

# Taking care of our community

GO SOUTH COAST  
Sustainability Report 2018



# About us

Go South Coast operates a fleet of 844 buses across Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

With around 140 routes, all of our buses are locally branded to give the buses within the towns we operate in a local identity.

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**Bluestar** – Southampton

**Damory** – rural Dorset

**morebus** – Bournemouth & Poole

**Salisbury Reds** – Salisbury

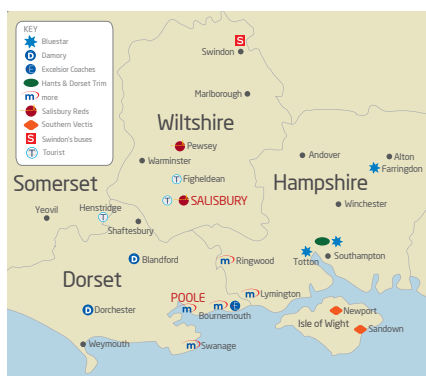
**Southern Vectis** – Isle of Wight

**Swindon's Bus Company** – Swindon

**Unilink** – University of Southampton

**UNIBUS** – Bournemouth University

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We believe in investing in our people. We focus on developing new skills through colleague training so we can deliver the best service to our customers.









Our stakeholder relationships are vital to our continued success. We are committed to the communities we serve and are always looking for new ways of engaging with them.



## In this report

- 2 Managing Director's message
- 4 Happier customers
- 6 Smarter technology
- 7 Stronger communities
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- 10 Better teams
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Follow us on social media:

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

For more information,  
visit our website:

[www.gosouthcoast.co.uk](http://www.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:



### Happier customers

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

p4



### Smarter technology

To implement new market leading technology and adapt it accordingly.

p6



### Stronger communities

Adding value to the communities we serve by working together.

p7



### Cleaner environment

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

p8



### Better teams

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

p10



### Finance

To work together with suppliers to jointly deliver the best possible service.

p12



We're part of The  
**Go-Ahead**  
Group

# Managing Director's Message

"Welcome to our 2018 Sustainability Report.

This has been a great year for the company, and I pay tribute to each of our 1,805 colleagues for their part in achieving our success."

**Andrew Wickham**  
Managing Director



People, customers and colleagues are at the heart of our business. Independent surveys showed that 91% of our customers were satisfied or very satisfied with their journeys. At Southern Vectis on the Isle of Wight, some 96% of our customers were satisfied or very satisfied – this being the highest rate of customer satisfaction in the country.

In order to achieve such high levels of customer satisfaction, we continue to invest in our fleet, and a total of 79 new buses, all built in the United Kingdom, entered service. They are all finished to our specification, which includes light coloured, dementia-friendly floors, additional, clear white destination displays, and audio/visual displays to advise customers of the forthcoming stop.

We continue to invest in technology. Every one of our buses now accepts contactless payments, and this, coupled with our ticket app and Key smartcard, helps to reduce the amount of cash collected on the bus, thereby speeding up journey

times as people spend less time paying when they board.

We strive to be the employer of choice, and continued throughout the year to invest in employee training, and also in upgrading employee rest areas and other accommodation. Directors and managers regularly visit all our depots and are thus able to keep in touch with colleagues' concerns and aspirations.

The consolidation of our relatively new Excelsior and Swindon's Bus Company businesses into the company continued, with vehicle and premises investment and other improvements underway at both units. We also continue to expand, with new routes launched in Bournemouth, Southampton and Dorchester following their withdrawal by others, and larger buses being used in these areas to satisfy demand. In Salisbury, we've worked with the local authority to help the city overcome the economic impact of the nerve agent attack in the spring.

Our new buses are much less polluting than those they've replaced. We are working with Southampton City Council to upgrade older vehicles to current standards, as part of the council's clean air strategy. A new double deck bus emits fewer potentially harmful particulate matter than a new diesel car. The fact that, in the rush hour, a bus may have 75 people on board, compared with just one in a car, and yet is cleaner, underlines the fact that buses are the answer to cities' air quality problems.

We have been recognised for our good work. The company won 'Large Bus Operator of the Year' at the Route One Awards, and 'Bus Operator of the Year' at the UK Bus Awards – an unprecedented double. Our Bluestar depot at Eastleigh also won Top Depot at this event.

