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**National Organiser**  
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# Passenger News

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**STOPPRESSSTOPPRESSSTOPPRESSSTOPPRESSSTOPPR**

- **A SAFER WAY NOW!**
- **STOP FOR A MINUTE**
- **11AM MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> 2011**

The Passenger Transport National Committee has called on all branches to support "Stop for a Minute"; an Armistice Day style pause for thought in support of our Safer Way campaign for better bus driving regulations in the UK. See inside for more details.



*As massive unrest rises amongst workers over the scale of cut-backs, inflation grows, job cuts soar, drastic changes to job contracts are imposed, and the banks talk again of further restrictions in lending - amidst a return of the bonus culture - PN looks at what it means for busworkers.*

*Plus ... much more!*

# Cuts that will savage bus services

By GRAHAM STEVENSON

National Organiser - Transport

ConDems callously tell unemployed to get on the bus but cut bus services!

Callously, the Tories and their Lib Dem allies tell people to get on a bus to look for a job but they are actually cutting bus services. It's alarming that subsidies paid direct to bus operators have been cut by a massive 20%. These cuts will result in the loss of significant bus services. It means more bus services will be confined to town-based, ordinary working hours' operations leading to greater social exclusion. Slashing local authorities' incomes by 28%, in a separate move, means that the one fifth of bus miles outside London that rely on publicly tendered routes are at risk. These are mainly evening and weekend services, often to rural areas and remote estates.

When the Tories privatised and deregulated the buses outside of London in the late 1980s, they were forced to accept "socially necessary" tendering. This is now at risk. Cameron stands to get what Thatcher wanted - the complete destruction of the bus as a social service. But they will have to run us over first - Unite will not only strongly defend its members in passenger services who struggle every day to keep the public on the road, we aim to support the much put upon passenger, too! The 20% cut in fuel duty rebate, or Bus Operator Subsidy Grant, could have been even deeper if it wasn't for the joint campaign launched earlier this year, which brought together Unite, RMT, the Campaign for Better Transport, the regional network body, PTEG, and Stagecoach, which forced the need to maintain bus fuel duty subsidies on the wider public agenda. Up to 75% cut had been mooted at one stage. Employers will have to pass on the costs to the public, or if they can get away with it (and we won't let them!) their employees. The result will surely be fares increases that could lead to a 10% reduction in passengers carried and service cuts, implying job losses in some thousands.

Boris Johnson's Transport for London chiefs were early to volunteer £5 billion in cuts in bus expenditure - without even being asked by the Treasury to do so. Even before the Department for Transport had even clarified what level of cuts it wanted and where these will be applied, Boris's hatchet men were at it. We campaigned against that, too, yet, now, TfL is told to slash its budget by 6% a year every year for four years, wiping £2bn off its £9bn funding and it seems (Boris, also) seems happy at the prospect!

London's bus market, unlike the rest of the country, runs on a totally contracted market with the private sector, with contracts renewed on a periodic basis. TfL are forcing these to have lower revenue per mile targets. Naturally, this will reduce operating profit margin in one fell swoop, perhaps by around 1.5% when most operators are lucky to obtain a rate of return of around 8% in London's regulated market. Losing a quarter of their profit in one fell swoop is certain to encourage the employers to savage the workforce and the travelling public both.

Boris Johnson once described London's busworkers as "the world's finest". Alright, he was electioneering at the time! But not only did he gain very few - if any - busworkers' votes, he's now about to find out why Unite's London busworkers have the reputation they do. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were the former-T&G's flagship membership. They are now set to claim that title from Unite. And busworkers across the UK will be following hard in their footsteps to defend terms and conditions along with public rights against the slashing aims of the coalition of Tories and the yellow ones.

An excellent start to the campaign against cuts was made in London, with a "Save Our Buses" lobby at City Hall, addressed by Unite AGS, Len McCluskey and Ken Livingstone, who Unite is strongly backing in his bid to return to the Mayoralty. The Unite campaign rightly links the interests of the travelling public with those of busworkers. For we know what this means, Ken Livingstone had to win a battle with the Treasury (OK, Gordon Brown!) when he was first Mayor to gain enough income stream to ensure a decent service was offered, at least in UK's capital city, if not across all parts of the country.

