking places of work, the railway station, park and ride and the town centre.

"As a county council we have worked hard to get this scheme off the ground, submitting an excellent bid to the Department for Transport and working with our partners to kick start the new routes.

"We hope that residents will give the new route a go and see the benefits of what is a really excellent new service for local people."

Pupils tune in by the busload

Tomorrow's stars of the airwaves could well partly owe their broadcasting careers to Stagecoach.

The company gave its backing to a new Scottish Executive roadshow, 'Determined to Broadcast', that rolled into Perthshire in June to teach school pupils about broadcasting and sound.

Stagecoach literally put the wheels in motion for the initiative, donating a double decker bus, as well as providing garaging and maintenance.

And Perthshire pupils, where the company has its HQ, were some of the first in Scotland to experience the roadshow before it officially launches in September. They were given the opportunity to turn into budding radio presenters for the day by creating their own radio programme, to broadcast standard, with experienced radio professionals.

Determined to Broadcast is a project funded by the Scottish Executive's



Wired for sound: The Stagecoach bus that is helping tomorrow's radio stars.

Determined to Succeed strategy for enterprise in education and has been developed in partnership with Radio Clyde's Cash for Kids, The Hunter Foundation and Stagecoach. It is further supported by Skillset, the Sector Skills

Council for the audio visual industries.

The hi-tech, interactive roadshow, which has already received the backing of high profile radio and TV celebrities, such as Radio Clyde's Ross King, BBC Scotland's Stuart Cosgrove and GMTV

presenter Jenni Falconer, creates an exciting and creative vocational learning experience for young people, whilst linking in with their curriculum subjects.

Michael Cross, Head of Division, Determined to Succeed, said: "Through real life learning, Determined to Broadcast will make a significant contribution to preparing young people for work and life through developing skills including communication, media literacy, working with others and problem-solving."

Max Watson, Determined to Broadcast Programme Director, added: "Radio is a powerful tool for communication that provides opportunities to develop students' imagination, expression, confidence and creativity. The study of radio production enables young people to experience the roles of performers, producers, writers, engineers, listeners and critics.

"I was really impressed with the pupils and I definitely think there are some talented radio presenters and producers of the future amongst them."

Poetry no longer in motion!

All good things come to an end, so they say, and when it was decided to replace one loyal vehicle with a new model on a coastal route in Portsmouth, the emotion just welled up.

So much so, Driver Mike O'Brien couldn't help but commemorate his affection in verse.

Read it... and weep.

The Olympian Story

(A Portsmouth driver's light-hearted tale.)

Our Olympian Coastliner's ending, They're taking our Ollies away. We are getting brand new Dennis Tridents, Time for some memories I say.

Dennis makes very fine dustcarts And fire engines too, so we hear. But when we are speaking of buses, Olympian's the name that we cheer.

The Ollie was born up in Leyland, A wonderful thing to behold. They did all the design engineering And considered they'd found pure gold.

Now Olympian sounds rather Irish And we know what rumours are like. Oh no – gasp – oh horror of horrors Could it be that mum had use of a bike?

The Leyland was placed on the market, A worrying thing at the time. But as people all noticed in hindsight, For Ollie the ending was just fine.

Volvo adopted the orphan; They took note of her lines trim and neat And, with one or two modifications, They made her the queen of the fleet.

So Ollie grew up as a lady; Treat her gently and there'll be no hitch.

But if you become too heavy handed You will find she can still be a bitch.

Auntie Ollie is now getting older; She's no longer the belle of the ball. But she's comfy, and safe and responsive And I really think that says it all.

So farewell and adieu Lady Ollie And thank you for all you have done. You've carried us there and back safely, Whatever the state of the run.

Once again, cheerio Auntie Ollie As you trundle away down the road On your journey to some other depot To carry your share of their load.

Mike O'Brien
Driver, Stagecoach in Portsmouth



Beauty in the eye of the penholder: The faithful Olympian.



1906-2006



Those were the days

A century ago bus travel was revolutionising ordinary people's lives across Britain.

The first service had begun in London two years before and, by 1906, when the first underground electric train hit the rails, folk up and down the country were climbing aboard the bus.

Stagecoach is now very much part of that historic tradition, keeping the country on the move in cities, in towns and in the countryside where the bus is not just a convenience but a lifeline to millions.

We've certainly come a long way to reach today's low level, easy access vehicles, online booking, and park and ride schemes, but one thing has stayed the same – taking passengers from where they are to where they want to be!

However, the world has changed a little since those first optimistic years of a new century. Back in 1906 politics was very much in the news with the Liberals having won a landslide victory, Russia had its first elected parliament (lasting for just a couple of months before the doors were firmly slammed shut and with the Tsar declaring martial law), a general strike brought Spain to the brink of chaos and 500,000 women marched on Downing Street in demand of the vote.

But making the news on a local level was the expansion of the nation's bus routes that were going where the train lines couldn't. Britain's travel network was expanding at an astonishing rate and opening up, as well as linking, the country.

In this special feature we proudly celebrate a number of centenarians from our operating companies, which have played an important part in the country's public transport heritage and are still doing today what they've always done – serving the public.

Stagecoach celebrates its role in Britain's public transport tradition

Rolls Royce –
a new name in engineering



THE RITZ OPENS FOR BUSINESS



Super battleship
Dreadnought launched



Tale of the cent

South Wales celebrates Rhondda's tram and b



By Christina Ratcliffe

South Wales recently turned back the clock 100 years to celebrate the centenary of Rhondda Transport.

The highlight of Stagecoach's celebrations was a three-day event, kindly hosted by the Rhondda Heritage Park in Trehafod.

The key attractions included a bus rally, showcasing 18 classic South Wales vehicles, an extensive selection of local bus industry memorabilia, bus models and recorded interviews with former and long-standing employees.

Around 100 of the 600 competition entries from seven local infant and junior schools, describing in words or pictures a bus journey through the Rhondda, were displayed at the event. Younger visitors were also invited to participate in a treasure trail throughout the park and bus-themed art and crafts.

Pride of place at the event was reserved for a former Rhondda Buses 1961 AEC Regent V double-decker.

This vehicle had originally operated out of Porth depot before being used as a training vehicle in Sheffield, and is currently owned by the Heritage Park. It was carefully refurbished by Stagecoach engineers at Porth and Brynmawr depots during the spring.

The Brynmawr paint shop also restored a Rhondda Buses 1966 AEC Regent V for the event.

Also integral to the event was the repainting of a Stagecoach Volvo B10M single-decker in the original maroon and yellow livery of the Rhondda Tramways Co.



Souvenirs from yesteryear: A variety of memorabilia capt

Launched in January 2006 by Stagecoach in South Wales Managing Director John Gould, Rhondda AM Leighton Andrews and the Mayor of Rhondda Cynon Taf, this current service vehicle includes large interior coving vinyls depicting trams and buses from throughout the company's history.

The event proved to be a major success, attracting 2200 people over the three days, and the celebrations will be long remembered thanks to Porth County Community School which is producing a centenary DVD.

Stagecoach in South Wales published a souvenir programme – Tramcars and Clippies – and a complementary set of six ceramic coasters depicting Rhondda vehicles was given to all current employees at Porth depot.

