

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 729 January 2025



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



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729 for EBM 729



Above: Eastern National Leyland National 2 1933 (MHJ 729V) departing from Harwich Bus Station on local service 120 Harwich - Dovercourt - Parkeston on 21 July 1990. The bus was on loan from Colchester Depot to Harwich Depot, hence the blind display. **Robert Appleton**

Below: Richmond's 729 KTO, a Plaxton Paramount bodied Volvo B10M originally registered B29 ABH, on hire to Biss Brothers to operate their scheduled service from Bishop's Stortford and Harlow, seen at Walton-on-Naze Railway Station on 11 October 1988. [Incidentally, Richmond's still use this registration, it is currently on a Van Hool TX16 Astron.] To the left are two London Buses Metrobuses, M1142 (B142 WUL) and M1052 (A752 THV) from Abbey District's Holloway (HT) garage. On the right is London Buses Leyland Titan T613 (NUW 613Y) from Forest District's Upton Park garage, which had been painted in West Ham Corporation Transport livery to celebrate the centenary of the County Borough of West Ham (which was in Essex in 1886) in June 1986 (not of the tram operation, West Ham did not get involved in trams until 1903). The reason this has number 675 is that this livery was originally meant to be applied to T675 and when the vehicle was later changed the paint specification wasn't! **Andrew Colebourne**





Above: London General route 26, Stratford - Brentwood, was renumbered 86 on 1 December 1924 and is still going today, albeit now Stratford - Romford only, a century on. This photo is from almost the midpoint between the start of the 86 and now. London Transport RT4190 (LYF 249) is seen heading along St. Edwards Way, Romford, passing the library, in October 1975 on a short working 86 to Forest Gate, Green Street. **Alan Osborne**
Alan's brief history and photographic tribute to the route is on pages 26-29.

Front Cover: As reported in the last two EBM's and on page 13 of this issue, Arriva Southend are losing Enviro 400 MMCs which are being replaced by older VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2s. One of the latter, 4455 (MX61 AXS), received from Arriva Southern Counties at Maidstone on 15 December 2024, is seen on its first day of service at Southend the next day on route 2 at Thorpedene.

Richard Delahoy

Happy New Year to all Members and readers

Right: First Essex Enviro 400 33684 (SN12 AFO) on route 75 in Maldon High Street on 28 December displaying "Merry Christmas & Happy New Year". **Gareth Jones**



Group Information

Chair
Secretary & Meetings Host
Treasurer & Membership
Distribution, Publication & Sales
Publications Co-ordinator

Ian Ransom
Alan Osborne
Richard Delahoy
Owen Woodliffe
Paul Harvey

Missing or Defective EBMs
Please contact Owen Woodliffe, 196 Sinclair Road,
Chingford, E4 8PT
pat_woodliffe@hotmail.com
Owen stocks a wide range of colour photos, please
send an SAE for details.

Editorial Team

Editor and First Essex & Ensignbus

Adam Kelleher
74 Park Road
Brentwood, Essex
CM14 4TU
adamxxxx4@yahoo.co.uk

Arriva Southend & Colchester

Richard Delahoy, address opposite
(Arriva Harlow notes to Adam Kelleher,
address above)

Hedingham & Chambers

Mark Lloyd
133 Hazelton Road,
Colchester, Essex CO4 3DY
lloydhousehold448@gmail.com

Service Revisions, Lodge Coaches and Publicity

Ian Ransom, ianransom2008@googlemail.com
34 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9JE

Stephensons & NIBS

Richard Delahoy, address opposite

Smaller Operators

Roger A Smith, 3 Station Mews
Station Road, Witham, Essex
CM8 2FP

Ipswich Buses in Essex

Robert Appleton, rcappleton29@gmail.com

Central Connect

Chris Stewart, shenfield252@gmail.com

Subscriptions

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printed copies sent by post, or £20 for electronic pdf
copies sent by e-mail. New members may join from
any month, but subscriptions will always run to
December from whichever month the member
chooses, please ask for the relevant price.
Please contact Richard Delahoy, 272 Shoebury Road,
Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3TT
richard.delahoy@blueyonder.co.uk

EBM Extra

EBM is published monthly. In addition, we aim to
publish two Extras each year full of historical features.
These are supplied to members free of charge, subject
to funding.

Membership Records & Data Protection

A statement of our compliance with the GDPR is
available on our website or by post. For any
membership or Data Protection issues please contact
Richard Delahoy, address above.

Reports, Articles & Photographs

Members' reports, articles and photos (prints, slides or
preferably jpgs) are always welcome. Please send to
the Editor or relevant Sub-Editor. The editors exercise
discretion to publish contributions in full, in part or not
at all and cannot guarantee publication in any particular
month.

Target Dates for EBM 730

Reports to Sub-Editors	18 January
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	24 January
Dispatch by Printers on or before	1 February

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 25th and will be included if possible, if not it will
be held over to the next month.

Views expressed in EBM do not necessarily reflect the
opinions of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group or
officers. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy, but
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Group Notices

Welcome to New Members

Tim Kay, Newbridge-on-Wye - 1236

Elliott Wright, West Bergholt - 1237

Group Meetings

The next meeting is being held at the normal location, **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL, which is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. Doors open at 1400 for a 1430 start, ending at 1630. There is very limited on-site parking, accessed via Cedar Avenue West, we would ask that you leave these for those less able to walk.

The meeting is being held jointly with our good friends at The Omnibus Society, Eastern & Southern Branch, who are very generously paying for the room hire, so entrance is FREE.

Unfortunately, nobody came forward to take on the role of Chelmsford Meetings Organiser, so this will be the last meeting in this format. However, a new style of monthly **Chelmsford Social Meetings** will be introduced from February on Thursdays at a new venue, **'The Globe' Public House**, Rainsford Road, which is 100 yards along from the Quaker Meeting House, on the other side of the road. There is a car park but you must register your car at the terminal on the bar on arrival, otherwise a penalty charge will apply. The meetings will be very informal with Alan Osborne as host. There will be an opportunity for networking and for the exchange of viewings of digital images (attendees would need to bring their own laptop to use as a screen), colour slides (viewer available), colour prints and monochrome prints in small groups.

A poll at the December meeting resulted in a split vote in favour of afternoon and evening meetings, so the February meeting is being held in the evening and the March meeting in the afternoon. After that a decision will be made on future times.

We temporarily return to the Quaker Meeting House, and to a Saturday, in April for the Annual General Meeting.

The first five meetings in **2025** are:

Saturday 11 January at 1430: Tony Francis - From Camberwell to Westminster via Reigate. A career in transport and lessons learnt. (Postponed from 12 October.)

Thursday 13 February at 1900: Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House

Thursday 13 March at 1430: Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House

Thursday 10 April at 1900: Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House

Saturday 12 April at 1430 (doors open 1400): **Annual General Meeting at The Quaker Meeting House** with the opportunity for a social gathering afterwards.

Group Members are also invited to the following **Omnibus Society** meetings which both have a strong Essex connection (with thanks to Andrew Gipson):

Saturday 18 January at 1400: Presidential Address from Bill Hiron of Stephensons / NIBS at the **Abbey Community Centre**, 34 Great Smith Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3BU. Ten minute walk from Westminster or St. James's Park Underground Stations.

Saturday 29 March at 1400: Talk by Robin Orbell, ex Western Greyhound and Eastern National at the **Abbey Community Centre**.

Group Tours

Following a lengthy discussion at the last committee meeting, it is with regret that we have decided to no longer organise coach tours. There are a number of reasons for this, in no particular order they include:

The difficulty of finding operators that are able to host weekend visits

The increasing costs of coach hire

Operators whose coaches we have used either no longer operate, or we no longer have drivers working for them. Since COVID, there has been a marked reduction in people booking for tours operated by other groups.

We may still be able to arrange the occasional visit to individual operators, museums, or jointly with other groups.

A massive thank you to those who have supported, organised or driven on our tours over the years.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 1 February: Enfield Transport Bazaar. St Stephens Church Hall, Village Road, Enfield EN1 2EY.

Sunday 30 March: Classic Buses from Rickmansworth to Loudwater.

Saturday 5 April: South East Bus Festival. Kent Showground, Detling.

