

# Taking care of every journey



Go South Coast  
Sustainability Report 2020





Go South Coast operates a fleet of 824 buses across Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. With around 140 routes, our buses are locally branded giving them a local identity in the communities they serve.

Our brands include:



**Bluestar**  
Southampton



**Damory**  
West Dorset



**morebus**  
Bournemouth & Poole



**Salisbury Reds**  
Salisbury



**Southern Vectis**  
Isle of Wight



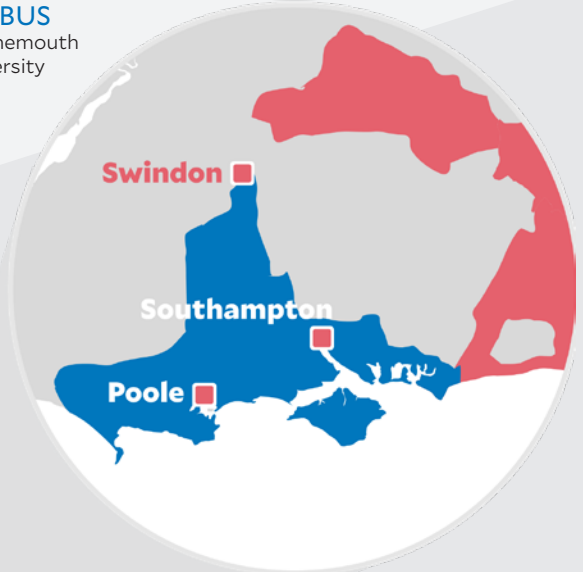
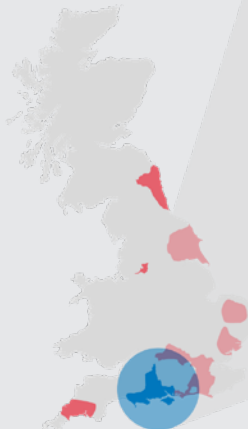
**Swindon's Bus Company**  
Swindon



**Unilink**  
University of Southampton



**UNIBUS**  
Bournemouth University



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- 04** Stronger communities
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## Find out more...

### Twitter:

@bluestarhq  
@damorycoaches  
@morebusco  
@myunibuses  
@salisburyreds  
@southernvectis  
@swindonbuses  
@unilinkbus

### Website:

gosouthcoast.co.uk

## Our reporting structure

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

This report is split into six sections:

### Stronger communities

To increase positive and proactive engagement with the communities we serve

→ [Read more on page 04](#)

### Happier customers

To provide a safe, reliable service to our customers

→ [Read more on page 06](#)

### Better teams

To constantly develop our people

→ [Read more on page 08](#)

### Cleaner environment

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

→ [Read more on page 10](#)

### Safer working

To provide safe working environments for our people and our customers

→ [Read more on page 11](#)

### Finance

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

→ [Read more on page 12](#)

# Managing Director's message



## 2020 highlights

- Industry leading customer satisfaction score of 92.4%
- Three new electric buses introduced on Salisbury's Reds
- Continue to play our part in transporting key workings and passengers safely
- Multiple community investment initiatives conducted throughout the year

## “Welcome to our 2020 sustainability report.”

**Andrew Wickham**  
Managing Director

Although its impact affected us only in the second half of the year, by far the main issue we have had to face as a company was the COVID-19 pandemic. This has had a profound impact on how we operate, including a very substantial, albeit temporary and now reversed, reduction in our services. I am pleased to report that no colleague lost their life as a result of the virus, and that the small number affected have made a full recovery.

We continued to play our full part in society during and after lockdown. Almost all our routes continued to operate, although less frequently than normal. We ensured our buses continued to meet the needs of key workers. This included altering timings and introducing additional journeys at various locations across our area. We have modified our buses, premises and working practices to make them as safe as possible.

Our bus refurbishment business, Hants & Dorset Trim, reacted quickly to the pandemic by manufacturing and supplying COVID-19 driver protection screens and other enhancements to a wide range of UK bus operators at very short notice, thus helping keep services running in other areas too. I pay tribute to all my colleagues across the business, at all locations, who have worked relentlessly to provide our bus, coach and support services during a period of rapid change and uncertainty. I am immensely proud of them all.