This first step will be followed by more 'belt-tightening' exercises on the peoples' transport (no cuts in taxi receipts in the City of London!). We know what this means - clapped out buses, cuts in mileage, soaring fares, and thinned service for the public. Wages freezes, attacks on conditions, buy outs and mergers resulting in forced moves for busworkers to garages far from where they live. Unite knows that busworkers both in the capital and right across the country will not be lacking when it comes to standing up for what's right.

There's only one answer - the fight back starts now! Rest assured - Unite will give maximum support to all members who struggle to defend and extend the rights of our members.



## Safer Way – campaign materials

The Passenger Sector's imaginative campaign to promote agreement across the whole industry to lighten the burden of driving and working time has already shifted into higher gear.

An imaginative clock/speedometer poster (pictured) in both notice board and office sizes has gone to all Passenger branches. This was followed by a T-shirt distributed at the first Unite Policy Conference.

A substantial pamphlet, a leaflet, and a sticker are about to hit branches as they begin discussing how to campaign effectively for our day of action on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The main aim is to ensure a pause for thought on every route across the country.

## Inflation on the up and up! Highest for two decades!!!!

|           | % increase on a year earlier |                   |     |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
|           | RPI                          | RPIX <sup>1</sup> | CPI |
| July      | 4.8                          | 4.8               | 3.1 |
| August    | 4.7                          | 4.7               | 3.1 |
| September | 4.6                          | 4.6               | 3.1 |

<sup>1</sup> RPI except mortgage interest payments

As PN repeatedly said during the ZERO % pay phase, which beset the Passenger Sector last year, inflation was set to soar. And here it is!

Weekly earnings are still losing their purchasing power as they lag behind the rise in the cost of living, the latest official figures show.

Inflation, based on the Retail Prices Index, showed a 4.7% rise in August — so the overall earnings rise was 2.6 percentage points lower than the rise in the cost of living. Pay negotiators take note!

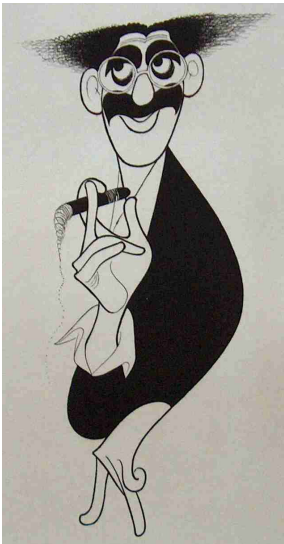
## FirstGroup skinny contracts



After raising concerns with the company nationally some months ago over the persistent appearance of a proposal at local level to introduce new contracts for new starters, Unite was told that there was no national policy on this. Employee rights in the proposed contracts are so sparse that drivers have dubbed them 'skinny contracts'. Most subsidiaries saw the notion brushed aside. Then, Unite's Leeds branch received notice of intent to use the contracts, leading to a plan to ballot locally and a call to consider whether a national ballot was deserved.

An emergency meeting of national negotiators ensued. Bobby Morton, NW RIO, who deputised for Graham Stevenson at the meeting with First's national management was able to report that: *"I informed the company on behalf of Unite that, not only would we not tolerate the imposition of the new starter contract, but also that some of the wording sent out the wrong message as regards our Recognition Agreement with the company and that any attempt to de-recognise the Union or to end collective bargaining for our members would conclude in a national ballot for industrial action. The company responded that they were not attempting to attack the Union but had financial problems at Leeds and wished to enter into negotiations on a new starter contract. The Union's position is that it is always available for negotiations on contracts, however, the issues of de-recognition and an end to collective bargaining are not negotiable. It is on this basis that the local negotiating committee will now meet with the company"*.

Subsequently, further discussions ensued at national level, where the matter is still available for debate – but skinny contracts are emphatically not! Skinny contracts NO – skinny jeans? YES, but only if you can slip them on!



## Pay cut volunteers sought at National Express West Midlands ...No joke, honest!

National Express West Midlands offered its drivers a lump sum payment in return for taking a pay cut. Drivers on the top rate of £10.60 an hour could take a lump sum of £5,100 in return for accepting a rate of £9.40. They were also asked to lose five days' holiday as part of the package.