A small number of both items are still

Travelling back through time

It turned out to be a great day but getting ready for April 1 was no joke for staff at the Dean Road depot in South Shields.

To celebrate its centenary, the depot opened its doors to the local community. Attractions included a display of buses through the ages, fairground rides, refreshments, stalls and memorabilia.

A vintage bus from the main square transported young and old alike to and from the festivities. The day was very well attended, with every visitor receiving a commemorative leaflet, designed by the Stagecoach graphics department.

The event was marked officially with the unveiling of a commemo-



Gleaming with pride: The buses through the ages on show at the Dean Road depot's centenary celebrations.

rative plaque by South Tyneside Mayor Councillor Bill Lynch.

Over its 100 years, the depot's fleets

have included horse trams and electric trams, trolley buses and, of course, the current fuel-operated buses.

Youngster's vision of the future wins art prize



Stagecoach tomorrow: The multi-coloured bus of the future, complete with robot driver!

A young girl with an eye to the future has won a picture competition celebrating the centenary of the depot at Dean Road, South Shields.

The theme of the competition was Buses from Past, Present or Future and nine-year-old Lynn Davidson beat off stiff competition with her entry of a futuristic bus, which was very innovative in design – even featuring a robot at the wheel.

Her skills won her £100 towards art materials for her Biddick Hall Juniors School.

Stagecoach North East Marketing Manager Jodine Milne said: "We had tons of entries, all very impressive, and Lynn has done really well to win the competition. Who knows, with design skills like these we might ask her to do our future bus liveries for real!"

Lynn's picture was printed in a special commemorative leaflet distributed at the Centenary Open Day and it was planned to display entries for the competition inside local buses.



Century

bus heritage



shared the imaginations of visitors.

available to buy from Anthony Evans at Porth depot, Aberhondda Road, Porth CF37 0LN. The souvenir programme costs £2 (postage free) and ceramic coasters £10, plus £1.14 postage and packaging.

John Gould said: "The Rhondda today differs tremendously from the community served by the Tramways Company, but the interest generated by this event clearly demonstrated pride in our history and heritage.

"With Stagecoach now firmly established in the driving seat of the Rhondda bus network, we look forward to a further 100 glorious years."



Colonel Nigel Josling OBE cuts the cake at Aldershot Bus Depot with, from left, Jason Bush, Engineering Manager Aldershot; Andrew Dyer; and Jim Mortimore, Operations Manager Aldershot.

Ton up for bus travel in Hampshire town

Aldershot bus depot reached 100 not out this summer and celebrated in style.

To mark the centenary, the Aldershot and District Bus Interest Group and Stagecoach South organised an open day at the

depot in June.

And thousands of local residents and bus enthusiasts enjoyed the chance to see behind the scenes at the depot.

The highlight of the day, though, was the opportunity to view the 50 classic buses from across the UK that were on display and offering free rides to the public.

One of those vehicles was Bill Tutty's Dennis LoLine 3 double decker. Bill was the first driver to take the brand new vehicle out of the Aldershot depot back in 1965. He bought the bus in 1998 and now attends bus rallies and events around the country as events manager for the interest group.

Along with Bill, many of the depot's long serving drivers and staff helped out at the open day. They were on hand to show visitors around and answer the many questions on the day-to-day running of the depot.

No celebration, though, is complete without a ceremony and Aldershot Garrison Commander Nigel Josling OBE duly cut the commemorative cake to mark the 100th anniversary of bus travel in the Hampshire town.

Andrew Dyer, Stagecoach South's Managing Director, said the event was an important milestone for public transport in Hampshire.

"We, as bus operators, are always looking forward to improve and enhance services in the region yet it is important to recognise the achievements of those who pioneered bus transport over the century," he said.

More than £1000 was raised from the sale of programmes and bus artefacts for enthusiasts and will be donated to the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice in Farnham to cover running costs.

When it comes to getting a message across, Stagecoach is a world leader.

The group has won more international recognition for the high standard of its corporate and investor communications.

It lifted an Award of Distinction in the Company Overview Video category at the 2006 Videographer Awards. The company was also commended at the 2006 Investor Relations Best Practice Awards for the corporate website www.stagecoachgroup.com. It was one of four companies shortlisted in the Best Website FTSE250 category of the awards.

Yet another prize vehicle

The Videographer awards are for business communications and highlight companies whose video-based communication is "outstanding".

Stagecoach's corporate video, *Delivering Innovation*, provides an overview of the company and uses three case studies to demonstrate its flair for generating new ideas on how to improve public transport.

The Investor Relations Best Practice

Awards, which were organised by the Investor Relations Society and attracted 750 nominations, honour companies leading the way in best practice investor communication and providing clear, timely and transparent information.

Stagecoach Group's website was completely redesigned last year, with more comprehensive information and additional functions. The judges commented on the website's "excellent

strategy and key drivers" content.

Last year the company also picked up the top prize at an international competition for corporate websites.

Steven Stewart, Stagecoach Group Head of Media and Public Affairs, said: "We are delighted to be recognised for the high standard of our communications with these two awards.

"Stagecoach has built up excellent relationships with its investors, customers and other key stakeholders, and our commitment to clear and open communications has been a central part of that success."

Local legend in line for national recognition

A North East driver has become a legend in his own lifetime!

David Hands has made the headlines with the local media and is famous throughout the region for his 'on bus' commentaries, filling passengers in on their surroundings as they travel on their journey.

Now he's in line for wider recognition after being short-listed for Frontline Employee of the Year in the National Transport Awards.

The title is awarded to an employee who has gone beyond the call of duty and delivered a better service as a result – and Stagecoach thinks David fits the bill.

Operations Manager David Wakefield said: "He is one of the most respected and well-known employees in Stagecoach North East and we are extremely proud to be able to put his name forward.

"He delights in his work and consistently goes beyond the call of duty to improve the service on his route."

David also takes time out to collect for charity and recently helped to raise £2000 for Macmillan Cancer Relief with a collection on the buses.

The award results will be announced on July 18.

Rail-air link Heathrow Flyer takes to the road

Virgin Trains has relaunched its Watford Junction to Heathrow Airport link as Virgin Trains ExpressCoach.

The new branding emphasises the rail-air link is part of a family of add-on services that enhance the core Virgin Trains rail business.

The four coaches used on the Watford to Heathrow Airport route entered service last year and are finished in a colour scheme that matches Virgin's Pendolino trains.

They provide connections with train services at Watford Junction. Coaches run half-hourly through most of the day seven days a week, with an average journey time of 40 minutes to Terminal 4 and 65 minutes to Terminal 1. They also serve Terminals 2 and 3.

Connecting with Virgin's long-distance Pendolino services from the West Midlands, North West and Cumbria/Scotland at Watford Junction, the Virgin Trains ExpressCoach provides a car-free, hassle-free alternative for holiday-makers and business executives heading to Heathrow Airport.

The coaches also connect with the Silverlink County outer suburban rail network, serving stations in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

The service also offers a way of getting to the airport without having to cross London.

Nation pays tribute to bombing victims

7/7 remembered in day of poignant commemoration

by Steven Stewart

Stagecoach employees in London were among millions of people who paid their respects to the victims of the July 7 bombings by taking part in a national two-minute silence on the first anniversary of the attacks.

Buses pulled over at the side of the road in London and elsewhere in the UK at 12 noon during a day of poignant events to commemorate the attacks and remember those lost and injured.