Saturday / Sunday 12/13 April: Wellingborough Bus Rally. Museum, Castle Way, Wellingborough NN8 1BX.

Sunday 13 April: Spring Gathering. London Bus Museum, Brooklands, Surrey.

Saturday 3 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER.

Monday 5 May: King Alfred Buses Running Day. Broadway, Winchester.

Saturday / Sunday 18/19 May: Isle of Wight Running Weekend. Ryde Bus Museum.

Events are published in good faith. However, the Group cannot be responsible for any changes due to future circumstances. Please check before travelling.

Member **Dave Cope** writes:

I have been planning with a few vehicle owners for a possible Mini Running Day in Kelvedon on Sunday 6 April 2025, to help the local museum to celebrate their 50th birthday, as well as an opportunity of recognising the 210th anniversary of Moores. It had been hoped that a line-up of buses in front of the workshops - to recreate the photos taken during the 200th anniversary running day in 2015 which was featured in EBN at the time - would be possible, but this is looking unlikely now (see Heddingham article on page 23). Further details to follow.

EBM 728 Pages 9 & 24

We apologise for the errors on these two pages in some issues of last month's magazine. This was out of our control. This resulted in the Stephenson / NIBS section heading being missing from the top of page 9 in some, but not all, of the printed copies, and some photos being printed in slightly the wrong positions. The incomplete photo on page 9, of the writing on the rear of the NIBS van is as **right**.



Surplus 'Buses' Magazines

Following the offer in a previous EBM of some surplus copies of 'Buses' magazine, those have now all been taken, but we still have a member interested in acquiring some. Ian Groves is looking for copies of 'Buses' prior to 2022, if any member is thinning out their collection and wants to give them away. If you can help, please contact Ian at i.groves604@gmail.com.

Follow Ups

EBM 725 - Newman Family Collection

In EBM 725 we explained about the plans to establish a bus museum at Great Yeldham to house and display the Newman family's collection of heritage buses. On 9 December 2024 Braintree District Council announced the following:

"Last week our planning committee approved an application for a new vintage bus museum set to come to Poole Farm House in Great Yeldham! The facility would be open to the public at weekends and to schools during the week, creating new job opportunities. Up to 60 vintage buses would be on display, including a car park, a café in a converted bus, and also new planting. This will make use of a neglected site which used to be home to an equestrian centre, riding arena and shop. This looks set to be a fantastic asset to Great Yeldham, bringing in new jobs and boost tourism in the local area - we can't wait to see it progress!"

Building work can now start. Two buildings require demolition and a number of horseboxes will be removed from the site. Once the site is cleared, two new structures will be built, which would be a home for the buses and coaches. One will display buses and the other will contain vehicles awaiting restoration. An existing building will be used for vehicle maintenance, and the reception and shop areas will remain. Around 40 of the buses will be in the main display hall and the others in the maintenance and restoration areas. An area of land would be dedicated to visitor parking on the northern side of the site, with six to eight full-time employees at the museum.

The main opening hours would be weekends only from 1000 to 1600, with a later opening of 1700 in the summer. There will also be a vintage bus service linking the nearby Colne Valley Railway, the USAF Ridgewell Memorial Museum and various villages on the way to Long Melford. The service will operate every 30 minutes between May and October.

EBM 728 - Route 123. Andrew Colebourne writes:

Further to the photos on the rear cover of Eastern Counties and Eastern National buses on joint route 123 between Ipswich and Clacton, including one taken at Mistley, I came across the **below** picture of Eastern National Bristol MW / ECW 1319 (214 MHK, allocated to CN), crew operated, meeting up with Eastern Counties Bristol FS / ECW LFS32 (2932 PW) from Ipswich, when route 123 ran through from Clacton-on-Sea to Ipswich and was jointly operated. The picture is on **Paul Webber's** Flickr photostream (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/35992382@N00/>) and he has kindly given permission for it to be reproduced in EBM. It is an acquired image and the photographer is unknown. I knew immediately that the location was in New Road, Mistley near Mistley Towers, although they are hidden in the background. Much has changed around here; in particular the fence on the left has gone as has the building with the distinctive roof to the right of the MW. However, the building on the far right with the arched window in the gable end is still there. The MW has Bradfield showing in its via point box but I don't think it would pass through the centre of that village on this journey.

Robert Appleton adds:

I know the location, the bottom of New Road in Mistley. The timing point in the timetable was Mistley (Towers). I was very surprised to see Bradfield as an intermediate destination. Service 123 heading towards Clacton continued up New Road, then along Clacton Road to Horsley Cross. The nearest it got to Bradfield was the junction of Steam Mill Road and Clacton Road at Horsley Cross, at least one mile from Bradfield village. Manningtree or Thorpe-le-Soken would have been a better intermediate destination if they were on the blind.

LFS32 was new in February 1962. In 1966 or 1967 service 123 was diverted away from New Road. Instead it continued past Mistley (Towers) up Mistley Hill, along Harwich Road, past Rigby Avenue, then turned right to Mistley Heath, then right again onto Straight Road, then right again on to Steam Mill Road, then rejoined the original route at the junction of Steam Mill Road and Clacton Road at Horsley Cross.

I do not have full vehicle workings for 123 prior to 1968, but I do know that an Eastern Counties bus worked 1010 Ipswich - Clacton, an Eastern National bus worked 0900 Clacton - Ipswich 123, crews changed over at Freston (Boot) near Freston (Cross Roads). The Eastern Counties bus returned on 1430 Clacton - Ipswich. The Eastern National bus returned on 1430 Ipswich - Clacton, crews changed over at Mistley (Towers) at 1523, which is the scene depicted in this photo. It looks like the Eastern Counties driver is wearing his summer jacket. An Eastern National bus worked 1000 Clacton - Ipswich and 1315 Ipswich - Clacton. I am not sure how the remaining three journeys each way were operated.



EBM 728 - Preserved Eastern National EOO 590

Owner Ian Runn has advised us that the only likely rally attendance in 2025 for his beautifully restored Eastern National FLF will be at the Leyland National 53 - National *isation* event at Whitehaven, Cumbria, on 3 & 4 May, organised by the Workington Transport Heritage Trust. The bus is stored at the Keighley Bus Museum and can be viewed there on most Sundays.

EBM 728 - Misspelt Blinds. Nigel Turner writes:

I was interested to see in EBM 728 that Peter Carr had picked up on the misspelling of Lindsell as 'Linsell' on the blind of JVV 430 in EBM 727. This error in fact dates back to the 1930s.

In 1932, Leslie Charter, son of the Landlord of the Kings Head in Stebbing, had his licences revoked by the Traffic Commissioners. To compensate, Hicks Bros extended a Wednesday journey on their Dunmow - Stebbing - Braintree route (subsequently numbered 15, later 315) to cover Lindsell (spelt correctly) and the Eastons. However, by 1937 the timetables were showing Linsell. The service was cut back to Stebbing on the outbreak of war in September 1939 but when reinstated in 1942 was still shown as Linsell and stayed that way right up to the very last Hicks timetable issued in November 1954. However an Eastern National August 1954 fare table, which included the Hicks routes, did show Lindsell.

It's odd that the mistake continued for so long especially as Hicks had their timetables printed locally in Braintree by a company whose manager was a former employee so one would have expected that an error would have been noticed. Some time ago, I did have a discussion about this with the chairman of the Stebbing Local History Society but he could find no evidence of Linsell being an alternative spelling of the village name.

Bob Williamson adds:

Other blind errors known are Cornnigham instead of Corringham (BN 30"x5" 1980s) and Leyer Road instead of Layer Road (CN 48"x 5" August 1961 printing). There is also the Kent Elm Corner and Kent Elms Corner variations on various SD blinds - which one is correct I wonder? {An interesting question, potentially both! Taking a Southend area timetable at random, for September 1961, in the timetables for services 6/A, 19/A it is singular but on the 11/A, 14/A, 23A, 250 and 251 the same stop is shown as a plural, as does the map. Most people locally refer to it in the plural].

David Edwards has provided a photo of part a BE/HD/SE blind, **right**, dated 1979 showing a misspelt Earls Colne with an extra 'E' in Earls, however Lindsell is spelt correctly.