Neil Barker, managing director, National Express WM explained: "We have a number of pay rates for drivers, which increase dependent on length of service. In the current economic climate, our top rate of driver pay is above the market rate, and increases we have made to other pay rates over the last few years have reduced the natural turnover of staff ... This is entirely voluntary and no one will be asked to change their rate of pay."

Meanwhile, staff at Lea Hall garage in Birmingham have been made redundant, the latest in a long line of depot closures in Britain's second city. Groucho Marx was unavailable for comment.

### Counter claim! 5% pay rise sought or else ... no joke either!

Unite is pressing for a 5% increase for 3,750 bus drivers across the West Midlands along with improved sickness and pension terms for lower-paid employees. The claim seeks to harmonise conditions for drivers at Pensnett Garage, in Kingswinford, where workers are on inferior rates. Pensnett was taken over from another company and drivers there have poorer terms and conditions all round.

Unite West Midlands regional officer John Partridge said: "The increase we have put in for the drivers at National Express is five per cent applicable to the basic rate of pay and all follow-through items, such as holiday pay, overtime rates and so on. Secondly, we are seeking an improvement in sick pay for standard rate drivers. There is currently a two-tier system with some drivers on inferior terms and conditions.

The union is also looking for an increase in pension provision for standard rate drivers. The current scheme is a stakeholder scheme for standard rate drivers with not very high company contributions compared to the final salary scheme for long term drivers. The company commented that it would be meeting the union but claimed that the union's claim is particularly surprising at a time when there is such job insecurity and many in the public sector are having their pay frozen." Watch this space!!!!

### ***FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT:***

*Keeping his head down on the train one day, our very own Groucho over-heard this story off some management type. Leastways, that's his story and he's sticking to it*

So, this bus and train company, they'd gone all American and they found themselves with a Canadian as top boss. He was determined to rid the company of all slackers. He had just got to this far flung depot and had satisfied himself that you could eat off the floor .... well, most drivers had had to anyway since they closed the canteen ... when he saw some young bloke leaning against a wall.

The more he looked at him, the more the bloke carried on slouching against the wall and generally looking like he'd rather lie down than do a day's work. Just at that point, a large number of buses came into depot as the morning rush faded and some workers faced an end of shift. The new boss thought to himself that this was a perfect chance to show them that he meant business.

He sauntered up to the confident sloucher: "How much do you make a week?" he demanded of him rather roughly. A little surprised, the young man said: "I know how much I'd like to be on."

"How much?" asked the new boss.

The guy looked at him and said, "I'd like to be on about £600 a week. Why?"

The bright new CEO said, "Wait here a minute." He walked to his gold plated limo, parked round the back of the garage, leaned into the back of the car and pulled out a fat wallet. Within only a minute or so, he had handed the guy about six inches worth of cash and said, "Here's four weeks' pay. Now GET OUT and don't come back."

Feeling pretty good about himself, the CEO looked around the yard and asked of a small clutch of drivers gathered to watch him: "Does anyone want to tell me what that f---ing idiot used to do around here?" A small disembodied voice thinly carried across the yard: "He's the pizza delivery guy from Domino's, who's been hanging about here waiting for orders ever since you closed the canteen."

**STAGECOACH  
NATIONAL  
WOMENS  
COMMITTEE**



Stagecoach National Liaison Committee is proud to report that it is the first Passenger Sector combine committee to form its own Women's Committee. The company has been very helpful to the three-woman group, who have been strongly aided by Frank Llewellyn, NLC national secretary, who writes:

Stagecoach has been convinced that the kind of issues raised by the Unite women's committee have been really important to enhancing its own progressive employment policies. Unite's male shop stewards have also determined to act and this has resulted in some very real progress.

A joint approach to issues related to pregnancy at work has seen considerable steps taken forward. Amongst other things, Risk Assessments of pregnant employees were being held regularly. A Stagecoach "Maternity and Paternity" booklet has been published and, although the Women's Committee is very pleased with this, it is still pursuing a couple of revisions before it is distributed. Aspects of pensions have been considered and, regarding Parental Leave, a new section will explain to employees with children less than 5 years of age how to request 13 weeks unpaid leave.