## Key highlights

# 1,883

colleagues

# 92.4%

customer satisfaction

# 40.66%

vehicles with Euro VI or above

Regardless of the pandemic, buses remain as relevant and important as ever in providing sustainable transport, supporting the economy and facilitating access to employment, health and education. We made a big step forward in sustainability when we introduced a fleet of three zero-emission electric buses into Salisbury in January. These buses give a considerable carbon and emissions saving over their diesel equivalents, and even more so compared to the number of cars needed to provide the same passenger capacity. We have learned a lot from introducing these buses and are in a good position to put further electric buses into service when circumstances allow.

We also placed a number of new low emission Euro VI diesel buses into service throughout the year. We honoured our orders with our UK bus manufacturer despite COVID-19, with new vehicles for Southampton, Salisbury and Swindon arriving during the year, replacing older, less efficient models.

Independent transport watchdog Transport Focus continued with its regular survey of our customers in the year. We again achieved industry-leading customer satisfaction results, and it was pleasing to see that the previous improvement in satisfaction at Swindon was sustained, as well as the high levels seen at our other operating units.

Our support for our local communities continued throughout the year, and whilst the current situation dictates how we currently do this, our commitment to the communities we serve will continue going forward.



# Stronger communities

Throughout the last financial year, we have launched and responded to many local initiatives.

**Buses are a lifeline to many, and public transport is critical to the functioning of society and has been fundamental in supporting communities through the COVID-19 crisis. At Go South Coast, we work closely with the communities we serve to enhance the lives of those who rely on us.**

## Linking Dorset

We have sought meaningful ways to support our communities in many forms. By joining up with other organisations, we launched an initiative designed to help get people out across the county, ensuring they could attend medical appointments or see family. We already have a Poole based call centre and were only too pleased to add in a dedicated line to those who felt cut off.

We work alongside PramaLife, Dorset Community Action, Dorset Community Transport, Bus2Go, SEDCAT (South East Dorset Community Accessible Transport), NorDCAT (North Dorset Community Accessible Transport), DING (Dorset

Interactive Neighbourcar Group), Christchurch Community Partnership,

Hope in the Community, Faithworks Wessex, Help and Care, and CAN. In December 2019, we launched a new joined-up way of signposting people to transport schemes available, via dedicated phone line.

Having easy access to local transport is vital for both physical and mental well-being. It offers increased social inclusion by providing access to employment, education and other services for people who do not drive or are less likely to own a car.

Cycling and walking combined with public transport offer healthy, efficient and good value modes of travel for many local journeys whilst reducing pressure on the road system from private vehicle use.

Research has also found that, on top of the physical health benefits of active travel, people who commute by using these modes have better mental health than those who drive to work.



Linking Dorset to help get people out and about





### Free travel for guide dog training

Bluestar was our first Go South Coast brand to launch free travel for guide dog training and we have since adopted this approach across all of our operations. We are helping to train a local guide dog puppy by offering some vital travel experience across our network.

We were thrilled to provide seven-month-old puppy, Peggy, and her walker, Jane Tabor, from Otterbourne, free travel on our services, to give the special pup a chance to get used to hopping on-and-off buses. Blind and partially sighted people rely heavily on these special dogs to help them go about their daily lives, and we are delighted to be able to help Peggy get used to hopping on board with us. Following the success of this trial, we now assist with puppy training on all of our buses.

### Loneliness kills and we have continued our work with the 'Chatty Bus' initiative

Our Salisbury Reds brand marked World Mental Health Day, by once again bringing our popular 'Chatty Bus' to the city.

Designed to get people talking, the bus was positioned in Guildhall Square. This time, we teamed up with the charity 'Pets As Therapy', to introduce local people and visitors to some loveable canines.

Dogs are beautiful and sensitive creatures, and few can resist the opportunity to say hello to them. There is a strong ex-military presence in Wiltshire, and we know many ex-service men and women suffer with mental health.

'Pets As Therapy' use dogs who are specifically suited to making people feel good, and we felt they would provide the perfect reason for people to interact when visiting our 'Chatty Bus'. We were delighted when so many people attended the event to have an informal chat on the bus and meet the dogs.