Last month we included a photo taken by **David Edwards** of First Essex Midi Enviro 200 44080 at the Tuesdays only 322 Lindsell terminus taken on 29 October 2024. As noted, this terminus is a few hundred yards further along the road from the former Eastern National Lindsell 'Old School' terminus. David has kindly sent us these photos taken at this location by former Braintree depot driver the late **Tony Langley**.



Top & Middle: Two views of Bedford YMQS / Wadham Stringer 1051 (TJN 974W) on route 314 in the deep snow of early 1985, on Saturday 9 February. It is missing a nearside fleet name and NBC logo. Four months later this bus was repainted into cream and green for operation on one of the first London Regional Transport tendered services, route W9, Enfield (Cecil Road) - Muswell Hill Broadway.



Right: Rear view of Bristol RELL / ECW 1542 (RPU 882K), also on route 314, on Saturday 22 July 1983. Note the short green bus stop pole with yellow fibreglass timetable case attached (but no sign of a bus stop flag).



Update on Harlow Bus Station

As expected, Harlow Bus Station closed after service on Saturday 30 November 2024, with the temporary replacement in Post Office Road opening the next day and expected to be in use for 18 months. Work continued throughout the following week and continues on refurbishing a nearby building to become a waiting room / toilet block.

Right: The layout of the temporary bus station. It consists of stops A, B and C adjacent to Post Office Road, stops D to H on the island platform, with buses on layover against the fence of Fourth Avenue. Access is only possible from Fourth Avenue via North Gate and Post Office Road, which is now two way. Buses don't all use the same routing, for example, Arriva routes 4 and 10 have been diverted away from Velizy Avenue via Third Avenue, Haydens Road, and Fourth Avenue. Central Connect routes 20 ,21 and 22 still use Velizy Avenue. Whilst the temporary bus station is spacious and a more pleasant setting, the small shelters, especially on stops A and B, are not sufficient for all passengers to be accommodated under cover.

Below: The temporary bus station in relation to the closed one. With thanks to John Card, Owen Woodliffe and Central Connect.





Before & After featuring Central Connect vehicles.

Above: Left to right, Mini Enviro 200 MMC 360 (YY24 HBD) on route 21, Enviro 400 MMC 502 (YX24 PLU) on route 20, First Essex Mini Enviro 200 44914 (YX09 AGZ) on 407 (see also page 19) and Enviro 200 MMC 349 (SK73 KOU) on route 25 at Harlow Bus Station on 19 November 2024. **Andrew Colebourne**

Below: Due to one direction only within the temporary bus station, buses have to set down at their stop, exit the bus station then re-enter to stand and do the same for departure. 350 (YY73 TGU), now repainted into fleet colours but lacking fleet names, is leaving the exit to regain entry to pick up passengers on route 20, showing a lazy blind, on 16 December 2024. **Owen Woodliffe** Other photos taken at Harlow Bus Stations are on pages 12, 19, 24 & 25.



1 September 2024

223 (Sch Only) Braintree, Wheatley Avenue - Sible Hedingham School **Flagfinders**. Service incorporated into the M-S daytime service 60 (Braintree, Marks Farm Tesco - Sudbury Bus Station).

29 October

33 (M-S) Grays Bus Station - Chafford Hundred Station **Ensignbus**. Additional journey on M-Th Sch only at 1547 Chafford Hundred - Grays, via Rainbow Road and Saffron Road.

1 December

Harlow Bus Station references are to the new temporary bus station which opened on this date.

5 (Daily) Harlow Bus Station - Sumners Farm **Central Connect**. Additional journey at 1925 from Harlow Bus Station on Sunday only.

24 (M-S) Harlow Bus Station - Harlow, River Way **Central Connect**. Revised M-F timetable introduced, with additional morning peak journeys and increased from hourly to half hourly between 0900 and 1500.

26 (M-F) Harlow Bus Station circular via Little Parndon **Central Connect**. NEW SERVICE, operates hourly 0925 - 1425, via same route as **Arriva 6**. The **Central Connect** Sunday service on route **6** renumbered **26A**.

30 (M-S) Epping Hospital - Coopersale Piazza **Central Connect**. Revised M-F timetable, with the 0740 ex Coopersale and 0745 ex Epping withdrawn.

31 (M-S) Harlow Bus Station - Coopersale Piazza **Central Connect**. Revised timetable on M-F morning peaks to aid reliability, additional journey at 0905 Tylers Cross - Harlow Bus Station introduced.

5 January 2025

8 (M-S) Rettendon, Central Connect Depot - Wickford Railway Station **Central Connect**. Additional journey introduced each way, 0610 from Rettendon and 1853 from Wickford, The Swan.

12 (M-S) Wickford, The Swan - Billericay Arlington Way **Central Connect**. Revised timetable introduced with an hourly frequency (currently runs at approximately 70 minute frequency). In addition, in Wickford, revised to operate via a loop of the town centre, so will depart from outside The Swan.

21/A/S (Daily) Canvey Island, Creek Road - Great Wakering, Landwick Cottages **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F and minor changes on Saturday.

22 (Daily) Canvey, Leigh Beck - Basildon Bus Station **First Essex**. Minor changes introduced on M-F.

27/A/827 (Daily) Canvey, Leigh Beck - Southend Travel Centre **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F.

28 (Daily) Harlow Bus Station - Old Harlow, circular **Central Connect**. Due to safety concerns and parked vehicles, the section of route via Minchen Road is withdrawn. Buses will now operate direct from Maddox Way to Momples Road, with a revised timetable.

28 (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Basildon Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F with additional journeys from Basildon to Southend in morning peak.

43/44/45/46 (Sch Only) Shotgate, NIBS Depot - Billericay Schools **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

49 (Sch Only) Basildon, The Watermill - Shenfield School **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

50 (Sch Only) Shotgate, NIBS Depot - Ingatestone, Seymour Field **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

75 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Maldon, Blackwater Leisure Centre **First Essex**. Revised timetable introduced on M-F to improve punctuality. Additional journey at 0655 Tiptree, New Times - Colchester Bus Station.

170 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Braintree, Marks Farm Tesco **First Essex**. Additional journey introduced on schooldays at 0735 from Youngs End to Chelmsford Bus Station.

200 (M-S) Basildon Bus Station - Grays Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised evening peak timetable on M-F.

375 (M-S) Horndon-on-the-Hill, South Hill Crescent - Grays Bus Station **Central Connect**. In Partnership with Thurrock Council, frequency increased from every 2/3 hours to two hourly and rerouted to operate via Corringham, Southend Road. On M-F, 0700 ex Horndon-on-the Hill retimed to 0655 and 0800 ex Grays retimed to 0750, for the benefit of pupils travelling to St Cleres School.

441 (Sch Only) Takeley, Four Ashes - Saffron Walden High School **Stephensons**. Service withdrawn.

481 (Sch Only) West Horndon Railway Station - Hutton, St Martins School **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

483 (Sch Only) Mountnessing, George and Dragon - Hutton, St Martins School **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

484 (Sch Only) Ongar, Four Wantz - Hutton, St Martins School **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

621 (Sch Only) Roxwell Village Hall - Ingatestone, Seymour Field **First Essex**. Service withdrawn due to low demand (in practice, last ran on 20 December 2024 at end of school term). This service had only been introduced in September 2024, see EBM 725.

625 (Sch Only) Chelmsford Bus Station - Prittlewell, Highfield Gardens **First Essex**. Revised timetable with additional running time.

B1 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Laindon, Fenton Way **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F mornings.

X10 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable, with most journeys revised to operate via Great Dunmow Town Centre.

X30 (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Stansted Airport Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable to improve reliability. Most journeys revised to operate via A120 and no longer serve Great Dunmow Town Centre (except some early / late journeys), replaced by revisions to X10 as noted above.

Colchester Park & Ride (M-S) **Arriva**. Revised timetable, with earlier journey on M-F and a frequency adjustment late morning on M-F.

The **Arriva London** service **347**, Romford Station - Ockendon Railway Station, will not be retendered in October 2025 due to low passenger numbers.

Christmas & New Year Services 2024/25

Generally a Saturday service operated on 24, 27, 30 and 31 December, with an earlier finish on 24th and 31st on some services (mainly Arriva and First Essex 20, 21, 27, 28, 100 and 300. Plus no afternoon service on Amazon Z3, Z4).