The committee has sought progress on the use of trained 'listeners'. It was agreed changes could be considered in regard to the process of referring an employee for counselling during a soon to occur review.

To help the situation regarding toxic shock concerns, an emergency provision for making sanitary towels available in all companies is to be developed, with a nominated person keeping them for employees who might need them. Since the Committee raised the procedures for women employees being released for Cervical Smear Test appointments, no problems have been reported. A leaflet is going to be drafted to raise awareness in some of the problems encountered by women employees facing menopausal problems for managers.



The trial of trousers made for women drivers was a big success and a request was made for future orders to be of the same style and material. An issue concerning women's blouses has been clarified. These are designed to be worn outside of trousers but some managers are insisting that they be 'tucked' in. It has been agreed that a uniform for pregnant drivers consisting of elasticised trousers and a loose top will be provided. In some companies, pregnant employees had been forced to wear men's trousers and shirts, a most inelegant approach! The Women's Committee has also been looking at Child Care vouchers, which the company pays for, and these can now be accessed on line. The Scheme is operated on a Salary Sacrifice Basis and the money is claimed back from the employee.

## SELF EMPLOYED DRIVERS GAIN VICTORY IN EUROPE: European Parliament rejects 86- hour week after 18-month ETF campaign

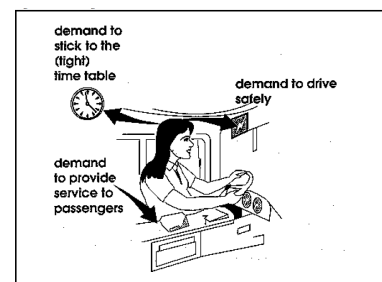
This year, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament has voted against the proposal of the European Commission to introduce an 86-hour working week for the self-employed professional drivers. Just a few hours before the vote, after a journey of six days through six European countries, a protest convoy of several dozen lorries and buses, organised by the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), arrived to urge the EP members to vote in favour of the rejection. This was the culmination of an 18-month campaign by the ETF, which has delighted both for all European citizens and professional drivers with the rejection by 30 against 19 votes.

If the EP had adopted the revised European directive on working time for professional drivers (Directive 2002/15/EC) it would have increased the working time for self-employed drivers from 48 to 86 hours per week. Trade union activists from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and the Netherlands joined the convoy to stress the overall impact of the European Commission's proposal.

The ETF, whose European President is our own Graham Stevenson, represents more than 2.5 million transport workers from 228 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.

### Demands .... Demands; All demands!

As an ILO report puts it, under the heading of 'conflicting tasks' (see pic): "The (bus) driver's task is mentally demanding because of having to cope with conflicting requests. The



company and the public want the driver to maintain good contact with passengers and to be service-oriented, for instance to travellers (providing information about timetables, routes, stops, fares, etc.). These are also important aspects for job satisfaction. In the operator's daily life, the demand for service by the individual passenger often conflicts with the need to keep to a tight schedule in dense traffic. The third demand on the driver, also conflicting with the other two, is the demand to drive safely according to traffic regulations."



Order "Cab Trade News" from PN, a monthly taxi trade publication produced entirely by Unite members.

## MORE EQUAL THAN SOME?

The Equality Act passed by the outgoing Labour Government has parts that could adversely affect taxi drivers. Areas currently with quantity controls on the numbers of licensed taxis will have to meet an unknown minimum requirement for wheelchair accessible vehicles, set by the Secretary of State.

Our policy is for metropolitan areas to have 100% wheelchair accessibility but to have mixed fleets elsewhere (a mixture of wheelchair accessible vehicles and saloon cars). The reason for this is that most of the disabled population, only a small proportion of which is in wheelchairs, want mixed fleets.

Unchallenged, the effect could be quite drastic. In Brighton, where we have a good taxi branch, there are currently 528 taxis of which 124 are wheelchair accessible. This is 30.69% of the fleet. If there was a requirement for 50% wheelchair accessibility then the number of taxis would increase from 528 to 808 an increase of 280 taxis or 53%. This pattern is repeated in a total of 68 councils to varying extents.