Despite all of this, we are never complacent, and my wonderful colleagues and I continue to strive for even better performance in the years ahead.

## Key highlights

**UK Bus  
Operator of  
the Year**

**Highest  
customer  
satisfaction  
rating in  
the UK**

**Over 400  
drivers  
registered as  
Dementia  
Friends**



Contactless payments on  
all buses



Winner of the Bus Operator of the Year  
at UK Bus Awards 2017



# Happier Customers

Our customers need up-to-date, accurate and well-presented information. They want to be greeted by a friendly driver and ride on a clean, smart bus. They want a network of services that go where they need to at a price they can afford.

Everything we do is with this in mind. But we don't take it for granted that we have the recipe right.

We have independent research carried out by Transport Focus which enables us to benchmark ourselves against prior years and other operators within the UK. We can proudly state we have the highest customer satisfaction rating (96%) currently in the UK for our Southern Vectis brand operating on the Isle of Wight.

Keeping customers informed is an essential part of keeping our customers happy. A journey often begins at home or in the office. Our websites and social media are often the first touchpoint for our customers, so we always have accurate, easy-to-find information available. Social media is used to inform customers of any interruptions to services, often outside of our control due to roadworks or severe weather. The snow of winter 2017/18 certainly had a huge impact on our operating area, and social media allowed us to engage with customers to ensure they

all got home safely. We really were the heroes of the community during this difficult time.

Our 'delight the customer' sessions are often fun and rewarding for both us and our customers. We can often be found out and about riding our buses, giving out mince pies at Christmas or a free cereal bar and the latest newspaper on a busy morning commute. These sessions give us the chance to really speak and listen to our customers, and are a very relaxed way of gaining valuable feedback from them, so we can find out their likes and dislikes. It goes a small way to rewarding them for travelling with us too, leaving them with a positive impression of our services which is spread through word of mouth.

The role of the bus driver can make or break a customer's day. Our customer promise course is a five-day training programme completely focussed on customer care. All drivers undertake this programme every five years and we constantly tweak and adjust the course to ensure it meets with any new demands.

During the last year we have significantly improved our network of services, allowing our customers to have more frequent buses with better connections.

- Bluestar – usage is up by 25.8%
- morebus – usage is up by 21.6% compared to a Poole & Bournemouth-wide increase of 19.1%, suggesting we're outperforming competitors
- Southern Vectis – usage is up 10.2%

We have an excellent track record of making a commercial success of services that competing operators have withdrawn.



In January 2018, we extended Bluestar 7 from the City Centre to Lordshill, maintaining vital links to the City Centre and General Hospital. Similarly, in April 2018, we assumed commercial operation of routes R4/R5 in Bournemouth and then merged with Poole service 14 to give new journey opportunities, again retaining important links from suburban areas to the hospital, schools and shopping destinations. In both instances, our actions have prevented local authorities from having to consider whether they should divert money from elsewhere to maintain links that would have been broken.

It is essential that we think about the customers of tomorrow. We regularly work with youth groups and schools, as well as targeting our marketing and approach, to encourage children to use the bus as a more sustainable method of travel.

## Key highlights

**96%**  
customer  
satisfaction rating  
for Southern Vectis

**91%**  
overall customer  
satisfaction  
for GSC

**over 55m**  
customer journeys

**over 25%**  
transactions now  
contactless



Bluestar working with Can Do finalists to help provide travel training for local people with disabilities.



Kids for a £1 – investing in our future customers by making travel accessible.

# Smarter Technology



The world is changing and technology moves fast. At Go South Coast, we believe in being as innovative as we can and giving customers what they need.

Over the last 12 months we have installed new ticket machines allowing contactless payments across our entire fleet.

Some routes are now achieving up to 45% of their revenue taken using this popular method. Cash machines in the UK are being withdrawn at a rate of 300 per month, so it is vital we make our services accessible with other convenient payment methods.

Contactless isn't for everyone; so to complement this, we have launched our handy new mobile app, clickit2ride. Customers can benefit from a wide range of ticket options including period passes, dayriders and multi-trips. They are available directly from



an Apple or Android smartphone. All tickets have a unique QR code which is read by our ticket machines, thus adding in a security measure that wasn't present on our old app. This also helps speed up boarding and is easier for both driver and customer.