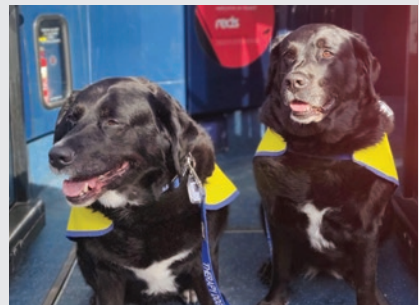


### Key highlights

## Free travel for guide dog trainers



Guide dog training Puppy Peggy and her walker Jane Tabor



# Happier customers

2020 has provided challenges to our industry that we have never seen before. A well-informed customer is usually a happier customer.

Once the Government announced a national lockdown, customers number reduced significantly and we had to start reducing our services in rapid succession to cope with shrinking demand.

As things changed so rapidly, we had to build stronger, different communication methods.

Our website, app and social media channels have been an essential part of our comms toolkit.

New banners and dedicated Coronavirus sections were added to our websites to ensure information was easy to find. Everything was clearly laid out and updated on a daily basis.

As the main public transport provider in the towns and cities where we operate, we invited keyworkers to get in touch with us should any timetable changes not meet their personal



requirements. An example of this was in Southampton, where keyworkers told us they couldn't get to their shift at Southampton General Hospital. We responded quickly by adding in an extra early morning trip from Weston towards the city centre and Southampton General Hospital, to ensure keyworkers were able to get their place of work.

Our new 'busy bus checker' has been a huge hit with customers. Many bus users have been concerned with social distancing and our new online tool offers dynamic, colour coded bus timetables that show seat availability on our services, giving customers who need to travel the confidence to plan bus journeys, avoiding busy times whilst capacity is reduced to enable



Southampton Hospital  
extra journeys for keyworkers







## HOW BUSY IS MY BUS? the busy bus checker

SEE HOW BUSY YOUR BUS IS

ALLOWING YOU TO MAKE THE DECISION TO TRAVEL  
OR TO WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT SERVICE COMES ALONG

**TRY IT NOW**

Find our **easy-to-use guide** at [morebus.co.uk/busy-bus](https://morebus.co.uk/busy-bus)

social distancing. The tool also gives customers an option to add feedback to a live journey.

Throughout the pandemic, we received lots of positive feedback from customers who were thankful for our efforts. As frontline workers ourselves, we have been very proud to do our bit to keep people moving.



**laurathegenie**

@laurathegenie

Replying to @SouthernVectis

Please thank all your wonderful team and especially your amazing drivers, for all their efforts 🙏

2:25pm · 7 Apr 2020 · Twitter Web App



# Better teams

At Go South Coast, we have 1,883 employees.

Communicating with our colleagues was essential during the pandemic and we have gone to great lengths to ensure that colleagues are kept up to date and informed, and that they know we will support them in whatever way we can.

Regular updates from the Managing Director have been posted on the Hapi App, dedicated colleague website pages and around depots. For those colleagues who were furloughed during the period, regular contact from managers have been made throughout.

A number of initiatives have also been introduced to provide greater protection for our frontline workers including social distancing in the workplace and protective screens above the cab door of buses providing a shielded space should the need arise. Customers have been urged to use non-cash methods of payment wherever possible.

Two colleague videos have been produced to show how to clean the cab of the bus with an anti-viral wipe and how social distancing is to be applied to buses.

Colleagues have been very understanding and cooperative in the most trying of circumstances, as we have introduced numerous changes to rotas and working patterns, as the business has reduced the level of service operated during the COVID-19 crisis. We wanted to ensure everyone we would do what we could

to protect our business. During this time, we received many positive comments from our colleagues.

“I’d just like to express how unbelievably grateful I am to be working for such an honourable company in terms of looking after their employees in such an unprecedented and turbulent time.”

Regular updates will continue to be provided through established channels so that all colleagues can keep in touch with what is happening. Weekly and periodic colleague newsletters are due to recommence.

We are looking to introduce ‘Blink’, a colleague engagement app, at the earliest opportunity. Blink enables real-time communication from the management team to colleagues. Drivers can access their rotas and request holidays, as well as view information about diversions, health and safety, and more. The app will also offer the management team, and other colleagues, with another way to share important messages, business changes, network, as well as publicity materials and local press coverage.