On ECC services the normal M-F timetable operated, except no service on 25 & 26 December and 1 January.

Christmas Day: Arriva special timetable on services 133, 309 and 510 for Stansted Airport.

Boxing Day: Arriva special timetable on services 133, 309, 510 and 724; Ensignbus special services X1 & X2 (Southend to Lakeside / Upminster); First Essex Stansted Airport X services, a special service on C1, S1, S4 and Amazon Tilbury services.

New Year's Day: Arriva special timetable on services 133, 309, 510 and 724; First Essex Stansted Airport X services and a special service on C1, S1, S4.

Arriva 724 on Boxing Day and New Year's Day saw only a very limited service (0110, 0310 and 2030 ex Harlow; 0025, 0530 and 0705 ex Heathrow). However, Carousel, provided a generally hourly service between Watford Junction and Heathrow Central Bus Station (first journey 0705 from Watford, last journey at 2025 from Heathrow).

Harlow Bus Station

All bus and coach services serving Harlow Bus Station had revised registrations from 1 December 2024 to register the revised route and terminal point at the temporary bus station. These are:

Arriva	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 59, 508/A, 509/A, 510/A, 724
Central Connect	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15/A, 20, 21, 22/B, 23, 24, 25/B, 26/A, 28, 31
Epping Forest CT	347, C392, HSB1
First Essex	4, 14, 19/A, 59, 407, 417
National Express	737



Richard Delahoy

Fares

Arriva have announced that the price of single bus fares will change from 1 January 2025, but with the Government capped fare customers will still be able to travel for no more than £3 per journey. There will be many single fares which will cost less than this. They advise to tell the driver where you are travelling to in order to get the best value ticket. Return tickets and some multi-journey tickets, including the 3 and 12 day bundles and 10 trip tickets, are being withdrawn.

Harlow

Acquired Vehicles

1660 (GN64 DXX) Wrightbus StreetLite WF, B30F.

New to (February 2015) and acquired from (December 2024) Arriva Kent & Surrey.

This bus came from Tunbridge Wells and 1466 has gone there in exchange (see below). This is the first wheel forward StreetLite to work for Arriva in Essex. It is seen **below** exiting the new Harlow Temporary Bus Station on 16 December 2024. **Owen Woodliffe**



4105, 4107, 4109, 4110, 4112 (SN17 MXD/F/H/J/L) ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B45F.

New to (August 2017) and acquired from (December 2024) Arriva Kent & Surrey.

Repainted from Fastrack livery to corporate blue before entering service.

These join 4103/4 reported last month. Harlow also has 4106/8 within the SN17 MXx batch, which were also acquired from Arriva Kent & Surrey, in August 2024 (see EBM 725).

Disposals

Optare Solo 1466 to Arriva Kent & Surrey at Tunbridge Wells, in exchange for StreetLite 1660 (see above).

VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2 3770, 3774, 3797, 3798 transferred within Arriva Herts & Essex, but out of our area, to Stevenage.

Services

The introduction of route 7 has seen a further rise in the PVR. although only between 0930 and 1530.

Although 3771, 3772 and 3798 have been active on the 724 recently, with the disposal of similar types noted above, it looks like the route is being converted back to Enviro 200 MMC operation.

Colchester

Acquired Vehicles

A further transfer in (from Northfleet) is another ADL Enviro 200, 4057 (GN09 AXK), delivered to Colchester on 28 November 2024. This and 4059 are in a modified version of the old turquoise 'cow horns' livery but with additional cream with a cream swoop covering the windscreen pillars and cove / roof first two bays. So in effect, the livery on these is a combination of the original Arriva livery with a cream swoop at the front and the replacement 'Interurban' style livery.

Then on 18 December, ADL Trident / Enviro 400 6461 (SN58 EOD) was transferred here from Ware and entered service the next day. It is in Arriva Max livery with a dark blue front (and "your usual bus is in for a service today so this is our spare" wording on lower panels on both sides).

Disposals

VDL DB300/ Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 4459 was transferred to Southend on 20 December. It was replaced by 6461 as noted above.

Southend

Acquired Vehicles

Further to last month, 4468 entered service on 26 November 2024. The first full stage of the swap of Enviro 400 MMCs for older VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2s (H42/27F) then took place on Sunday 15 December with 4450/5/60/3/4 (MX61 AYJ, AXS, AXY, AYB, AXD) arriving from Arriva Southern Counties at Maidstone (they had been new to Arriva Merseyside). All are in light blue corporate livery. 4450 is seen **below** the next day, its first day in service, on route 2 at Thorpedene. **Richard Delahoy**. See also front cover photo.

Then, as noted above, Colchester's similar 4459 (MX61 AXW) was received on 20 December. This is in older turquoise 'cow horns' livery.

More VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2s arrived from Maidstone on 29 December, these being 4469-71 (MX61 AXK, AXM, AXN), all in light blue corporate livery.

4227/42 (KX62 JRZ, KX13 DHM) Optare Versas. Transferred within Arriva Herts & Essex from Hemel Hempstead but not used in service recently (according to Bustimes 4227 not since January 2024 and 4242 not since October). Both in light blue corporate livery. Neither are yet in service (nor is previously acquired 4185, KX62 JJO).

Disposals

Enviro 400 MMCs 6503/9/11-3 (SN66 WHW, WJE, WJG, WJJ, WJK) on 15 December 2024 and 6505/10/4 (SN66 WHZ, WJF, WJL) on 29 December to Arriva Kent & Surrey at Maidstone.

Enviro 400 MMC 6508 (SN66 WJD) transferred within Arriva Herts & Essex, but out of our area, to Ware on 20 December.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher, Keith Sadler, Steve Thompson, Owen Woodliffe, LOTS and Bus Lists on the Web.





Adam Kelleher

Corporate News

On 9 December 2024, First Bus introduced a new corporate logo to go with the new corporate livery introduced earlier in the year. We have incorporated this into the header for this article, as seen **above**. White on purple is used as fleet names on buses, although pink on purple is used in publicity (**right**). Of note is that the logo now precedes the fleet name. The first First Essex bus to receive the new style logo and fleet names was Enviro 200 MMC 67197, as illustrated on the opposite page. The new style name & logo, with purple background, has also been used on timetables for the first time from the 5 January 2025 service revisions, replacing green Essex Bus and red shuttles colours, although the Essex Airlink blue branding remains on the new X10 and X30 timetables.



From the same date, tickets were printed with the new logo, as shown **right**, however, the old logo is pre-printed on the roll.

Then on the 10th, First Bus announced that it is to return to operating Transport for London services with the acquisition of the RATP Dev London bus operations (comprising London United, London Sovereign and London Transit). RATP London is one of the principal bus operators in the capital, with a circa 12% market share, comprising:

10 depots across central and west London (four owned and six leased)

A fleet of approximately 980 buses of which a third are fully electric

c. 3,700 employees, over 80% of whom are drivers

89 TfL route contracts in central and west London.

The acquisition builds on First Group's return to London after its recent purchase of Anderson Travel. The deal is subject to French Government and TfL approval but is expected to be completed in the coming months.

RATP Dev will focus on global rail projects, including driverless metros and high-capacity commuter rail systems. Incidentally, there are still almost 40 buses in the current RATP London fleet that were bought new by First London before they withdrew from the London market in 2013.



Demonstrator

Further to last month, Yutong U11DD double deck demonstrator YD73 FTP was at Ravenhill Depot, Swansea, by late November 2024.

Vehicles on Loan

In Allocation Changes last month we showed 47679 as CR (loan)-FG, but we forgot to specifically state that this bus finally moved to Ipswich on 7 November 2024, nearly a year since it was received on loan; it was originally only supposed to be on loan for a few weeks. More details were in EBM 726, page 14.

Further to EBMs 727 & 728, white Enviro 400 33593 (SN09 CFG), which had been operating at Colchester on loan from Ensignbus during October 2024, was seen at Basildon depot on 18 December (and possibly also there on other days) but was not reported to operate in service.

Repaints

33668 from Urban livery to new corporate livery (with vinyls), back in service at Colchester on 28 November 2024.