Our new ticket machines have enabled us to improve communication with our drivers too. There is a messaging system in which our control room team can quickly send a short message out to drivers who get to read it at their next stopping point. This is used to alert them to any urgent issues such as a diversion due to a traffic incident.

40% of our buses have been fitted with next stop audio announcements too. We understand the challenges faced by those with visual impairments whilst they are travelling on public transport across our region. These announcements should help make their experience a more enjoyable one. We've added in extra information concerning points of interest, helping people understand where to get off for important landmarks. This is also a major benefit for those visiting the area and we know we carry a lot of tourists who find this information very helpful.

USB power is fitted as standard to all new buses and many older ones have had this feature retrofitted. Feedback from customers states that this is an essential part of their journey and offers them reassurance they can stay connected with their friends and family.



Next stop announcement screens improve accessibility for those hard of hearing or visually impaired.



# Stronger Communities



One of the core strengths of Go South Coast is the relationships our local bus brands build within the communities we serve.

We know that buses contribute massively to the local economy and we tailor our offer to ensure we are accessible to all, adding value and catering for specialist needs.

## Key highlights

- Continued work with the elderly and active members of Age Friendly Island
- Supporting travel training for Guide Dogs
- Helping to improve literacy levels across Wiltshire
- Travel training for minority groups



Local Guide Dog volunteer trainer Sarah Whitebread, pictured with driver John and Guide Dog, Milo.

Many of our passengers are older people. With the Isle of Wight being one of the UK's favourite retirement destinations, we value what these individuals offer the community in terms of life experience and skills, and it is important to us to make our services accessible to them. We've been working in partnership with Age Friendly Island for over five years and have signed up to the official charter where we are committed to:

- Continuing our age friendly training to ensure all drivers are consistent in their approach to the ageing population
- Regular engagement with concessionary pass holders

## Reducing isolation

During January 2018 we held a dedicated event in our Newport travel shop, where we served tea and biscuits to this customer group to learn more about their experiences and requirements of our services.

Mary Hall, 71, said *"When I moved to the island, I lost my husband soon after and I felt very alone. My financial budgets also reduced considerably, and I found my pass to be invaluable. It allowed me to make necessary trips like going to the shops, visiting the doctor or the hospital, and I was able to get out and meet people. I'd be lost without it!"*

## Helping volunteers

When we were contacted by local Guide Dog volunteer trainer Sarah Whitebread, we were keen to help. We have been providing seven month old pup Milo and Sarah free travel on our services, to give him a chance to get used to hopping on-and-off buses. Sarah said; *"I'm a volunteer with Guide Dogs for the Blind and will be training Milo until the end of the year. The next part of his training involves negotiating public transport.*

*Morebus were only too pleased to help, giving Milo and myself free travel to conduct our training. This extends wider, to whoever has their life transformed by Milo once he finishes his training."*

# Cleaner Environment

Our energy climate change policy pledges to mitigate the negative impacts of the energy we use by operating our services and premises efficiently – with a continual drive for improvement.

But, more than this, we want to educate residents in the cities we serve so that they fully appreciate the benefits of the bus and understand the investment we have made into the latest Euro 6 engined buses.



Introduced in autumn 2018, the new Unilink vehicles for the Southampton University routes come with the latest Euro 6 engines

Buses have a major role to play in easing congestion and are part of the solution for cleaner air.

**1 bus takes 75 cars off the road**

Buses fitted with a Euro VI engine are less polluting than a new diesel car, despite the fact that the bus can carry 75 people when often a car will only have one person in it. Our continued investment in these greener technologies has a positive impact on the environment and our future.

We have been busy working on a 'promise campaign' where we are encouraging residents to swap one car journey for one bus journey per week. We strongly believe that together we can make a difference.



***"I'll travel each week with bluestar for clean air  
Showing our city and children I care Just  
once, each week, your car stays on the drive  
Helping clean air in Southampton to thrive..."***

By visiting large employers in the area we are encouraging their workforce to take part as well as engaging with our local communities. Southampton has to meet its clean air targets, so this is where we have focussed the start of the project.