We remain dedicated to providing training and development, creating supportive inclusive workplaces, engineering apprenticeships, as well as a graduate and internal management trainee programme. We are always looking to the future too and participate in the Go-Ahead Group’s ‘Women in Bus’ campaign aimed at encouraging more women to join the bus industry. This investment allows our people to reach their full potential with the aim to improve our customer’s overall experience.





## Key highlights

### Going bald for charity!

#### Staff shaved their heads in April



# £1200

raised for NHS with headshave

Going bald for charity!  
– team photo before the head shave!



Going bald for charity!  
– team photo after the head shave!

### Going bald together for charity

Engineers at our Poole depot came up with a hair-raising scheme to raise funds in support of Dorset's local hospitals and the NHS, who have all been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic.

The cheerful bunch, who continue to keep our own wheels turning by transporting local key workers, wanted to express their appreciation for the hard-working NHS staff, who are working on the frontline of the pandemic.

They are a strong, dedicated team that like to work hard and play hard, and so in April, decided to shave their heads in exchange for donations to the NHS with a target of £1200.

# Cleaner environment

electric **reds**

## New electric buses

Our Salisbury Reds brand paved the way for the latest additions to the city's Park and Ride services, following a successful bid by the local bus operator and Wiltshire Council for £600,000 of Government funding. The move means greener and cleaner journeys across the region by putting into service three new electric buses.

Together with Wiltshire Council, our team worked incredibly hard to gain Government support, under the Low Emission Bus Scheme, for this important initiative. It's all about helping to lower emissions across the UK, following the publication of the Government's draft Air Quality Plan, and we are delighted that Salisbury Reds is at the forefront of that project here in Wiltshire.

Councilor Bridget Wayman, cabinet member for highways and transport, joined those journeying on the buses for the very first time and said: "We're delighted that three new electric buses are now serving our Park and Ride sites in Salisbury. These buses represent a significant investment in the city, and will help to reduce the environmental impact and improve air quality. This is an important part of our pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030, and we hope that by leading the way with initiatives like this, it will inspire people and other organisations to make a positive difference".

32% of our bus fleet is now Euro VI. Real world testing shows a 95% reduction in NOx emissions compared with previous models. We also purchase vehicles which further conserve fuel through reductions in weight and advances in the technology used in gear boxes.

## Improved bus lanes and priority for buses

We've been working closely with Southampton City Council during the last year and two new bus lanes have been introduced. As a result, we have seen improved reliability and journey



Salisbury Reds Electric Buses; greener, cleaner journeys

times reducing by three minutes. The scheme on the busy Bursledon Road, where we operate our frequent Bluestar 18 service, will benefit from these changes, helping to make bus travel more appealing in the city.

By working together, we have carried out a trial using bus priority technology where our ticket machines are connected via a virtual loop to traffic signals. Following the success of this trial, some existing bus lanes will be replaced with virtual bus lane technology. This involves the upgrade of traffic signal technology which will enable buses to communicate with traffic signals and ask for additional green time. This will lead to more reliable bus journey times.



Salisbury Reds Electric Buses; greener, cleaner journeys

# Safer working

Safety remains one of our top priorities. Learning how to function in a pandemic has meant we have developed many new working procedures.

Additional measures have been put in place across our business and our customers have helped fine tune these features to improve the overall customer experience.

## Bus drivers

- Bus drivers have been issued with anti-bacterial and anti-viral wipes to ensure that their cab area and ticket machines are kept clean
- Bus drivers have all been issued with their own supply of face coverings and hand sanitiser
- Cab areas have been fitted with a COVID-19 protection screen
- Driver rest room facilities at depots have been increased in size to allow for social distancing
- For those drivers who have been furloughed through the pandemic, upon their return, all have undergone a return to work induction and driver training to ensure they are up to the required standard

## Our vehicles

- Additional day time cleaning has been introduced, focusing on the high usage touch points including hand poles, seat grab rails, bells and ticket machine
- The cleaning regime on our vehicles has been intensified, with a deep clean carried out every evening on return to the depot
- Regularly testing of the cleanliness of our vehicles using a machine that can test for bacteria build up on surfaces
- Vehicle maintenance is compliant with our O Licence and any bus that has been parked up due the pandemic has undergone a full safety inspection before returning into service