33713 from Urban livery to new corporate livery (with vinyls), back in service at Colchester on 11 December.

47667 from Southampton City Red livery to new corporate livery with vinyls, including new style fleet name and logo, the second vehicle to receive these, back in service at Colchester on 22 December.

67197 from Park & Ride black to new corporate livery at Mardens, the first vehicle to receive the new style logo and fleet names. This was also the last vehicle in all black ex Park & Ride livery. Back in service at Colchester on 18 December. It is seen at Quayside on 17th. Note that although the front and side fleet names and logos are white, the rear logo is light purple, the same colour as the dividing stripes. Also, on single-deckers, on the offside the logo is in large size below the windows, but on the nearside where an advert frame is fitted, a smaller version is used, above the windows and nearer to the front of the bus. All **Ryan Hannah**



Allocation Changes

BN-Basildon; CF-Chelmsford; CR-Colchester; HH-Hadleigh; DS-Driving School; FG-First Group cascade (to / from another First company); oos-out of service.

Period 9 2024/25 (24 November - 28 December)

33689 CR (oos)-CR, 33991 BN-BN (oos), 34453 HH-HH (oos), 36217 HH (oos)-HH, 36843 CF-CF (oos), 44473 CF (oos)-CF, 44909 BN-BN (oos)-CF (oos), 67192 BN (oos)-BN

44909 moved from Basildon to Chelmsford for component recovery, it was then due to go for scrap. Further to last month, 44473 returned to service on Christmas Eve, having been out of use since November 2023.

Boxing Day Services

The routes that ran on Boxing Day 2024 are outlined in 'Service Revisions' on page 11.

Vehicles reported:

C1 67167, 67169

S1 33663, 33684, 67190

S4 33713, 37613

X10 67191, 67192, 67193, 67195, 67196

X20 34421, 34422, 34423, 37621

X30 34424, 36837, 36838, 36839, 36840, 36842

Hadleigh depot was closed, so for this day only Amazon services Z3/Z4 were operated by Basildon using 47649, 47650, 47653, 63169, 67194.

New Fares from 1 January 2025

Following the announcement of the UK Government's £3 fare cap (up from £2), First Essex announced changes to fares from 1 January. Although the maximum single fare will be £3, 36% of fares will cost less. The key changes are:

Shorter distance singles will start at £1.50, with the majority costing between £2.30 and £2.80 dependent on location

Those using Tap & Cap for multiple journeys in a day will never pay more than £5.50 in Colchester, £6 in Southend or £6.80 in Basildon and Chelmsford.

Those who travel 5 days a week or more using Tap & Cap in Basildon or Chelmsford will not see any cost increase. For customer convenience, 10 single trip and group tickets will be available across all areas.

Around the Depots

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot. All dates December 2024 except where stated.)

Colchester

On the Colchester scrap line on 22 November 2024 were 32547, 37004, 37006 and 37007 as noted last month, plus 32672. 33689 had gone, and returned to service on 29 November. On 20 December, 32547, 37004 and 37006 were no longer there, and may have been disposed of, to be confirmed.

Airlink liveried 34422 unusual on S6 (28th).

Quite a few single-deckers on double deck route 320 recently, noted have been 47430 (10th), 47666 (29 November), 47669 (11th), 63331 (2nd), 63335 (11th), 63341 (12th), 67190 (16th), 69520 (3rd).

News of the Harwich routes (22 November-24 December).

On Monday - Friday two or three double-deckers continued to work on 104, normally ADL Enviro 400 or Volvo B9TL. Three Volvo B7TL worked on 104, 32673 on 4th, 6th & 13th, 37016 on 10th, 37037 on 11th. In contrast, ADL Enviro 400 MMC 34422 worked 1435 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1615 return on 3 December in between its X20 duties.

The single deck duties are shared between StreetLites and Volvo B7RLEs. Exceptions were ADL Enviro 200 MMC 67197 on 25 November and 67190 on 26 November. On Sunday 15th, there were changeovers during the day meaning 102 was worked by five of the six B7RLEs: 69515/16/18/19/20 instead of the usual three buses. Then on 23rd, the first day of the Christmas school holidays, all six of the B7RLEs 69515 -20 appeared on 102/104: 69520 0720 Harwich - Colchester 104, 69515 0910 Mistley - Colchester 104, 69519 0935 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104, 69517 1035 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1510 Harwich -

Colchester 104, 69518 1135 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1310 return, 69516 2035 Colchester - Harwich 102. All these duties involved interworking with 71/371. Also working on 104 on 23rd were 33690, 47421, 47427 47461, 47630 and 63331. Traffic congestion in Colchester in the run up to Christmas caused late running, thus changeovers took place to restore punctuality meaning that a total of twelve buses worked on 102/104.

More typical allocations on 102/104 on Monday - Friday schooldays have been:

26 November: 33676, 33684, 37136, 47421, 47430, 63312, 67190, 69516, 69517, 69518

13 December: 32673, 33680, 47483, 47658, 63329, 63334, 63337, 69516, 69518, 69520

16 December: 33680, 33687, 33697, 63331, 63333, 63337, 69516, 69517, 69518, 69520.

Chelmsford

Further to last month, 44597 and 44900 remained on the scrap line on 10 December. On 20th, both were still there, although rather unusually 44900 had been moved. In its previous place was 36843 with accident damage, likely sustained somewhere near Kent Elms Corner in Southend on 17 December. It had been towed back to CF.

36838 on 170 (10th). 44176 on last 621 (20th). 69434 on X30 (3rd). DS66886 on driver training in Witham (29 November).

Basildon

Withdrawn Enviro 200 44598 (last used in service on 15 March 2024) remains parked at the back of Basildon depot, but, whilst the rebuilding works continue for electrification of the depot, it is being used, with its ramp down, as a temporary bike shelter.

Further to last month, 67192 has also had X20 branding removed.

44001 (17th) and Airlink liveried 67193 (12th) on 625. 67165 on 9 (2nd). 67195 on 300 (27th).

Hadleigh

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 37986, in 1968 Eastern National FLF coach livery, has had its front white LED display replaced with an orange one after the former failed.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, David Edwards, Ryan Hannah, John Lidstone, John Podgorski, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Robert West, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group, LOTS and Terminus.

Below: Christmas lights at Chelmsford Bus Station on 14 December 2024, Enviro 200 44544 (YX13 AKF) on route C10. **Chris Stewart**



First Essex News in Pictures

Right: Enviro 400 33555 (SN58 CGF), with two front fleet numbers, on route 9 in Brentwood High Street on 6 December 2024.
Andrew Colebourne



Below: On Sunday morning 24 November 2024, a building partially collapsed in the lower half of Maldon High Street due to the gales caused by Storm Bert. Due to the road being blocked by emergency services vehicles, two buses were terminated in the High Steet. These were Colchester based StreetLite 47667 (SN15 ACO), in Southampton City Red livery with a Colchester shuttle logo on the windscreen, but since repainted, which had been working route 0925 75 from Colchester to Maldon and Chelmsford based Enviro 200 MMC 67164 (YY66 PBF), in Essex Bus green, which had been working the 0950 332 from Chelmsford to Burnham-on-Crouch. **Gareth Jones**





Above: Mini Enviro 200 44914 (YX09 AGZ) entering (the old) Harlow Bus Station on 19 November 2024. **Andrew Colebourne.** Two of this type, 44900 and 44909, have been withdrawn from service recently, leaving just 44914, 44915 and 44927 in use.

Below: Last month we reported that Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37140 (SN57 HCZ) had moved to First Eastern Counties. It is seen at Fakenham on route X29 on 25 November 2024. **Kevin Smith**



Acquired Vehicles

54151, 54152 (WUI 7786 / 8150) Mercedes-Benz 516CDi Sprinter / EVM, B16F. From First Leicester, where they had been used on the Leicester to Birmingham Airport Aircoach service, November 2024. New to Airporter, Londonderry June 2018. All white. These may only be temporary additions to the fleet. During November and December they were being used on temporary TfL route 546, see below.

Repaint

BCI Enterprise 406 (39052, LX19 EAG) was repainted to blue and grey in early December 2024.