Memorial plaques were laid at the blast sites, with survivors and victims' families among those present.

The day of remembrance began with flowers being laid at King's Cross station to coincide with the timing of the attacks.

Mayor of London Ken Livingstone and the capital's transport chief, Peter Hendy, also laid flowers in Tavistock Square, a year to the minute after a bomb exploded on the number 30 Stagecoach bus.

Stagecoach driver George Psaradakis, at the wheel when the bus exploded, killing 14 people, also laid flowers.

Plaques carrying the names of all those who died in the July 7 explosions were laid at King's Cross, Russell Square, Edgware Road and Aldgate Tube stations, and at Tavistock Square.

Relatives of those killed were invited to several private events, including a lunch provided by Transport for London (TfL).

The day ended with a public ceremony at Regent's Park in west London when the names of the 52 people who died were read out.

Two weeks after the 7/7 bombings, a number 26 Stagecoach bus, driven by Mark Maybanks, was the target of a failed bomb attack in Shoreditch.



Engraved in the nation's memory: The devastated number 30 Stagecoach bus that has become an iconic image of 7/7.

Apprentices just wild about training



Outward emotion: The apprentices show their enthusiasm during the teambuilding week.

More than 50 first year engineering apprentices have taken a walk – and a climb – on the wild side.

They recently headed to an outward bound centre in Appledore, North Devon, as part of their block release course at S & B Training in Bristol. Three apprentices from Yorkshire Traction and one from Strathay also joined the group.

The week-long event was aimed at team building, motivation and leadership. It was also the first opportunity all the first years had to meet with the other Stagecoach apprentices from around the country.

Activities during the week included abseiling, raft building, team assault course, climbing, team challenges and the infamous 'high ropes'.

The apprentices were supported at different times during the week by Service Delivery Director Paul O'Callaghan, Engineering Director Mark Horide, Deputy Training and Development Manager Dorothy Hermiston, and Clare Willis, Training Co-ordinator.

The centre and company staff were very impressed by the enthusiasm and attitude of all of the apprentices and all agreed they were a credit to Stagecoach UK Bus.



Bus names given the thumbs-up

Drivers in the North East aren't just climbing behind the wheel when they start a shift but taking to the road with Tootie Fruity, Bubbles, Buster the Bus, Bess the Express and Sparkle!

That's the names local kids came up with in a competition to celebrate the launch of a new service.

Marketing Manager for Stagecoach North East Jodine Milne said: "We had a great response level, although some of the names were a little unusual to say the least! We chose these ones because we thought they gave a nice, friendly feeling to the buses – even the bus drivers are becoming quite attached."

The buses, which make up the fleet on a new bus service to the Kingston Park area of Newcastle, have been made even more eye-catching with distinctive green livery.

The launch ceremony was attended by representatives

What's in a name? Three of the local youngsters who came up with the winning name for buses on a new service in Newcastle.

of Newcastle City Council, Kingston Park Community Association, Stagecoach and Nexus.

Robin Knight, Commercial Director for Stagecoach in Newcastle, said: "The Kickstart government-funded bus route has been developed in direct response to increased levels of congestion within the area and it is hoped that investment in new vehicles and a targeted marketing campaign will encourage people to use public transport rather than take their cars."

"Everything has been designed to appeal to the modern traveller, with buses and timetables structured to fit in with contemporary lifestyles."

The service started at the end of May and has been doubling its passenger targets.

Passengers to benefit from £6m rail upgrade

Stations across the South West Trains network have been given a new lease of life, thanks to an investment of around £6 million.

Included in the ambitious improvements programme was a £1 million contribution from Transport for London (TfL) towards safety and security, which will benefit the metro area.

Improvements included enhanced subway and overbridge lighting, additional cycle facilities, CCTV and improved waiting accommodation.

Other major projects with TfL have also been undertaken, such as the refurbishment of the booking hall at Vauxhall station to help relieve congestion.

Several partners joined forces to make the improvements possible, including Hampshire, Surrey and Dorset county councils, Royal Borough of Kingston, Southampton City Council and Network Rail.

Some stations have undergone major works, whilst a fresh coat of paint has brightened up others.

South West Trains' Customer Service Director Ian Johnston said: "I am delighted with the work we have achieved and, of course, with the support of our partners and associates. I am glad local stations are recognised as a worthwhile investment and am keen to continue improving conditions and facilities across the network."

The improvements have obviously hit the mark with the public, as a recent National Passenger Survey shows overall satisfaction has risen from 78% to 83% in a year.

Ian Brown, Managing Director, TfL London Rail said: "Passenger safety and security is a top priority for TfL. We hope the improvements will reassure passengers and encourage more people to use London's rail network."

Work is expected to continue throughout the rest of the year.

If you are making improvements to benefit your passengers, we would like to hear from you.

Your On Stage contact is listed on p2.

A tale to tell?



Sheffield unfurls SAFE travel flag

Sheffield's secondary schools have signed up to be SAFE.

They will work with local bus operators and the Transport Executive as part of the Supporting A Friendly Environment (SAFE) scheme to promote good practice in home-to-school transport.

Staff and pupils will work with SAFE officers to encourage more people to use public transport, ensure a safe environment on the school buses and deal with anti-social behaviour by drawing up and implementing transport-related policies and initiatives.

Schools will be awarded the SAFE Mark for recognising pupil transport issues and addressing them with a plan of action.

The SAFE Partnership is responsible for promoting and maintaining personal safety on all public transport in South Yorkshire.

Its partners include the Transport Executive, Stagecoach Supertram, First Group, Yorkshire Traction, Bus Operators Serving South Yorkshire (BOSSY), British Transport Police, South Yorkshire Police and Northern Rail.

They're helping schools in a number of ways, which include providing regular drivers who've completed customer care courses with special sections on transporting young people.

Stocksbridge is just one of the high schools to sign up for the scheme. Assistant Head Margaret Lowe said: "We are very pleased to be working in close co-operation with the Transport Executive and to be part of the SAFE Mark scheme."

"At Stocksbridge High School, we are committed to ensuring that home-to-school transport of our students is safe and effective. We work with students, parents and governors to ensure everyone adopts a responsible and safe response to public transport."

SAFE Liaison Officer Fran Cockerill, who works at the school, said: "I'm delighted that Stocksbridge has joined the SAFE Mark scheme and I'm looking forward to working with students, teachers and parents at the school to encourage safer public transport use."

"We've had an excellent response to the SAFE programme in Sheffield and now, with Stocksbridge signing up, it means every school in the city has joined the scheme. This is an excellent achievement and Sheffield secondary schools are really flying the flag for SAFE travel."



The twilight zone: The young Filers who sharpened up their football skills with Dunfermline Athletic.

From the Twilight to the bright side of the road

A football initiative to give teenagers a healthy alternative to life on the streets has had a successful run in Scotland.

The Twilight League, organised by Dunfermline Athletic and sponsored by Stagecoach, ran in conjunction with Fife Police for 10 weeks until the end of June.

Dedicated sessions were held from 8pm until 10 pm every Friday evening, providing youngsters with football skills and development training.

The Twilight League was targeted at teenagers aged between 14 and 18 and aimed to provide them with a healthy alternative to life on the streets and help them avoid the dangers of being drawn into anti-social behaviour.