## Also, in the last 12 months we have:

- Reduced gas consumption by 25.6% on prior year by installing data loggers to our gas suppliers in depots where heating is controlled automatically. Our Wireless Energy Management System (WEMS) is controlled by a third party to achieve maximum efficiency.
- Reduced electric consumption by 4.4% on prior year by installing energy efficient heaters, motion sensor lighting and LED lighting.
- Our bus washes use re-harvested rainwater, saving 30 litres per wash.
- Our diesel MPG has improved by 0.72% on prior year, by investing in new fleet, purchasing the most fuel-efficient vehicles on the market. Our policy is to only buy LEB-compliant vehicles with the use of smart electric technology and weight saving measures.
- Attracted £1.2m of funding to retro-fit 74 buses with a combined diesel particulate filter (DPF) and selective catalytic reduction (SCR) system in one unit – to convert the fleet to the latest Euro VI standard. Tests carried out at Millbrook proving ground have demonstrated NOx reduction greater than 95%!
- Our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 0.79 kg per passenger journey and we have reduced that down to 0.76 kg which is a reduction of 3.19% per passenger. This is significant because it was the highest achieved amongst the Go-Ahead Group.
- We are accredited for ISO 50001 for energy.



**Southern Vectis**



**Swindon's Bus Company**



**morebus**



**UNILINK bus**

# Better Teams

Go South Coast is one of the largest bus companies within the Go-Ahead Group and we employ around 1,805 people. Looking after their needs and keeping them engaged is vital for a happy workforce which reflects in customer satisfaction. Our vision is to be the company people want to work for.



Every year we invite our long-serving and Employee of the Month colleagues to join us to celebrate their achievements. Last year's Employee of the Year, Nigel Curtis, pictured with Managing Director, Andrew Wickham.

We're big believers in involving our colleagues to enable us to make stronger business decisions.

## Examples of this include:

- Before registering any service change we seek opinions from drivers and supervisors. Their feedback is gathered to help improve our timetables, which in turn improves their working conditions and reliability for our customers.
- We also include drivers, engineers and cleaners in meetings with vehicle manufacturers, so they fully understand what our colleagues need from future vehicle design.

PCV licence training for new starters has been extended to include 'busplus', improving their confidence, resulting in fewer minor knocks in the first 12 months of service.

**New product training** – such as ticket machines or payment technologies for customers – to ensure our colleagues are first to know. This is a mix of practical and written guides.

Our **Graduate Development Programme** is to develop the managers of tomorrow. Two are half way through this scheme and we are in the progress of recruiting two more.

As well as this, we believe in finding internal talent, so have developed an **Internal Management Development Programme** which is open to existing colleagues, who receive a similar experience to graduates. Our first candidate for this joined us 15 years ago as an apprentice and is now an assistant operations manager.

Apprentices are part of our future. We currently have 20 engineering apprentices on a four-year programme of on-the-job learning and attending S&B Academy. As well as this, we work with local charity, The Rainbow Project, where we support getting young people from troubled



backgrounds into a sustainable career, with three currently in training.

Lean Engineering involves a new approach to workshop life and a new training programme. Lean means fewer buses, more colleagues and carrying more parts. Productivity is the key here. The principle is the same as a pit stop in F1 racing where 12 staff change four wheels in less than three seconds.

All our engineers have been trained and tested by Manchester College to pass IRTEC\* inspection and maintenance modules; a voluntary industry-recognised qualification where they are independently assessed.

There's still time for fun and reward too! Each brand has an Employee of the Month scheme where winners receive a £50 high street shopping voucher and an invitation to our annual awards night where an overall Employee of the Year is crowned. At this event each brand's Employee of the Year is announced and after receiving an additional £500, these winners are then put forward to be our overall Go South Coast Employee of the Year. The winner of this accolade receives the top prize of an amazing £3,000 and two weeks' extra holiday!

We encourage colleagues to socialise too and support football teams and golf tournaments where the different brands and depots challenge one another. We organise family-friendly events for them at subsidised rates, such as a trip to the Christmas pantomime!

New for this year are additional employee benefits having teamed up with the Personal Group so that our colleagues have access to many savings in every day life, including supermarket shopping, cinema trips and discounted holidays.