- Capacity has been reduced by approximately 50% to allow for social distancing
- Onboard signage has been added indicating where customers should sit
- Hand sanitiser units have been fitted to buses for use by customers
- Audio announcements have been updated, reminding customers of the new procedures on board

## Communities

- Social distancing measures have been put in place with signage and markings to inform customers where to queue
- Bus stops have been adjusted to allow for more queue space and new signage is in place alerting people to where new stops are located
- Issued press releases to local media and stakeholders so information about our services can reach as many people as possibly could
- Monitored passenger levels very closely and where we could, ran duplicate buses to cope with demand
- Asked customers to only travel if it is an essential journey



## New technology

- Introduced a 'busy bus checker' so that customers can check in advance how busy a particular journey is, which helps social distancing.



# Finance

Our journeys provide our customers with a convenient way to travel around the communities we serve, helping them get to work, engage in social activities and access essential services. Go South Coast makes a direct positive contribution to the communities we serve.

Our services strengthen the UK economy by connecting communities and supporting local companies and trades.

We provide jobs to local people, offer a safe passenger service to our customers, and support local businesses, charities and the community by supporting special events.

COVID-19, and the associated lockdown measures, had a huge and unparalleled impact on public transport. From March 2020, services were scaled back with patronage falling drastically. The key role of the bus operation in lockdown was to ensure services remained in operation to transport key workers.

Our aim is to get back to as near 100% of pre-COVID-19 levels of service as soon as possible. We are looking at all opportunities including increasing our networks where possible to do so in order to transport our customers safely under the 'new normal'.

## Engaging with our suppliers

We realise the importance of partnering with suppliers who align their work ethic with our values as this supports efficient delivery of our services. We rely on suppliers to take a partnership approach in working together to jointly deliver the best service possible.

Our ethical procurement approach is embedded in our supply chain, procurement and management processes. We take commercial and technical factors into account when considering which suppliers to partner with, and we encourage our suppliers to adhere to similar high standards of corporate responsibility.



## Key highlights

**1,883**

Average number of employees

**803**

buses in our fleet

**£1.2m**

Invested in electric buses



# Key data: Go South Coast

	2020	2019	2018
<b>Safer working</b>			
Bus accidents per million miles	54	55	62
Fleet with CCTV (%)	92.6	89	85
Number of reported crimes	32	111	106
Bus fleet which is DDA compliant (%)	92.5	99.1	96.2
RIDDOR accidents per 100 employees	0.43	0.78	0.83
<b>Cleaner environment</b>			
Carbon emissions per vehicle mile (kg)	1.49	1.53	1.68
Average age of bus fleet (years)	7.95	7.25	7.5
<b>Stronger communities</b>			
Community spend per employee (£)	2.4	6.81	0.45
Number of stakeholder events	127	76	336
<b>Happier customers</b>			
Customer satisfaction score (%)	92.4	91.4	91
Punctuality (%)	84.9	83.5	83.2
<b>Better Teams</b>			
Average number of employees	1,883	1,803	1,805
Employee turnover rate (%)	9.1	11.4	12.5
Absenteeism rate (%)	4.0	4.5	4.4
Training spend per employee (£)	394	515	423
% of female employees	15.1	16.2	15.4
% of Asian, black and other ethnic group employees	4.2	4.7	4.0

## Key

RIDDOR – Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations at workplaces  
 DDA – Disability Discrimination Act



For information on the full Group data, please visit our corporate website: [go-ahead.com](http://go-ahead.com)

## More information

You can find out more about Go South Coast by visiting our website [gosouthcoast.co.uk](http://gosouthcoast.co.uk) and more information on how Go-Ahead Group manages sustainability can be found by visiting: [go-ahead.com/sustainability](http://go-ahead.com/sustainability)

If you have any comments, views or ideas on how we might improve, or have any thoughts on other issues that we should address in this report, please write to Managing Director, Andrew Wickham, at the following address:

Go South Coast  
Towngate House  
2-8 Parkstone Road  
Poole  
BH15 2PR

## Summary Verification Statement from Bureau Veritas UK Ltd

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

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

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