Dunfermline Athletic's Jim Leishman commented:

"Our community initiative is extremely important to Dunfermline so to allow us to extend this through our links with Fife Police into this area is great. I can only thank Stagecoach again for its contribution to allow this initiative to take place."

Steven Stewart, Stagecoach Group's Head of Media and Public Affairs, added: "Stagecoach is a major part of communities across Fife, where we run lifeline bus services. We have a strong track record of supporting young people, who are the future of our country."

"We hope our backing for the Twilight League will help local youngsters be their best. As well as staying fit and out of trouble, sport is a great way to learn important skills that can help you achieve success in your life."

Fife's stationery vehicle...

A group of enterprising pupils in a Scottish secondary school are really on the ball... point, thanks to Stagecoach in Fife.

The Inverkeithing High School students, with a range of social problems and learning difficulties, were taking part in a business project. The cash raised went to Guide Dogs for the Blind.

To help keep the overheads at a minimum, Stagecoach donated pens, pencils and rulers to fill the stationery holders that were handmade by the pupils.

Operations Director Doug Fleming

said: "Heather King, a third year pupil, wrote to us directly, inviting us to take part in the project and Stagecoach was more than happy to help with this worthwhile assignment."

"By donating this stationery we are assisting in maximising the money raised through this project."

Pens at the ready: Stagecoach graduate trainee Mark Whitelocks presents the pupils with a selection of Stagecoach stationery.



Scots receive some canny advice on retirement

The Scottish Transport Credit Union is providing all Stagecoach employees in Scotland with free pension information to help them plan for retirement.

A dedicated pension website has been set up at www.mycu.co.uk where they can access a pension forecast, pension tracing if they've lost contact with an old provider, a state pension calculator, and other helpful advice.

Stagecoach employees in Scotland are represented on the Credit Union Board of Directors through two prominent employees and union representatives, John Fotheringham from Stagecoach in Fife, and Jimmy Young from Stagecoach Western.

Scottish Transport Credit Union is based in Glasgow with more than 8000 members in Scotland.

It provides many services to employees, including savings accounts and general insurance.

Also available are free life insurance, free financial advice, free money advice, free legal advice, mortgage set-up free of broker charges, and an interest free starter loan of £300.

Every Stagecoach depot and office has a local officer who can advise on all aspects of the Credit Union, including signing up new members.

The website www.scotcu.co.uk details what's available and a personal enquiry line allows direct contact with a member of staff at local call rates on 0845 45 00 933.

Passenger saved from her indoors!

As a passenger, Paul Smith has a lot to thank Stagecoach Bluebird driver Graeme Milne for.

Paul is the first to admit that he has a glorious history for falling asleep on buses and, on more than one occasion, has required the assistance of Graeme!

And a recent email to the East Scotland Customer Services praised Graeme for his help in escorting him to the right stop in Aberdeen to catch his bus home after a night out... sure that if he missed it and had to wait for the next, his wife would divorce him!

Paul said: "In an age where people really have lost the ability to provide and promote good customer service, he really stands out and should be applauded on the part of the customer and commended by his employers.

"Graeme, well done. I look forward to you looking after me the next time my wife offers me a green card to go out!"

If you have got a funny story to tell about your passengers, then we'd like to hear about it.

Your On Stage contact is listed on p2.

A tale to tell?



Making a quicker connection

Passengers will be quicker off the mark thanks to Stagecoach South, which has just introduced nine new single-deckers into its 75-strong stable.

The easy access Solo models, which collectively cost £675,000, will be used between North Town, Aldershot, Sandyhill and Farnham. And they will now run every 10 minutes, instead of every 15.

Solo celebrations: Stagecoach South's new fleet is given the big send-off.

Managing Director for Stagecoach South Andrew Dyer and Councillor Helyn Clack, Surrey County Council's Executive Member for Transportation, launched the buses.

Andrew said the investment, and additional resources required for the new Connect service, demonstrated Stagecoach's commitment to the Government's Kickstart initiative and ongoing Quality Bus Partnership with both Surrey and Hampshire county councils.

Improvements win passengers' backing

More passengers are giving Virgin Trains the thumbs-up.

The latest survey by an independent national rail consumer watchdog reveals that more people have become satisfied with Virgin Trains West Coast and CrossCountry services during the past year.

With punctuality up by around 18% year-on-year, overall satisfaction with the West Coast journey experience rose to 90%, up 10 points from spring 2005, and to 84% with Virgin CrossCountry, up one point.

Customer satisfaction with the cleanliness of trains rated particularly highly at 90%. Some 89% of West Coast and 82% of CrossCountry customers were satisfied with punctuality and reliability, which regularly exceeds 90% on a daily basis.

Improved journey times were reflected in satisfaction scores of 88% on West Coast and 86% on CrossCountry, up eight and four points respectively.

On board, more customers were satisfied with the helpfulness of staff and information given, and satisfaction with information provided at stations also recorded significant increases.

Passengers said they were more satisfied with the value for money of the price of their ticket, up 10 points on West Coast and five points on CrossCountry compared with a year ago. This reflects sales of the bargain Virgin Value tickets, particularly since these were made available for sale up to 6pm on the day before travel in a simplification of the booking system from last September.

This has driven down the average price paid for a Virgin West Coast ticket by 6.5% year-on-year to February 2006.

Virgin Trains Chief Executive Tony Collins said: "We have worked hard in all areas to improve quality of service for our customers and these results show our efforts are achieving measurable success. "We, however, shall not be content until our customers tell us they are 100% satisfied with all aspects of the service they receive."

The survey was carried out by Passenger Focus.

Stagecoach has a 49% shareholding in the Virgin Rail Group, which runs the West Coast and CrossCountry franchises.



Sir Richard pledges commitment to CrossCountry rail network

Passenger satisfaction with Virgin CrossCountry might be on a high, but Sir Richard Branson wants it to be even better.

On a tour of the Virgin CrossCountry network, Sir Richard said he was committed to the rail industry long-term and that Virgin Rail Group intended to pre-qualify for the new CrossCountry franchise.

He said: "We should see the competition to find an operator for CrossCountry from the end of next year as a real challenge and an opportunity for Virgin, our partners at Stagecoach and our people to show what we can offer."

Sir Richard continued: "Our passengers have voted with their feet and we have just celebrated carrying 20 million passengers in a year. We now need to build on our successes and look at how we can get more capacity onto the CrossCountry network. We've started so we'll finish!"

He made his comments as he joined staff at Reading before travelling on a Virgin Voyager train to Birmingham, where he met with both frontline and support staff before spending time with Virgin Rail Group's other train franchise – West Coast.

The network

Virgin CrossCountry operates a 'golden thread' of train services across mainland UK, linking Scotland with the North East/North West and Birmingham down to the

South Coast, South West of England and South Wales. From November 2007, the new CrossCountry franchise will also include services from Nottingham to Hereford and Cardiff via Birmingham and on the busy Birmingham-East Anglia link, which serves Leicester, Peterborough, Cambridge and Stansted Airport.

Investments

Virgin Rail Group launched the CrossCountry franchise in January 1997. Since then it has replaced its entire train fleet and improved services and connections. Virgin CrossCountry has invested over £1bn in 78 Virgin Voyager and tilting Super Voyager trains and now operates 184 services every day.