Services

During planned gas works in Downe, Kent, TfL route 146 (operated by Stagecoach London) was curtailed to Keston Church and did not serve Downe from 0900 on 18 November to 1700 on 20 December 2024. A replacement shuttle route 546 was run by Ensignbus using a white Mercedes-Benz Sprinter (out of the two available, see above, with the other spare). The service operated from Keston Church to Downe High Street.

Christmas Presents Bus

In previous years, open top RM371 has been decorated with Christmas symbols and lights and been used to deliver Christmas presents to children. It was illustrated in this role on the rear covers of EBN 681 and EBM 693, plus another photo in EBM 693. As this bus has now returned to the Newman family, RMC1510 (510 CLT) was used in this role, suitably decorated and lighted, in December 2024. It made various trips in Thurrock, then on Monday 23rd it operated from Leigh-on-Sea station along route 68 to the Kursaal, stopping at each stop, but not carrying passengers. This particular trip was organised by Ross Newman and his family, despite them no longer being involved with Ensignbus.

All the days were very popular, none more so than in Southend. There were huge crowds at Leigh-on-Sea Station, delaying the planned 1630 departure to 1705, and then significant crowds at the stops on Marine Parade and into Leigh, with the bus not clearing Rectory Grove there until 1830, and not reaching Southend Pier until three hours after leaving Leigh Station! RMC1510 is seen below waiting to depart from Leigh-on-Sea station. **Richard Delahoy**

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, John Lidstone, the company and LOTS.





Green and cream in Southend. On Boxing Day 2024, instead of just the X1 from Southend to Lakeside as in previous years, Ensignbus split the service with every other journey going to Upminster instead of Lakeside, to connect with the District line. This was numbered X2. Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 130 (LX15 GPY), in 20 years of route X80 livery, is seen at Southend Victoria. **Richard Delahoy**

STEPHENSONS NIBS buses Richard Delahoy

We are delighted to record that at the recent UK Bus Awards the Gold Award for Lifetime Contribution to the Bus Industry, sponsored by the Transport Benevolent Fund, was awarded to Bill Hiron MBE. As the Awards announced: "With nearly 40 years of service, Bill began as a trainee during the last days of the regulated era. His incredible career has seen him hold senior roles in major groups and the independent sector. Beyond his entrepreneurial achievements, Bill has been a tireless advocate for the bus industry, holding leadership roles in organisations such as CPT and ALBUM. From acquiring Stephenson's of Essex and later NIBS Buses, to leading the industry through collaborations, advocacy, and mentorship, Bill's contributions have left an indelible mark. Even after selling his business, Bill continues to shape the sector's future".

We'd like to add our congratulations to him on this well-deserved recognition.

The only Solos remaining in service use are now 327/8. 323 is still on fleet but only used for staff shuttles.

A new operating centre is being established in Bishop's Stortford with an authorisation for five vehicles, to enable local services to be operated more efficiently than from Haverhill and Boreham depots and to attract drivers from a new area. The site is at Bishop's Stortford Football Club, Birchanger, and is expected to open sometime in January. A further operating centre has also been authorised at Hasse Road, Soham, Ely for 14 vehicles, plans are still being progressed and it may start operations in February.

With thanks to the companies.

Acquired Vehicle

Y7 THG, ADL Trident / Enviro 400, ex Go North West (TfGM Bee Network) 3119.

New in November 2009. Originally registered SN59 AVY and originally H41/26D but was single door when with Go North West. New to Travel London, later worked on Fastrack routes in Kent for Go Coach, then with British Blue Tours (where it received its current registration) before reaching the TfGM Wigan depot. Y7 THG departed the Manchester area on 20 November 2024 on suspended tow. It was at KN depot, repainted from Bee Network yellow and black into Hedingham livery due to transfer to Sible Hedingham, on 23 December. New fleet number theoretically 652 but to be confirmed. It has replaced 587, see below.

Withdrawn Vehicles

260 (EU56 FLR) ADL Dart SLF / Pointer - withdrawn 1 November 2024 after a full day's service

587 (PL51 LDU) Volvo B7TL / Plaxton President - VOR at CN 20 December

Significant Allocations

465 (YN58 BCE) KN - HD by 6 November

517 (LX05 EZR) HD - KN

602 (SN10 CFF) CN - KN by very early November

602 (SN10 CFF) KN - HD by 4 December (working 88 route)

874 (PN09 ENC) SY - KN by 4 November until 9 December

830/1/2 (YN57 FYE/J/L) all rotated around KN and HD as of week commencing 18 November.

Fleet News

Note, 'Allocations' in EBM 727 was correct regarding 642 (LK08 FLN) working at Konectbus from September but subsequent text in the article incorrectly identified the Konectbus based Hedingham Enviro 400 as 641. 642 was still at Konectbus on 20 December 2024. See photo on opposite page.

Scania OmniDekka 818 (YN06 JYC) suffered a breakdown whilst operating the morning HN4 school service in Coggeshall on 25 October. The bus suffered overheating and passengers were evacuated. Reports stated that the lower deck was filling with steam before the vehicle stopped. The issue was reportedly a coolant system failure and the bus was rectified and returned to service later the same day and performed the return school journey the same afternoon.

On Wednesday 6 November, 832 (YN57 FYL) failed just outside Honeywood School Coggeshall on the pm HN3 school service and thus failed to complete the pm journeys on the Witham 40 service. 832 was seen at 1845 that night on tow being recovered to Sible Hedingham depot. 832 returned to work from Kelvedon on 12 November on PL4 and D2 duties.

260 (EU56 FLR) was withdrawn from service on 1 November having worked a full day service that day on routes 14 and 81 in Colchester. This leaves sister 259 (EU56 FLP) as the last remaining Dart / Pointer in service, all others of this model having been withdrawn.

524 (LX05 EZG) is active again according to Bustimes - yet to be verified that the vehicle has been returned to service - it has been long term off road since May 2024. 517 (LX05 EZR) and 520 (LX05 E2C) are still active at HD depot with regular allocations to the 88 service, but 517 then moved to KN to replace 587. 587's withdrawal removes the Plaxton President body from the Hedingham & Chambers service fleet, present from 2003 until 2024. However, there are still 9029 and 9030 as driver trainers.

9644 (LK08 FLJ) ADL Enviro 400 was seen on driver training duties in Clacton on 19 November and was still active there on 9 December. From 26 November, hired for the training school at Clacton was Y555 DMP from DMP Training, an East Lancs bodied Dart SLF, ex Ipswich Buses PJ53 PLE, on two weeks hire to assist with training as 9273 (LX09 AZP) was in Norwich doing the same task. 9273 had returned to Clacton by 9 December.

Long term off road late October / November - 275/292/463/470/502/820/873.

Long term off road December - 465/470/537/823/852/873 (810 reportedly damaged with 818 in a yard shunting incident and both were off road for periods between 26 November to 18 December).

Other News

Go Ahead have placed a planning application with Braintree District Council for changes at Kelvedon depot. The planning application is for the demolition of the old Moores pit area and workshops and replacement with an extended concrete hardstanding area. It looks like this will double the capacity at Kelvedon, and it will end up as an outstation with no engineering facility, being purely a concrete hardstanding area with a staff portacabin and diesel tanks surrounded by fencing. If anyone wishes to look at the application, which includes a document showing photos of the inside of the pit and workshop area, the planning application number on the BDC website is 24/O1882/FUL. The old Moores depot buildings have been under threat for around 10 years, but this looks to definitely be the end of the road.

On 28 November it was announced that Go East Anglia had won silver for the Marketing Campaign of the Year at the UK Bus Awards for the dedication in empowering young people and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to travel confidently and independently on buses. 'Generation Go' was a blend of interactive workshops and on-bus experiences and has aimed to make public transport a welcoming option. Hedingham & Chambers promoted how to catch the bus, promoting the app and journey planner and bus tracking. In May 2024, Chambers delivered a 'Generation Go' workshop at the Sudbury Ormiston Academy.

On 11 December, open top 502 (LF52 ZNE) became the Santa Bus in Clacton and travelled in a circular route between Clacton Pier and Jaywick raising donations for the Clacton Foodbank. The bus was adorned with festive lights, with Santa on board with his little helpers.

With thanks to Dave Arnold, John Podgorski, Dave Cope and the Hedingham website.