An increase in taxi numbers of this magnitude will have widespread implications for drivers and will probably lead to a worst service for disabled passengers in the areas affected, let alone thinking of the implications for other road users. In Brighton a meeting to discuss this issue attracted over 300 with many more hundreds being unable to attend due to the room's capacity.

This issue represents a very good opportunity for us to campaign, along with other good campaigns the Taxi Section is currently involved in. We will need to talk to our parliamentary group and meet the new ministers, and are looking to organise a lobby of parliament.

**Mike Hedges**  
**National Sector Committee**

## TRANSDEV HARROGATE GO FOR GOLD

By: DANIEL MAGUIRE  
Chair, Harrogate Bus Workers  
Branch (NE/9-104)

The Branch Committee at Transdev Harrogate (Branch NE/9-104) have signed up to the Bus Worker's Charter in the most effective way possible by specifically highlighting the four and a half hour maximum driving spell as a realistic aim.

This follows work by the branch committee to agree a full Schedules Agreement with management. For several years the 140 drivers at Transdev's Harrogate depot have had very little in the way of defined schedule parameters.

The new agreement brings improvements but we have made it clear that this is just a first step towards an 8 hour maximum paid day and a 4 hour 30 minute maximum spell.

The Charter has given our branch the confidence to go to management and say that enough is enough. Driving spells in excess of 4 hours 30 minutes are wrong. I urge other Passenger Transport branches to sign up to the Charter and commence negotiations with their own management.

The Harrogate Schedules Agreement provides for:

- Maximum 8 hours 30 minutes paid day.
- Maximum 4 hours 50 minutes driving spell.
- 10 minutes vehicle check, and 3 minutes signing on time.
- Minimum 45 minute break (guaranteed regardless of late running).
- Maximum 60 minute unpaid break.
- Minimum 10 hours off between shifts.
- Revised rotas to be posted at least 21 days before start date.

We haven't stopped there. After 23 years of two separate rates of pay, drivers at Transdev Harrogate have finally achieved wage parity. As was common with ex-NBC companies, the then West Yorkshire Road Car closed off the top rate of pay (the conventional or 'big bus' rate) in August 1987. Subsequent drivers were then employed only on the 'mini bus' rate. As the proportion of drivers on mini-bus rate increased, the demand for equality also increased. In 2002 management signed an agreement with the union that committed to bringing the two rates together by 2010, at a rate of 7.5p a year extra.

The date was finally reached, on 1<sup>st</sup> July, when the final 25p differential was bridged and all drivers (with the exception of a new starter rate for 24 months) are on the same hourly rate.

However, we must all learn from this history lesson. More and more of us are faced with threats from management concerning Low Pay Units and lower rates for new staff, on the promise from management that 'existing staff will not be affected and will be no worse off'.

The lesson from privatisation is that all staff loose out in the long run. The reality at our depot is that the pre-1987 drivers on the conventional rate lost out year after year as they received a lower pay rise in order that the gap could be bridged.

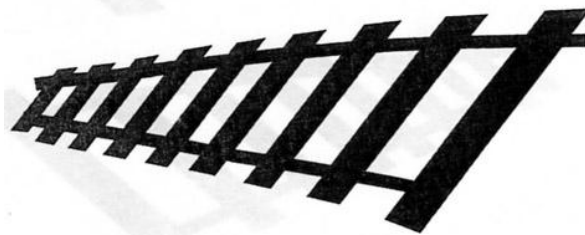
It is a mistake to think that new rates of pay and new contracts will not affect existing workers. Five or so years down the line, and those lower rates and reduced conditions will become the norm.

We must all unite to defend the gains we have made since privatisation. I am grateful to the members of our branch who have supported me and my predecessors to achieve one rate of pay for all bus drivers at Harrogate depot.

[Daniel@uniteharrogate.org.uk](mailto:Daniel@uniteharrogate.org.uk).

BRANCH REPORTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME  
IN PASSENGER NEWS.

PASSENGER NEWS



#### STAGECOACH SOUTH YORKSHIRE SUPERTRAM

A long-running dispute has come to a head concerning the accrediting of Mick Fletcher, the NE, Y & H 8/2000 branch secretary (the role is tantamount to that of 'convenor'), which was refused by the company after a controversy about union notices over a pay ballot.

