

# BUS ALLIANCE



## MERRY HILL BUS STATION REFURBISHMENT

intu Merry Hill and Transport for West Midlands are working in partnership to deliver a modern, more accessible and welcoming bus station for visitors to the shopping centre.

Works began in January 2017. Phase One has recently been completed and three of the new stands are now fully operational. Phase Two works will include the shelters nearest to the

centre's car park being removed and new enclosed stands being constructed.

Work on the project is due to be completed in spring 2017.

## BUS ALLIANCE HIGHLIGHTED AS EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE IN PARLIAMENT

During the recent reading of the Bus Services Bill in Westminster, the West Midlands Bus Alliance was highlighted as a success, particularly for the efforts it has made in the areas of information and ticketing.

Louise Ellman, who is chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee, was discussing the current state of bus services and the need for reform.

The Labour MP for Liverpool commented: "Some attempts to reform the system that began operating in 1986 have brought about improvements, albeit limited ones. Our inquiry was given examples of innovative partnerships operating around the country.

"For example, the West Midlands Bus Alliance has benefited passengers through integrated timetabling and joint ticketing, and FirstGroup told

us about a successful partnership in Bristol. I am sure that there are many other examples of partnerships on offer under the current system that have made things better and been able to address some of the problems."

To read the debate in full, please go to:

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-01/debates/5E418991-OBA5-435A-B7C2-7774074B6F5A/BusServicesBill\(Lords\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-01/debates/5E418991-OBA5-435A-B7C2-7774074B6F5A/BusServicesBill(Lords))

### We want to hear from you!

The West Midlands Bus Alliance is comprised of representatives from bus operators, local councils, Highways England and other partners - and we'd be delighted to hear from you.

This is your newsletter, so please let us know about any projects you are involved with so that best practice and successes can be celebrated and shared with all the partners.

Projects could include new facilities for passengers, bus priority measures designed to increase punctuality and reliability, harnessing the latest technology to make integrated travel even more seamless, staff who have achieved great things or gone

above and beyond in their day-to-day duties or new initiatives aimed at increasing patronage.

They could also include innovative ticketing initiatives, cutting-edge solutions to reducing carbon emissions, network reviews and the introduction of new routes.

Please contact Matthew Finn at the West Midlands Combined Authority if you would like any of the excellent work the Bus Alliance is doing included in future editions of the newsletter.



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MAR17/20



National Express West Midlands' Matt Jukes polishing the alloy wheel of a Platinum bus

## ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOLADE FOR CARBON CUTTING TECHNOLOGY

National Express West Midlands (NXWM) has been recognised for its industry-leading work in fighting global warming, thanks to the bus operator running the largest fleet of low-carbon certified buses outside London. These vehicles played a big part in the Birmingham-based company's recent Carbon Saver Gold Award.

To be certified low-carbon, buses have to meet strict government efficiency standards in real-life tests. The company pushed the boundaries to get their engines pulling less weight, working closely with manufacturers, especially the Scottish bus maker Alexander Dennis, to reduce weight.

Colin Saward, Head of Engineering at NXWM, explained: "We shaved the thickness of the glass in our windows

down from 4 millimetres thick to 3 millimetres. The 96 Platinum buses we bought in 2016 all had alloy wheels. They don't just look cool - four of those on a bus saves 80kg, the weight of an average man. And under the hood, all our new buses have stop-start technology and 'smart accessories' that drain less power from the engine, so using less fuel."

To win a Carbon Saver Gold Award, an independent assessor measures a company's carbon footprint, a process which includes site visits to verify claims. NXWM's multi-million pound investment in 190 cleaner, greener buses is making a real difference to the environment and this is the third time in a row the company has won the Carbon Saver Gold Award.

Glenn Wilkinson from Carbon Saver added: "Achieving the Carbon Saver Standard demonstrates an organisation is taking real action on reducing their environmental impacts through carbon. The award follows three years of measuring, managing and reducing carbon across the organisation.

"For National Express to win Carbon Saver Gold for the third time in a row has been a real team effort, involving staff from property, with a lot of support from finance and operational teams. Assessors found that the operator improved its score from 71% last year to 86% - that's a substantial increase."





## COVENTRY DRIVER SCOOPS TOP AWARD

The recent Accessible Transport Group (ATG) Employee of the Year Awards saw success for an exceptional bus driver based in Coventry.

Winner Andrew Sawyer, who drives for iGo, was deemed to have a superb rapport with his passengers and his driving skills were second to none. Andrew is based at the iGo Coventry depot and works on routes 26 and 41/47.

ATG is a charity employing 950 people, with its focus on providing accessible transport services across the West Midlands. The annual Employee of the Year Awards are an opportunity to recognise those who have been pre-eminent in performing their role during 2016, with a celebration inviting all

involved in making the charity so special – Ring and Ride users, suppliers, local authorities and TfWM, staff and trustees. David Bermingham, Chief Executive, Accessible Transport Group, said: “All employees are automatically entered and have points awarded or deducted relative to areas of their daily performance at work e.g. attendance, attitude, appearance and accident history etc.

“Each depot provides a winner who then goes into the next round where they undertake a test in their area of the business, with all drivers having a driving assessment. Each winner receives £200 in vouchers, a crystal memento, engraved pen and their depot displays the relevant cup for the year.”

Andrew proved to be the cream of the crop in what is a rigorous process. The drivers are first whittled down at depot level, they are then subjected to a one-and-a-half hour driving assessment when they are in service on their route. During this time, particular attention is paid to their customer service skills and disability awareness.

A delighted Andrew added: “I was really happy to receive the award and to be part of an organisation that appreciates their staff. I didn’t expect to win as I have never won anything before. The award let me know I am doing my job to company standards.”



L-R – David Bermingham, Cllr Kath Hartley, nominated iGo Driver, winning driver Andrew Sawyer, nominated iGo Driver, Dave Sterland, Stephen Holloway



A bus passenger using a VUER on-bus infotainment system

## THE SHOW IS ON THE ROAD FOR WEST MIDLANDS BUS PASSENGERS!

In a UK first, passengers in the West Midlands can now plug into the latest entertainment on board their bus.

National Express West Midlands (NXWM) has launched the country’s only on-bus infotainment system, offering blockbuster films, TV, news and magazines online – completely free of charge.

The VUER (View, Unwind, Enjoy, Relax) app allows customers to enjoy hours of free entertainment, as well as news and weather plus free wi-fi, on their own phones or tablets from the comfort of their seat.

Peter Coates, Managing Director of NXWM, said: “It’s very exciting to be

the first operator to launch an on-bus infotainment system. It means our customers can now unwind, relax and get the most out of their journey.

“Passengers on three Platinum express services can now browse the internet, read up to £20 worth of magazines, enjoy films and television programmes for both adults and kids – all for the cost of a bus ticket.”

The Vuer service is available on:

- the X1 between Birmingham and Coventry via the airport and the NEC
- the X2 – Birmingham – Yardley – Sheldon – Solihull via Old Lode Lane
- the X61 between Birmingham and Frankley via Northfield

The system, which was rolled out on National Express coaches at the end of 2016, is very simple to use. Customers simply download the app from the Apple or Android app store on their phone or tablet before they get on the bus. Content is then streamed over wi-fi during the journey.

The films and TV programmes are stored in a box installed on the bus, ready to be picked up and watched on the customer’s phone. The content is updated every day.

For further information on Vuer, go to: <http://www.nationalexpress.com/vuer.aspx>