Measuring success

Passenger numbers have increased from 12 million in 1997 to more than 20 million in 2005/06 as Virgin CrossCountry has created massive growth on the regional inter-city network.

Since September 2004 numbers have increased by 621% between Derby and Leeds; 259% between Birmingham and Newcastle; 100% between Preston and Birmingham; 72% between Exeter and Plymouth and 126% between Manchester and Oxford. Business travel now accounts for almost 40% of CrossCountry journeys. Ten years ago it was less than 5%.

Bus girls go on the run

Ten female members of Stagecoach, along with friends and family, have been donning their trainers in preparation for a Race for Life event.

The three-mile run at Herne Bay in mid July, in aid of Cancer Research UK, has meant the bus girls racing to raise as much sponsorship as possible from their colleagues at Stagecoach's six depots in East Kent and Hastings.

Marketing Assistant Stacey Hall said

the runners were hoping to raise £1000 for the charity.

"We are delighted with the response so far from our colleagues," she told On Stage. "Not only are many donating money, but they have pledged to cheer us on at the event."

Ready to race: Sandra Taylor, Sam Wigley, Stacey Hall, Paula Blake and Sandra Rushton show off their racing numbers.



Record breakers on fast track to success



Mini drivers: The youngsters take a break from exploring the visiting double decker.

Driving a bus is kids' play

Inquisitive tots were able to clamber aboard and explore a Stagecoach in Cheltenham double decker when it visited Arthur Dye Little Learners pre-school.

About 30 children, aged three to four, were allowed to roam the bus, and even sit in the driver's seat.

The bus was taken to the school as part of youngsters' term-long project on transport and play leader Kerry Blindell

said the children had a fantastic time. "When one of the dads heard about our project, he suggested asking Stagecoach to send one of its buses along," she said.

"The driver and support staff were extremely friendly and the children were given the chance to have a look around the bus and to sing songs. It was a great day – the children were so excited when the bus pulled into the yard."

Sir Richard Branson envisioned a bigger and better Virgin Trains network as he joined colleagues in celebrating record-breaking performance improvements and passenger growth.

Announcing that Virgin Rail Group intends to pre-qualify for the expanded CrossCountry franchise, he said customers have seen only the start of plans to attract millions more to the railways.

Around £2 billion has been spent replacing all trains on Virgin CrossCountry and Virgin West Coast routes and transforming the travel experience. This has brought a 50% increase in passenger numbers and both companies have hit peak performance, now regularly achieving more than 90% punctuality.

Sir Richard said: "There were many cynics who just laughed at our plans when we launched the franchises. They said it could never be done and, at one point, even I briefly wondered if they might have been right. But we persevered and the Virgin rail operation of today is a shining example of what can be achieved with the right vision.

"We have developed close partnerships with Government, Network Rail and key suppliers such as Alstom and Bombardier to bring huge improvements to customers."

Highlighting a range of innovations planned over the next three years, he said that now that the two new fleets of trains had bedded in there was more to do to make rail travel irresistible.

This includes plans to run trains every 20 minutes between Manchester and London by 2008 – the highest frequency anywhere in the world for a journey of more than 300 kilometres (189 miles) on a route used by more than one operator.

Three services an hour will run between Birmingham and London under plans being finalised with Government and Network Rail. Faster and more frequent services will also be offered from London to Liverpool, Glasgow and North Wales.

Other plans include an hourly service from London to Chester, more trains between London and North Wales, first trials of e-ticketing, a new website to make ticket-buying easier, trial of a personal chauffeur service, mobile telephone links and wi-fi trials on trains.

More plans are being made for Virgin CrossCountry ahead of the refrenchising process but Sir Richard added: "We are not giving away any secrets to our rivals!"

Setting out a long-term vision, Virgin Trains Chief Executive Tony Collins said action is now required to ensure the train service grows to meet the massive increases in demand.

He said: "We need to look at more Pendolino trains and increasing carriages on the existing trains, otherwise we will inhibit further growth. We also need to improve car parking at stations. These are not vague ideas for the future but real issues we are already progressing.

"We also have trains that can travel at 140 mph, but are restricted to 125 mph. We are talking with Network Rail about running at 135 mph on some parts of the route – we believe we can do this and build on the success we have already seen."

Businesses choose the green option

More and more Greater Manchester businesses are jumping on the bandwagon to take full advantage of Stagecoach's business travel discount scheme.

Sales have increased by 25% in the last 12 months with organisations adopting the scheme as an alternative to motoring costs and parking problems.

The scheme provides discounted travel tickets for staff and, by increasing the use of public transport, reduces the pressure on employers to provide and fund car parking spaces.

It's available to any organisation with more than 100 employees and there are currently around 20 working with Stagecoach so far. They include councils, health authorities and local businesses.

Stagecoach works with these organisations to tailor the packages most suitable to them and gives support to promote the scheme internally.

The biggest growth area has been monthly and annual Megarider tickets, which are sold exclusively through the travel scheme. Discounts are also available on daily and weekly tickets and when bought in bulk.

Travel Co-ordinator at Stockport Primary Care Trust Mary Brooks explained: "Stagecoach's business travel discount scheme has enabled us to sell bus tickets to our employees at a discounted rate. This is of great benefit in helping us to encourage our employees to use public transport and is in line with NHS Corporate objectives in encouraging healthy lifestyles, reducing pollution and protecting the environment."

Buying a train ticket is now even easier

South West Trains has invested a total of £6.7 million in 259 new ticket vending machines to make buying a ticket as hassle-free as possible.

These will replace all the Quick-Fare machines currently at stations and will offer a whole host of fantastic benefits including:

- The choice to buy your ticket using cash or card
- The option to buy a seven-day season ticket
- Tickets to the most popular destinations in the country
- The option to use Railcards when buying your ticket
- English, French and German language options
- Tickets to London Underground destinations
- Same day car park permits from the station you are travelling from

Some 58 new ticket vending machines are already benefiting passengers at 13 South West Trains stations, including London Waterloo and Clapham Junction. This is by no means the end, as there are well over 100 stations due to have the new machines installed.

The touch-screen machines are easy to use and while they are being introduced at stations there will be designated staff to help guide passengers through the process.

Sunderland says 'you're hired!'

Sir Alan Sugar might have hired Michelle Dewberry but Sunderland has its own successful home-grown apprentice.

Twenty-year-old Dan Clark has just received confirmation of completion of his engineering apprenticeship, which he has been studying for the last four years.

Incorporating NVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3, Dan split his time between studying in Coventry and gaining practical experience in the workshop at the depot.

He is one of an elite squad, with only one apprentice every four years making it through the ranks at the Sunderland bus depot.

His final year was spent solely under

the supervision of mentor Neil McLeary, Engineering Manager.

Neil said: "Dan is an excellent worker who is very quick at grasping new tasks and systems, much like The Apprentice winner, Michelle. He has had to prove himself time and time again, not just in the classroom but also on the job. The difference is that this is real life and Dan's tasks have been integral to the work we do here. I'm over the moon to see him come all the way through his apprenticeship to become a fully qualified engineer."

Dan is equally happy, and said: "Although I loved the apprenticeship,



One of the elite: Sunderland's latest successful apprentice and now fully qualified engineer, Dan Clark.