After months of internal and external wrangling, members voted to take continuous strike action. As the strike loomed, the Company issued a warning letter to all members of the consequences of taking strike action. The Branch Committee decided to abandon strike action but the case lay unresolved.

This experience had long ago stimulated a motion both at the Passenger Sector NIS conference and a motion from the regional sector to the Unite Policy Conference. The National Committee, on a motion from the regional sector, considered the matter recently.

Fortunately, a resolution was found to the dispute but lay activists remain concerned to ensure a copper bottomed guarantee that Unite's resources will always be fully and successfully used to protect our lay reps in the front line.



Arriva plc, in which Unite has some 16,000 members in the bus division, was wholly acquired on August 27<sup>th</sup> by DB UK Holding Limited, a 100% owned subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn AG, or German railways.

In the merger control proceedings before the European Commission, Deutsche Bahn committed to divest the entirety of Arriva's businesses in Germany. Contact between the relevant German unions and Unite has taken place with regard to ensuring that issues relating to the European Works Council are resolved. The deal, worth £1.59bn, has created one of Europe's biggest rail and bus transport groups; Deutsche Bahn also runs Arriva Trains Cymru, Chiltern Railways and rail freight services in the UK, as well as rail and bus services in 12 European countries.



## SAVE THE M4 MOTORWAY BUS AND TAXI LANE!

The Heathrow branch of the Cab Section of our union is asking their valued customers to sign a petition supporting UNITE's campaign to save the M4 bus and taxi lane.

The lane is a vital part of an integrated transport system. It speeds business passengers, tourists and UK travellers alike to their destination, aiding the prosperity of our country by showing the world that we are ready to do business.

It also provides a safe passage for motorcycle riders, reducing time lost because of motorway accidents but more importantly **SAVING LIVES!**

The M4 bus lane is a fantastic asset for visitors and business users alike who fly into one of the world's busiest airports and are whisked into our capital to enjoy or conduct business here. What a great signal it sends out to the world of a dynamic city with intelligent transport solutions. What sort of message will it send to the worlds travelling public with everyone sitting in the slow lane, getting nowhere fast?

The Highways Agency three months into the scheme showed.

- Average daily flows of traffic on this section of the motorway have increased
- The lane saved buses, coaches and taxis more time than cars, but journey times were quicker for all vehicles
- During the morning rush-hour buses and taxis saved up to nine minutes and other vehicles up to six minutes
- Overall, the bus lane saved more than 700 person-hours every weekday
- There is no evidence of drivers diverting on to other roads
- 3,400 vehicles a day have been using the lane - 700 coaches or minibuses and 2,700 taxis.

The National Organiser has written to the Secretary of State for Transport but I don't suppose we'll get much of a sensible answer. Is the whole idea not idiotic or what? Welcome to life under a ConDem government!!!!

**Danny Freeman**

**Heathrow Taxi Branch**

## Stagecoach Group acquires East London – again!

The third largest bus operator in London, with a market share there of approximately 15%, has been brought back into the Stagecoach Group after its disposal back in 2006.

The cash paid was £59.5m for 10 depots and has a fleet of around 1,400 buses. Stagecoach will operate the acquired business as a stand-alone business unit, albeit with some economies of scale from integrating “back office activities” with the rest of the Group.

Financing for new vehicles will be via the slightly costlier approach of operating leases that match the related contracts with Transport for London. This will mean that “the fleet strategy of non-London UK Bus operations is less dictated by owned vehicles that are no longer required by the London business being forced upon the non-London

business.”

## INSIDE STAFF GET ORGANISED NATIONALLY - GET IN TOUCH, NOW!

Union activists representing inside staff from all over the

country have been getting together over the last year.



A National Liaison Committee involving reps for skilled and semi-skilled engineering staff, bus cleaners, checkers and all manner of other inside staffs has

been established. Issue 2 of the bulletin, “The Insider”, has been prepared and is being sent to all Passenger Branches.

Orders for bulk copies to be sent to Inside Staff reps can be sent to Passenger News, its sister publication.

### FACT FILE FACT FILE

Current national market shares in the bus industry:

- Others – 32%
- FirstGroup - 24%
- Stagecoach - 20%
- Arriva – 12%
- National Express – 7%
- Go-Ahead – 5%