\*Independent technician accreditation – is a renewable and voluntary accreditation scheme that assesses the safety and competence of technicians who maintain and repair vehicles in the commercial vehicle, trailer and passenger carrying industries.

## Key highlights

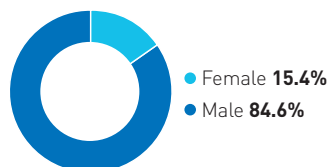
over **400**  
colleagues now  
qualified as  
**Dementia  
Friends**

**£3,000**  
for Employee  
of the Year plus  
two weeks'  
extra holiday!

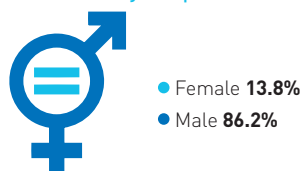
All engineers  
**IRTEC**  
accredited\*

**20 engineering  
apprentices across  
Go South Coast**

## All employees



## Gender Pay Gap



Median pay for men is 2.7% higher than that of women, compared to the national average of 18.4%.





56 million journeys are taken with us each year, which is critical to our local businesses and communities.

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.

## Key highlights



Our services strengthen the UK economy by connecting communities and supporting local companies and trades. In the Go South Coast area of operation, we have 1,805 employees and we are dedicated to providing training and development, creating supportive inclusive workplaces, engineering apprenticeships, and a graduate and internal management trainee programme. This investment allows our people to reach their full potential with the aim to improve our customers' overall experience.

23% of our buses are now Euro 6. Real world testing of Euro 6 rated diesel buses demonstrates a 95% reduction in NO<sub>x</sub> 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.

Contactless ticketing allows our customers to access our services in a modern, efficient way which improves the punctuality of our services through improving loading times.

## Engaging with our suppliers

We realise the importance of partnering with suppliers who align their work 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 into account ethical as well as commercial and technical factors when considering which suppliers to partner with, and we encourage our suppliers to adhere to similar high standards of corporate responsibility.

We are also working closely with local authorities on their aspirations and requirements for implementing clean air zones. In the coming year this will include converting buses to meet the standards required for Southampton's clean air zone and we will meet this requirement well in advance of the legal deadline.

# Key data: Go South Coast

	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
<b>Society</b>			
<b>Safety</b>			
Bus accidents per million miles	62	65	68
Fleet with CCTV (%) <sup>+</sup>	90.7	84.4	79.9
Number of reported crimes <sup>+</sup>	106	96	90
<b>Environment</b>			
Carbon emissions per passenger journey (kg)	1.12	0.78	0.77
<b>Community</b>			
Community spend per employee (£)	0.45	1.15	2.39
Stakeholder events (number)	336	195	275
<b>Customers</b>			
Customer satisfaction score %	91	91	91
Regulated excess bus waiting time (mins)	83.2	83	83.3
Expenditure on new buses in financial year (£'000) <sup>+</sup>	14,596	6,171	3,315
Average age of bus fleet <sup>*</sup>	7.5	8.1	9.2
<b>Accessibility</b>			
Bus fleet which is DDA compliant (%) <sup>*</sup>	96.2	97.5	84.8
<b>Our people</b>			
Average number of employees <sup>+</sup>	1805	1699	1613
RIDDOR accidents per 100 employees <sup>+</sup>	0.83	0.97	0.92
Engagement score	62	63	46
Employee turnover rate (%) <sup>+</sup>	12.5	13.7	12.8
Absenteeism rate (%) <sup>+</sup>	4.4	3.8	4.1
Training spend per employee (£)	423	379	309
<b>Diversity</b>			
% of female employees	15.4	14.1	13.8
% of Asian, black and other ethnic group employees	4.0	2.2	2.0
<b>Finance</b>			
Passenger volume growth (%)	6.9	6.1	49

Key

+ For the reporting period

\* as at the reporting period end

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

## More information

Find out more about Go South Coast at [gosouthcoast.co.uk](http://gosouthcoast.co.uk)

If you would like to speak directly with the company's Managing Director Andrew Wickham, please write to him 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 2 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

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

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

Produced by The Go-Ahead Group and designed by Black Sun plc



Bureau Veritas UK Ltd  
August 2018

[gosouthcoast.co.uk](http://gosouthcoast.co.uk)

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**Go-Ahead**  
Group

Sept 2018