I'm pleased the classroom based part is over. I think with a job like this you've got to enjoy getting your hands dirty and I loved the practical side in the workshop.

"Having a trade under your belt is a real advantage in this day and age. Doing something like this gives you skills you can carry throughout your whole life."

New airport service offers a flying start

'Hopair' people carriers put a new buzz into Scottish business

Scotland now has its first dedicated bus service for business jetsetters travelling to and from Glasgow Airport.

The 'Hotel Hopair' service, run by Scottish Citylink, is aimed specifically at business people, providing frequent and inexpensive daily runs between Glasgow city centre and the country's busiest international airport.

The service works to a seven-day timetable with pick up points at Glasgow Airport, the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre and George Square.

It also operates on demand, picking up when required at several major city centre hotels which are participating in the initiative.

Steve Walker, General Manager of Scottish Citylink, said: "Glasgow Airport is a vital gateway for people visiting or leaving the city on business. That is why we were keen to launch a service to ensure they have a hassle free, fast and inexpensive way to get to their destinations.

"We are delighted to have several top city centre hotels on board for this – the first service of its kind in Scotland – and one which, we hope, will be well received by the business community.

"Depending on its success, there is every possibility we could roll it out to other busy airport locations across the country."

Seven-seater people carriers run the route, with the fare costing just £5 single and £9 return.

There are nearly 50 daily departures and passengers can use the service from the named pick-up points without booking.

The hotels that have signed up have a dedicated phone line giving a direct



At your service: Citylink Commercial Manager Graeme Hoggan behind the wheel of the new Hopair bus.

link to the call centre for bookings.

The increased travel links between Glasgow Airport and the city have been welcomed by Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and Chief Executive Lesley

Sawers stated: "Improving connections between the city and Glasgow Airport is vital to facilitate good working links nationally and internationally.

"With passenger numbers at Glasgow

Airport predicted to virtually double to over 15 million a year by 2030, we need to ensure Glasgow is an easy city to visit and do business in, and improving links to the airport is vital."

It's the longest serving party in town...

Stagecoach North West recently paid tribute to its long serving employees and retirees at a special dinner at Penrith, Cumbria.

In all, 24 staff were present on the evening, attended by UK Bus Division

Managing Director Les Warneford. The number of years of unbroken service of those who attended totalled 776 shared by employees from Carlisle, Chorley, Kendal, Morecambe, Preston and West Cumbria.

Recipients who attended the dinner were:

Carlisle: Richard Irving, Driver – 35 years. Gordon Bateman, retired Driver – 25 years.

Chorley: Ian Pendlebury, Fitter – 25 years. Martin Jolly, Chargehand/Bodybuilder – 30 years. Douglas Bailey MBE, retired Driver – 35 years.

Kendal: Trevor Pennington, Operations Manager – 40 years. Anthony Draper, retired Driver – 27 years.

Morecambe: Malcolm O'Halloran, Assistant Operations Manager – 25 years.

Preston: Satyanarayana Padala, Depot

Inspector – 30 years. David Seed, Coachbuilder – 30 years. Dennis Pritchard, Driver/NVQ Assessor – 35 years. Barry Blakeley, National Express Driver – 40 years.

West Cumbria: Mark Bell, Workshop Manager – 25 years. Colin Johnstone, Driver – 25 years. Michael Turner, Driving Instructor – 25 years. Philip Wilson, Engineering Manager – 25 years. William Hughes, Fitter – 30 years. Gordon Gray, Driver – 35 years. Frank Derbyshire, Driver – 35 years. Richard Robinson, Driver – 40 years. Edward McMullen, retired Driver – 40 years. Derek Glaister, retired Driver – 41 years. William Malkinson, retired Driver – 43 years.

Head Office: Nigel Barrett, Managing Director – 35 years.



Crime-busting initiative on the buses

Crime on Stockport's buses could be a thing of the past as Stagecoach joins forces with Greater Manchester Police to tackle anti-social behaviour.

It's investing £5000 to support an increased police presence on buses in Stockport. Uniformed and plain clothes police officers will travel on a number of routes in and around the area during the school half-term and summer holidays.

High frequency services will be targeted initially, but this will extend to other less frequent and night services over the course of the campaign.

Stagecoach's Operations Director, Elisabeth Tasker, explained: "As part of our ongoing commitment to safety and security, and the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour on board our buses, we're naturally very happy to be working with Greater Manchester Police again.

"Uniformed officers will provide a high-visibility presence to reassure our customers as well as acting as a deterrent, while the non-uniformed officers will be helping to perform covert operations in problem areas.

"Stockport has no lesser or greater threat of this type of problem but the opportunity arose to work with Stockport Police following similar campaigns in the past that have proven to be of great value.

"Feedback from previous campaigns has been very positive from both our staff and customers in terms of actual results, general reassurance and from a crime deterrent perspective."

Inspector David Sutcliffe, who is responsible for Stockport Central's Neighbourhood Policing Team, added: "Stockport Police are determined to ensure that people feel safe in their communities and that includes feeling safe on public transport, which provides a real lifeline to many residents.

"We are pleased to be working in partnership with Stagecoach to make life difficult for people who want to indulge in anti-social behaviour against bus passengers and drivers. This initiative is only one of many planned to tackle anti-social behaviour and to bring to justice those who are making other people's lives a misery."

Eager Beavers quiz staff in Newcastle

A sett of 'badgers' was the unusual wildlife to be found recently at Stagecoach Newcastle.

However, the badgers in question happened to be the name of a group of youngsters from the 1st Westerhope Beaver Scout Group.

Assistant Beaver Leaders Christine Wilson, Suzanne Gordon, Sheila Watson and helper Claire White accompanied the nine boys on a tour of the depot, led by Customer Service Manager Graham Robertson.

Graham was ably assisted by Control Supervisor Gordon Turner, Depot Fitter Chris Johns and Driver Syd Bolton, who all answered questions about their jobs put to them by the eager Beavers, who received Stagecoach tee-shirts as a memento of the visit.

Changing faces and places

London MD reaches his bus stop

Stagecoach London Managing Director Barry Arnold is retiring in the summer after a 42-year career in the bus industry.

And his contribution to the industry has received Royal recognition with the award of an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Barry (60), who has lived in Hertfordshire since 1974 and is married with two children and one grandchild, said: "I'm really pleased to have received such recognition. It came as a surprise."

"I have had more than 40 years' service in the bus industry, but I have been very fortunate to have worked with a lot of very talented people. I've had a great time working with Stagecoach since 1994 and over the years my career has taken me overseas to Hong Kong and Singapore."

"It's a job I've loved doing and it's given me a lot of satisfaction."

Nigel Barrett, currently Managing

Director of Stagecoach North West, has been appointed Managing Director designate for Stagecoach London and will work closely with Barry over the next three months before taking over on August 1.

Stagecoach North West Commercial Director Chris Bowles will succeed Nigel Barrett as Managing Director for the regional operating company.

Les Warneford, Managing Director of Stagecoach UK Bus, said: "Barry has been a key part of our success in growing our London bus business over the past few years. He has built up excellent relationships with Transport for London and we would like to give him our best wishes for his retirement."

"Stagecoach London is our biggest bus business in the UK and, as part of



Barry Arnold.