Below: Enviro 400 642 (LK08 FLN) remains on loan to Konectbus. It is seen at Dereham on route 11 on 11 December 2024. **Kevin Smith**





Above: The layout of the temporary Harlow Bus Station as shown and described on pages 8 & 9. One Arriva vehicle and two Central Connect, including, on the right, Enviro 400 MMC 502 (YX24 PLU) on route 20 on 16 December 2024. **Owen Woodliffe**

Vehicle News

The red ex-Arriva Enviro 400s continue to appear regularly in normal service. They are usually on route 25 (as an example, the two buses running the service on route 25 on 5 December 2024 were 587 and 588) but they are also used on routes 20/21 at weekends. 585 completed the quartet at Harlow, seen on 25 on 23 December. Further to the photo of 586 in last month's issue, it now has the correct route number 25 programmed.

Vehicles with Simonds

Further to previous EBM's, a check on Bustimes in December 2024 showed the following vehicles in Central Connect livery working for Simonds:

Enviro 200 MMCs (in new two tone blue livery) 341 (SF66 ARV), 365, 366, 367 (YY24 HBJ/K/L)

Enviro 200s (in old red / blue livery) 921 (YX60 DXY), 922 (YX12 FPY), 925 (ML62 OGY).

Snapshot in Time

Central Connect tend to frequently move vehicles between depots. John Card has kindly provided the following information for 2 December 2024 utilising his own observations and information from Bustimes.

Harlow operates routes 5, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 30, 31, 84B, 801 School service, Harlow evening & Sunday services.

Allocated vehicles were 218, 219, 221, 306, 318, 320, 322, 323, 324, 325, 348, 349, 350, 351, 357, 358, 361, 362, 363, 364, 368, 501, 502, 503, 586, 588 (Total 26).

[As noted above, 587 was on route 25 three days later and 585 on 23rd.]

Stansted operates routes 35, 36, 37, 38, 305, 315, 325, SB6, SB11, H1-H6

Allocated vehicles were 201, 204, 208, 215, 217, 223, 316, 317, 319, 321, 342, 343, 345, 346, 353, 360 (Total 16).

Rettendon operates routes 8, 10, 12, 48, 375, 701, 702

Allocated vehicles were 202, 220, 222, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 359, 369 (Total 13).

With thanks to John Card, Allan White, Owen Woodliffe and LOTS.

Airport Bus, Stansted Airport

BV72 XZA, a Mercedes-Benz Tourismo M/2 (C55FL), arrived here in November, previously with Grange Travel, Gravesend, Kent.

Anita, Stansted Airport

VV16 ERN, a Mercedes-Benz 1021L with UNVI C34F body, has gone to TK Travel, Burghfield Common, Berkshire.



Above: Epping Forest Community Transport Mercedes-Benz 513CDi Sprinter minibus FJ13 CVH on route C392, Harlow-Hoddesdon, in (the old) Harlow Bus Station on 19 November 2024. **Andrew Colebourne**

M&M Staffing, Cooksmill Green

The following have all gone from here as this company's Operator's Licence has been revoked. OU18 ZSY, a Neoplan N2216 C57FLT; OW68 AXB, a Neoplan N2216 C53FL; RX19 XUF, a Mercedes-Benz 516CDI with EVM M16 body and MM71 BUS, another Neoplan N2216, this time C55FL.

REL

REL Capital has taken a majority shareholding in Felixstowe Travel. The existing management team will remain in place, but Felixstowe Travel will work closely with other group operators REL Davian and REL Tendring.

South East Coaches, Wickford

Setra S415HD (C49FT), registration GRZ 2450 (ex. BU04 EZD) left here in September 2024 and is now with 1st Bus Stop, Gravesend, Kent.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, the PSV Circle and routeOne magazine.

This is a photo feature of route 86 to celebrate its 100th birthday in December 2024.

Below is a brief outline of the major changes to the route over the last 100 years. More minor route extensions / diversions (some on certain days of the week only) are not included.

On 1 December 1924, London General bus routes were renumbered under the direction of Chief Constable A. E. Bassom. Under this scheme, all short workings had to be allocated suffix letters. Since route 25 (Victoria - Seven Kings) had so many variations these had to be rolled over to the 26 series. The former 26 (Stratford - Brentwood) was renumbered 86 (a number that had not used before), whilst the 26A (Stratford - Upminster) became the 186.

Following the formation of London Transport in July 1933, a complete renumbering of routes took place on 3 October 1934. The 86/A/B/C became 86 whilst the 186/A/B/C became 86A. In December 1936, both the 86 and 86A were extended from Stratford to Mile End, but in 1939 (April for 86, December for 86A) the Bow to Mile End section was replaced by Bow to Limehouse. During wartime, the main service on 86 became Brentwood - Chadwell Heath only, with the service beyond Chadwell Heath still covered by the 86A (extended during the War from Upminster to Corbets Tey).

The 86 was withdrawn on 26 August 1958, replaced by a revised 87 which became Rainham - Romford - Brentwood. The 86A remained, covering the core Romford Road section through to Stratford.

[During the 1960s, the Brentwood section of the 87 was replaced by new route 287 (Barking - Brentwood), at first on M-F, later on all days of the week (now Hornchurch - Brentwood). The 287 was withdrawn in July 1970, ending the London General / Transport link from 1924 on this routing between Brentwood and Romford.]

A year later, on 19 August 1959, the 86A was renumbered 86 (Limehouse - Upminster, the Corbets Tey section withdrawn). Various changes followed. On 18 July 1970, the Romford to Upminster section was withdrawn and the extension to Limehouse was finally abandoned on 25 May 1991. The route then settled down to maintain the present format from Stratford to Romford over the same basic route introduced on 1 December 1924, a century ago.

Throughout the period, many garages have supplied vehicles for the 86 and 86A: Hornchurch (RD), Seven Kings (AP), Forest Gate (G), Stratford (SD) and West Ham (WH), plus Upton Park (U) RMLs that were not needed on the 15 at weekends. At the present time, the route is maintained by North Street, Romford (NS) garage with a charging outstation at Lea Interchange (LI). Electric operation with Wrightbus StreetDeck Electroliners was introduced in 2024, with a peak vehicle output of 30 vehicles providing a weekday six minute headway. Due to heavy demand, the route is supplemented between Ilford and Stratford by the aforementioned 25 (currently Ilford - City Thameslink Station) and its 21st Century offshoot the 425 (Ilford - Clapton).

As Transport for London, the successor to London Transport, sought to make all routes that operated within and into Greater London operated by low floor buses, on Boxing Day 2005 they introduced route 498 between Brentwood and Romford which replaced First Essex routes over this corridor. This was the first time for 35 years that LT / TfL had operated on this section of route, since the withdrawal of the 287. The 498 is currently operated by Stagecoach London using Enviro 400 MMCs which were new in 2015/16.

And so today, a century on from the introduction of route 86, it is possible to travel on basically the original route between Stratford and Brentwood but now using two services, the 86 and 498, requiring a change of buses in Romford.

Acknowledgments

Motor Omnibus Routes in London Vols. 1 - 11, 1899 - 1934, Omnibus Society
Ian Armstrong's 'London Bus Route Histories' website.

All photos by **the author** except the black & white one.



Old & New. **Above:** This historical Chadwell Heath scene from around 1946/47 shows London Transport LT640 (GP 3548), an AEC Renown new in 1931 with Chiswick-built bodywork, working on the 86 from Upton Park (U) garage bound for Brentwood. **Alan Osborne collection**

Below: A September 2024 view of Stagecoach London 82017 (LV73 FFC), a Wrightbus StreetDeck Electroliner portrayed in High Road, Seven Kings just a few yards from the author's home. Electric operation has returned to the area; until 18 August 1959 Trolleybus 693 used this stop en route to Chadwell Heath. The background buildings are essentially unchanged.



Picking up at Centreway, Ilford in July 1975 is London Transport RML2514 (JJD 514D) bound for Romford Station. Upton Park (U) garage provided these at weekends when they were not needed for route 15. Note the old style block gold 'London Transport' fleet names and gold fleet numbers, whereas the RM behind has the more modern roundel and white fleet numbers. Plus also the adverts for the Kursaal, Southend, on the front of the RML.