Chris Bowles.

our succession planning, Nigel will be working closely with Barry over the next few months to ensure there is a smooth transition.

"Nigel is an excellent public transport professional and I am sure he will further enhance our reputation as one of the best bus operators in the capital."

"Chris has a wealth of experience in the UK bus industry, particularly in the

North West, and I am delighted he will be heading up our operation in the area."

Barry has worked for Stagecoach for 12 years and has headed up the company's London business since 1997.

He started his bus industry career in 1964 after leaving school when he became a clerk for London Transport and during the past four decades he also worked in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Nigel Barrett (53), originally from London, has more than 35 years' experience in bus and rail operations in the UK. A former London Transport bus conductor, he has held a number of senior managerial positions for Stagecoach and also spent time working for the business in Malawi.

He was previously Managing Director for Stagecoach in Teesside and also

worked for more than two years as General Manager of Feltham Division of South West Trains, the UK's biggest commuter rail franchise.

Stagecoach London, which employs around 4300 staff, operates contracted bus services for Transport for London in East, South East and Central London. The company's 1300 buses carry around 300 million passengers a year, giving it a 16% share of the London bus market.

Chris Bowles (53) has more than 30 years' experience in the bus industry and joined Stagecoach in 1996 when the company acquired operations in Manchester where he was one of three Area Traffic Managers. Chris became Operations Director at Stagecoach's Ribble business in 2000 before becoming Commercial Director for the North West in 2001 when the Ribble and Cumberland operations were merged.

West Scotland appointments

New key members of the Stagecoach West Scotland management team have been appointed.

Sam Greer has become the new Managing Director and John Harper has taken up the position of Engineering Director following the promotions of Tom Wileman and Robert Andrew.

Sam was Engineering Director for West Scotland for nearly 10 years after joining Stagecoach in 1992 and has 22-years' experience in the bus industry.

His successor, John, has 25-years' industry experience and has been with Stagecoach since 1991.

Tom Wileman was promoted from Managing Director for Scotland to Regional Director for the North West, while Robert Andrew – formerly Deputy Managing Director – has become Managing Director for Scotland.

New Managing Director for Scotland Robert Andrew said: "I'd like to wish Sam and John every success in their new roles. I'd also like to recognise the significant contribution made by Tom Wileman to the Stagecoach West Scotland business."

Also joining the team is former graduate trainee Sarah Longair who has been appointed Operations Director.

Sarah, who is currently Operations Manager at Stagecoach Manchester's Princess Road depot, will take up the post on September 1.

New look to Scotland's top team

Management in Scotland's bus operations will be strengthened thanks to a number of new appointments.

Charlie Mullen (54) – Managing Director of Strathgrym since 1989 and a former finance director – has been appointed Managing Director of Stagecoach Bluebird.

Doug Fleming (58) is now Managing Director for Stagecoach East Scotland – which includes the Fife and Strathgrym divisions. He was previously Operations Director for Stagecoach in Fife and has held senior positions with Travel Dundee.

Sandy Brydon (63) has become Engineering Director for Stagecoach East Scotland. He has held the same post in Fife since 1991 and also held a variety of posts in the Scottish Bus Group.

Tom Robertson (54) has been appointed Assistant Engineering Director for Stagecoach East Scotland. He began his career with Strathgrym in 1968 and has held a number of engineering posts within the

company. He became Engineering Director of Strathgrym in 1997. Along with Sandy Brydon, he will now share responsibility for the East Scotland divisions.

Jim Gardner (53) has become Commercial Manager for Stagecoach Bluebird. He's worked in the bus industry since 1970 and with Strathgrym since 1985. He became Commercial Manager for Strathgrym in 1993 and will continue to be involved in commercial and network issues at Strathgrym.

Lisa Henry (28) – former Marketing Manager for Stagecoach Bluebird and Fife – is now Marketing Manager for Bluebird and East Scotland. She'll also take on additional marketing responsibilities at Strathgrym in her expanded role.

Managing Director for Stagecoach Scotland Robert Andrew said: "These appointments will strengthen our management team across Bluebird, Fife and Strathgrym and ensure we continue to offer high quality services that attract more passengers to bus travel."

Further developments in Training

It's all change at UK Bus' Training and Development Department.

The department has been undergoing a restructuring since the appointment of Matt Darroch as Training and Development Manager towards the end of last year.

Dorothy Hermiston, the former S/NVQ Manager, is the new Deputy Training and Development Manager. She'll help Matt across the full range of training and development activity – with a particular focus on engineering training.

Former S/NVQ Administrator Clare Willis has been appointed Training Co-ordinator and, in that role, will provide a full support service to both Matt and Dorothy with the help of Rhona Rattray as Training Administrator.

Two in-house Trainers are also being recruited to ensure that, where possible, management and supervisory training programmes are delivered internally by Stagecoach staff in a way that's more relevant to the company's operating environment.

UK Bus strengthens management team

Two new directors have been appointed at UK Bus – helping to strengthen the management team.

Tom Wileman is the Regional Director for the North West and Robert Andrew is Scotland's new Managing Director.

Tom has enjoyed a 35-year career with Scottish Bus Group and joined Stagecoach in Fife in 1990.

He's held positions as Operations Director for the East Midlands, Managing Director with Stagecoach's Fife, Bluebird and Manchester divisions and, more recently, Managing Director for Scotland.

He now retains responsibility for the Scottish Citylink joint venture and is helping UK Bus Managing Director Les Warneford with other business development projects in the expanded northern region.

He also has specific responsibility for Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside operations.

Robert started out in 1985 with Scottish Bus Group's Kelvin and Western companies and joined Stagecoach in 1992. He was Operations Manager in Inverness before becoming Operations Director for Bluebird and Fife and Managing Director for Fife and East Scotland.

He's now been promoted from Deputy Managing Director to Managing Director for Scotland and is responsible for the



Robert Andrew.



Tom Wileman.

Bluebird, Strathgrym, Fife and Western divisions.

Les Warneford said: "I would like to congratulate both Tom and Robert on their deserved promotions. These appointments will further strengthen our UK Bus management team as we continue to grow our successful bus operations across the country."

Virgin Trains has appointed David Lowrie as Virgin Rail Group Bid Director to lead its new franchise bid team.

And one of his first tasks will be to oversee the bidding process for the re-made and re-tendered CrossCountry franchise.

A qualified chartered accountant, David has seven years' rail industry experience, principally as Finance Director of the Wales and West, Cardiff Railway Company, Wales and Borders and Wessex franchises.

David's new bid for success

As a key member of the management team that improved the operating and financial performance of these businesses, he worked closely with future members of the Virgin Trains senior team.

David qualified with City of London-based KPMG and spent the early part of his career with Powell Duffryn plc and

Colgate Palmolive before joining Prism Rail plc as Group Financial Controller in 1997.

Two years later he became Finance Director of Wales and West Passenger Trains, Cardiff Railway Company and At-Seat Catering Ltd, which his team led to the top of the national performance

league tables.

He renegotiated the franchise terms and created the Wales and Borders and Wessex franchises through a series of reorganisations and acquisitions, working with Chris Gibb and Charles Belcher, later appointed Managing Directors, Virgin CrossCountry and Virgin West Coast

respectively. David then re-financed Milk Link, the UK's third largest integrated dairy business before returning to the rail industry as Bid Director, Virgin Trains. A married father-of-two, he lives in the Cotswolds.

Virgin Trains Group Finance Director Linda Bell said: "We are very excited by David's arrival and the opportunity to bid for the new CrossCountry franchise. We look forward to working with him and wish him every success in his new role."

Keeping cosy on the greens

The Hampshire Amy Rose Under 31s Bowling Team will now be cosy in their inter-county competitions across the UK.

Stagecoach donated fleeces to the nine team members following a request for sponsorship from manager Rosemary Corney.

She thought that the uniform fleece worn by her bus driver husband Steve would be ideal and Pete Robinson, Stagecoach's Operations Manager in Andover, agreed to support the team.

Attending the presentation at the Whitchurch Bowling Club was Molly

Shutter, president of the Hampshire County Women's Bowling Association.

"I'm delighted that Stagecoach is supporting some of our young bowlers," she said.

"We are keen to encourage the next generation of players to take up bowling. It is important that the image changes for the sport that no longer requires teams to play in whites," said Molly.

Season warm-up: Steve and Rosemary Corney with Pete, Carley Bishop, Paula Roundtree, Molly, Georgina Heath and Claire Spreadbury.



Hanoi hike to help hospice



Hanoi here I come: Paul steps out on his fund-raising build-up.

Paul Southgate, the Managing Director of Stagecoach in Kent, has volunteered to join a sponsored walk in Vietnam to raise funds for a kids' hospice.

He will be part of a 20-strong team that will spend 11 days in North Vietnam in October, walking more than 100km over difficult terrain from Hanoi to the Pu Luong Nature Reserve.

When Paul (51), from Tenterden, checked with Stagecoach's founder and Chief Executive Brian Souter that he could take time off from his duties he was delighted with the response.

"Brian has seen the support we have offered the Demelza Hospice over the years so he immediately promised to match any sponsorship I can raise to boost funds for the hospice," said Paul.

"I am already receiving pledges from many of our management team in Canterbury and from our depots across the region."

In preparation for his Hanoi hike, Paul is starting to build up his stamina. The itinerary for the walk will require all participants to walk for an average of eight to nine hours each day, often through uninhabited areas with nothing but a satellite phone to use for emergencies. The distances will vary depending on the terrain, which can be very steep.

Paul, who admits to being several stone overweight and very unfit, says that apart from a multitude of creepy crawlies to contend with, the organisers highlight the humidity as one factor that can make the trek exhausting. Whilst that climate cannot be emulated in Kent, Paul has already started his training by walking some of the bus routes near his home.

Sue Bedborough, area fund-raising manager for the Sittingbourne-based hospice, said she admired Paul for taking the challenge:

"We appreciate the friendship and support shown by Paul and his team and the tremendous offer made by Brian Souter."

Anyone wishing to sponsor Paul can pledge by email at backdemelza.withpaul@stagecoachbus.com or by post to Paul Southgate, Stagecoach, The Bus Station, St Georges Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2SY.

Peak fitness as staff scale the heights

Eight members of staff from South Wales recently left their buses in the valleys to scale the UK's three highest mountains... in under 24 hours.

Starting at Mount Snowdon, Dan Seymour, Wayne Powell, John Rees and Steve Parry from Brynmawr depot, Neville Coleske, Mike Anderson and Adrian Mortimer-Rees from Caerphilly depot, and Area Engineering Manager Mark Powell moved on to Scafell Pike that evening before completing the gruelling challenge on Ben Nevis in the early hours of the next day.

The team was ferried between the three countries by two drivers, Huw Davies and Mark Paynter, in a minibus funded by Stagecoach in South Wales.

It was hoped to raise at least £1500 for Tenovus, a cancer charity committed to quality research, prevention/education, counselling and patient care.



Support galore for Maria's charity leap



Happy landing: A relieved Maria after her jump.

Maria Barbosa decided to do her first-ever parachute jump in memory of her late son. On the day of her 10,000ft jump her only child, Steven, would have been 12.

He passed away a year ago at Helen & Douglas House, Cowley Road, Oxford, for whom Maria did her fund-raising leap.

The Stagecoach Oxfordshire bus driver has so far raised £1,600 with more money still promised.

And she has praised the support of her Stagecoach colleagues, which she described as 'amazing'.

"I want to say a big thank you to every driver and member of staff at the depot - their support has kept me going and made me feel very close to my work", said Maria (37).

"My colleagues at work have given me huge support and I can't describe the support I have had from Stagecoach itself."

"I felt that raising money for the hospice by doing a parachute jump on Steven's birthday was a very positive thing to do. I am pleased I did it and I would certainly do it again."

Maria, who completed her tandem parachute jump at Weston-on-the-Green airfield, came to the UK from Portugal 14 years ago and dreamt of being a bus driver.

She joined Stagecoach Oxfordshire nearly four years ago and has recently been based at the Bicester depot, driving a double decker on the Bicester to Oxford service.

Loyal service honoured

A total of 17 South Wales' employees were recently honoured at a long service dinner in Cwmbran.

Collectively clocking up an incredible 590 bus years, the staff were drawn from Brynmawr, Chepstow, Cwmbran, Merthyr and Porth depots plus the regional head office.

Special mention must be made of Driver Ron Morgan and Storeman John Amos from Cwmbran depot, along with Revenue Inspectors Eddie Mullaly from head office, all of whom are celebrating 45 years' loyal service.

A marathon hike and a severe haircut... that's what two members of Stagecoach's team at Hastings depot committed themselves to in the name of charity.

Driver and union representative Les Smith joined the 17-mile pier walk from Hastings to Eastbourne in June and collected over £1000 in sponsorship that will be donated to ECHO, the Evelina Children's Heart Organisation.

Alfonso Assorgi, originally from Italy and now a Ninfeld resident has, over the past six months, grown a full beard and long hair deliberately to raise cash for Cancer Relief. He was hoping to raise over £500 by having it all shaved off at the Cancer Research Charity Shop in St Leonards in early July.

Hastings Operations Manager Tom Bridge was proud of Les and Alfonso's

Feet first and head first for charity



Happy hiker: Les Smith with his sponsorship board.

determination to raise funds for the charities.

He said: "They received tremendous sponsorship and support from their



Cut and fund: Alfonso Assorgi, hair today - gone now!

fellow drivers, engineers and the administration staff here at the depot. Donations were also made by passengers who had heard of their events."

Women from Stagecoach Group's Perth head-quarters raised nearly £500 as part of the national Race for Life campaign to boost funds for Britain's leading cancer charity.

They were among more than 2000 female runners who took part in a 5km run around the city's North Inch in aid of Cancer Research UK.

The Stagecoach runners - Elizabeth Bain, Katie Loudon and Norma Scott - raised £225, which was matched by the company. They were joined on the run by Katie's sister, Edith.

Perth's pacesetters: The team that took part in the national Race for Life.

Thousands of women have been involved in similar events across the UK, with a target of raising £46m by attracting 750,000 women to get involved.

Cancer Research UK's Race for Life began in 1994, with one race in Battersea Park when 680 women came together and raised £36,000 in sponsorship.

Twelve years on, Race for Life has grown to become the UK's biggest women-only fund-raising event.

The annual event has raised a total of more than £100m for the life-saving work of Cancer Research UK, with over two million women taking part.