This October 1992 view is of T643 (NUW 643Y), a London Transport Leyland Titan. Note the local East London fleet names carried. Seen setting down in St. Edwards Way, the closest stop to Romford Market.



Stagecoach East London VN119 (R119 XNO), a Northern Counties bodied Volvo Olympian, passing Ilford Central Library on the way to Stratford in September 1998. At that time, as the East London HQ was in Clements Road, Ilford, Stagecoach routinely registered their new London buses at the Chelmsford Licensing Office with Essex registration marks.



A later, March 2005, view at Centreway, Ilford, of 17124 (V124 MEV), a Dennis Trident with Alexander ALX400 bodywork in corporate Stagecoach London livery. Another bus with an Essex registration.



An April 2009 view taken in the Romford Station departure bay featuring 17989 (LX53 KBP), a Transbus Trident / ALX400, after sale to the East London Bus Group (Macquarie Bank, Australia). Operating as a ferry bus but still showing evidence of its previous night's work on night bus route N86.



When this photograph was taken in August 2020 COVID restrictions were in place. Stagecoach London Enviro 400 19819 (LX11 BKN) on route 86 displays a 'Bus Full' notice which was often needed to prevent the reduced capacity then in force from being exceeded. In the background of the view, taken at the Atlanta Boulevard, Romford bus park, is 19133 (LX56 EAJ) another ADL Trident with Enviro 400 bodywork, named Lord Nelson. Converted to open top for the Stagecoach London Mega sightseeing tours, being employed here as a restroom 'bubble' for crews on layover.



January 1955 heralded a fundamental change to the way that bus services in south east Essex were operated. Until then, Southend Corporation's operations had been limited to parts of the County Borough area. The dominant bus operator across the area was Westcliff-on-Sea Motor Services, whose domination had increased with the early 1950s takeovers of the City Coach Company and Benfleet & District / Canvey & District. Eastern National was only a small player, with routes to Clacton, Chelmsford and Grays. The 1940s plans for a coordinated network had been frustrated, but with Westcliff having consolidated its position (and being in the process of being absorbed fully into Eastern National - completed in 1955), negotiations proceeded and a comprehensive agreement was signed on 1 January 1954, coming into effect a year later. This provided for joint operation of services across the 96 square miles of the Coordination Area, taking in Canvey Island and bounded by Benfleet Tarpots Corner, Rawreth Carpenters Arms and Rettendon Turnpike Corner.

A key aspect of those negotiations was agreeing both the overall split of mileage - fixed as 37% to Southend Corporation and 63% Eastern National - and who was to operate each route. It was critical for the operating costs of the two partners to match the revenue split, and those costs were heavily influenced by average bus speeds. So a number of short (slow) town services previously worked by the Corporation were in future to be operated by EN, and in return the Corporation took over running some 'country' routes such as the 1, 7 & 8 to Rayleigh. The effective date for the new regime was set for 2 January 1955 (with Southend having abandoned its trolleybuses a couple of months earlier in anticipation) and the publicity at the time explained which routes were changing sides, the public being exhorted "not to have regard to the Colour and Ownership of the vehicles operating the said services, but to observe the destination and service number".

There were no immediate changes to the actual routes, timetables or fares, but steps were soon taken to improve services, e.g. by linking routes together to provide cross-town services. A story for another day. The Coordination Agreement lasted until bus deregulation in October 1986 but foundered then, amid doubts as to whether it would be legal to continue to share out the network between what were now to be competing companies.

WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA

SOUTHEND CO-ORDINATION SCHEME

As from Sunday, 2nd January, 1955, the following services will, in the main, be operated by the Southend Corporation Transport Department:—

1	SOUTHEND — HADLEIGH — THUNDERSLEY — RAYLEIGH
4	SOUTHEND — GREAT WAKERING — LANDWICK
4A	SOUTHEND — GREAT WAKERING — SHOEBOURNESS
5	SOUTHEND — NORTH SHOEBOURY — SHOEBOURNESS
7	SOUTHEND — ROCHFORD — ASHINGTON — HOCKLEY — RAYLEIGH
8/8A	SOUTHEND — ROCHFORD — HAWKELL — HOCKLEY — RAYLEIGH
9/9A	SOUTHEND — EASTWOODBURY

Passengers are advised not to have regard to the Colour and Ownership of the vehicles operating the said services, but to observe the destination and service number. Times and Fares remain unaltered.

TIME TABLES (6d.)
AND
FARE TABLES (3d.)
INCLUDING
ALL SERVICES IN THE
CO-ORDINATION AREA
available from the Operators' Local Offices

W.P.S. 14821124
Head Office : New Writtle Street, Chelmsford. (Phone 343) (4 lines)
(Within zone 10/10)

Opposite top: One route whose operation changed was the Corporation's 62, Southend Central Station to the Plough Hotel in Westcliff, which now saw Eastern National buses. Derek Giles was on hand to record the new operations, photographing brand new Lodekka 1440 (later 2409), VXV 24, on the first day, 2 January 1955. The bus is in Tilling green livery with Westcliff fleet names and the conductor has found the correct destination and passing points displays on the blinds. Behind it, Bristol K CHJ 256 (1299, later 2227) is similarly working an ex-Corporation route, the 61B to Hamstel Road. An Inspector looks on to ensure all is well. Westcliff / EN crews regarded the 61/2/4 group of services to be tightly timed and scheduled, hence the allocation of brand new Lodekkas to them, fitted with the more powerful 6-cylinder Bristol BVW engine. Photographer **Derek S Giles**, copyright **The Bus Archive**, ref **DG02_03695**

Opposite bottom: Derek Giles also recorded routes that passed the other way, including the erstwhile Westcliff service 9/9A from Victoria Circus to Eastwoodbury, Willson Road (close to the airport). Again taken on the first day of the new regime, 2 January 1955, Corporation Daimler CWA6 271 (HGC 263) stands at the outer terminus ready to return to Southend. The bus is a former London Transport D class Daimler, bought by Southend early in 1954

and rebodied with the Massey lowbridge body seen here before entering service. They were the first Southend buses to have the three part destination / passing point / number blind displays, needed to cope with the multiplicity of Coordination routes. The story of these buses, and other Southend rebodies, will be told in the forthcoming EBM Extra 8, due out at the end of March.

Photographer **Derek S Giles**, copyright **The Bus Archive**, ref **DG02_03705**



c2c Rail Replacement

Two photos taken by **Richard Lewis** on Saturday 30 November 2024 of vehicles on c2c rail replacement, Pitsea to Shoeburyness.

Below: Grange Travel of Gravesend Van Hool Astromega 29 GT turning right out of Chichester Road into Tylers Avenue on its way to Southend Central Railway Station. The First Essex Enviro 400 behind continues into Southend Travel Centre.

Bottom: Travelmasters of Sheerness, Kent Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 BK10 MFV, new to Dunn of Heanor, picks up passengers in Clifftown Road opposite Southend Central Station.



Thursford Christmas Spectacular

David Bell

The Annual Christmas Spectacular at Thursford in North Norfolk ran in 2024 from early November until 23 December, with two shows daily, at 1400 and 1900. Coach parties travel from far and wide to what is now the largest Christmas show in the UK. I only live just over 20 miles away and there is a good location for taking photos at North Lane, Thursford, less than half a mile from Thursford Museum where the event is held. Here are a selection of photos of Essex operators attending.

All photos by **the author**.

Right: Kirbys Coaches, Rayleigh, Mercedes-Benz Tourismo K100 BYS on 16 November. New to Belle Vue, Heaton Chapel as BX64 WHN. Later re-registered to A19 VUE.

Below: Matthews Travel of Hockley Setra S250 Special M2 TVL, new to MacKay, Edinburgh as R722 KSX, also on 16 November.

Rear Cover

Two VDL Futura 2s, one bi-axle the other tri-axle.



Top: Cooks Coaches, Westcliff-on-Sea, YK15 OKE, new to Birmingham International Coaches, acquired from them earlier in 2024 and still in their livery, on 21 November.

Bottom: Kings Coaches, Colchester, new to them, KC16 ABC on 5 December.

Other Essex operators seen were Dons of Dunmow, Lodge Coaches, High Easter and SBC Leisure, Leigh-on-Sea.





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