

# Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 730    February 2025



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

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## 43731 at Chelmsford Bus Station



**Above:** First Essex ADL Dart / Pointer 43731 (S731 TWC) at Chelmsford Bus Station on route 42A on 13 August 2015, with Optare Solo 53131 (E002 NFN) on route 40 behind. **Adam Kelleher**

**Below:** Nearly a decade later, and the same Dart at the same place on New Year's Day 2025. Now preserved and painted in a pseudo 1986 Eastern National dual purpose livery which it did not carry in service. **William Morrison**

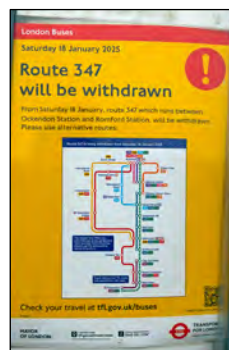




**Front Cover:** In October 1995, Thamesway purchased four Dennis Darts with unique (for the company) Marshall C36 bodies. They were numbered 851-4 (N851-4 CPU) and named Odin, Zeus, Thor and Loki. They were B17F with a wheelchair lift at the front door and space for four wheelchairs. They were purchased to operate the London Regional Transport London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge Mobility Bus services 935/49-62, which commenced on 28 October 1995. They were in red livery with a broad yellow band between below the windows and above the wheels. 951, by then part of Essex Buses, was badly damaged by fire in November 2000 and was withdrawn. The other three, now part of the renamed First Essex, received 46 prefixes to their fleet numbers in the March 2004 Sema renumbering. Route 193 and Mobility Routes plus school route 646, now part of the TfL network, along with Romford depot and Solos 53101-53111 and the Mobility Darts 46852-4, transferred to First London on 18 September 2004 (the Darts went to Rainham, prior to this date they had been allocated to Basildon). This ended the once large presence of First Essex and its predecessors on LRT and TfL contracted services. Less than two months later, on 6 November 2004, 46852 operated on the first day of new TfL route 347 (Ockendon Station - Romford Station). It is seen at the latter location. **Kevin Smith.**

**Above:** Just over 20 years later, and route 347 has come to an end. Arriva London Enviro 200 ENL111 (LX11 AWP) has arrived at Ockendon Station on the final journey, full of enthusiasts, on 17 January 2025. This photo was taken after everyone had alighted, there were more people out of shot on the right. The bus then proceeded out of service back to Grays Depot.

**Right:** A poster at the northbound bus stop in North Road at Home Farm Cottage, just a few yards over the border in North Ockendon, London Borough of Havering. Both **Andrew Colebourne.** More details of the last day of route 347 are on pages 31-32.



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## Subscriptions

The calendar year subscription for 2025 is £29 for  
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  
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## 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 731

Reports to Sub-Editors **15 February**

Sub-Editor drafts to Editor **21 February**

Dispatch by Printers on or before **1 March**

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent  
up to 22nd 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

Doug Fayers, Leyland - 1238

Douglas Blaber, Chigwell - 1239

We regret to advise the death of Frederick Mann, member 978, who died in December 2024. Our condolences to his family and friends.

## Group Meetings

The next meetings in **2025** are:

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

**Thursday 20 March at 1430: Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House**

**Saturday 12 April at 1430** (doors open 1400): **Annual General Meeting at The Quaker Meeting House** (more details below).

**Thursday 17 April at 1900: Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House.**

Since EBM 729 was published, it has come to our attention that the Omnibus Society also hold events on the second Thursday of the month and so, to avoid clashing, **the March and April dates have been moved back a week from those published in EBM 729.** However, **the February meeting remains on the same date as previously advised.**

The social meetings will be very informal with Alan Osborne as host. There will be no set programme, instead there will be an opportunity for networking and a series of short shows of about 20 minutes duration to members seated around two tables will take place. If you would like to give a digital show you will need to bring a fully charged laptop (there are no mains electrical connections available) which will be used as a screen. About 30-35 images would be best. For colour slides a slide viewer will be available to pass around, about 20 slides should suffice. If you would like to share views of colour prints or B&W photos then these (20) can also be passed around. At the end, the contributors will then swap tables. There will also be a short break. However, there is no obligation for attendees to give a show and members are very welcome just to view and join in discussions.

**The Quaker Meeting House** is in Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL and is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. 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 Globe' Public House** is also in Rainsford Road, just 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

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

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

## Annual General Meeting

As noted above, the 57th Annual General Meeting of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group will be held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford on **Saturday 12 April** commencing at **1430**. There will be a slide show afterwards, where Richard Delahoy and Ian Ransom will present a mixed selection of omnibus interest. There will be a brief presentation from the Committee on the current and future plans of the group. If any member of the Group is willing to stand for one of the Committee roles, please contact the Chair (Ian Ransom) no later than 31 March, contact details on page 2. The current roles are Chair, Treasurer & Membership, Secretary, Magazine Editor and Sales Manager. We also welcome questions from the membership, again via Ian Ransom.

The following events have been advertised.

**Sunday 23 February:** Epping Ongar Railway. Winter Bus Running Day. North Weald Station. Further details at [eorailway.co.uk](http://eorailway.co.uk).

**Saturday 8 March:** Delaine Bus Museum Open Day, Bourne. 1200-1600, admission £2.50, includes bus ride.

**Sunday 23 March:** West Surrey Running Day, Guildford. Southern Bus Preservation Group.

**Sunday 23 March:** Wood Green Transport Event. Heritage buses on routes 29, 121, 144, 251 and W3.

**Saturday 29 March:** Route 19 (Finsbury Park-Battersea) Running Day by London Bus Museum.

**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.

## Follow Ups

**EBMs 728 & 729 - Misspelt Blinds.** Chris Stewart writes:

My friend Chris Baggs (who took this photo) and I were regular visitors to Brentwood depot in 1974/75 during which time we were



occasionally alerted to something of particular interest. We came across this blind on Bristol FLF / ECW 2887 (WNO 975F) in May 1975. I can't remember why the destination had been added to an existing blind (rather than Central Bus Station which had opened the previous year) but we sent a copy of Chris's photo to Chief Engineer Rodney Hawkins. He sent Chris a reply in which his secretary had studiously changed every relevant 'c' for an 's', the final line of which I recall being "We are of course arranging for it to be corrected". Rodney was a good friend of the Group and always very helpful to us. He went on in due course to be Engineering and Technical Services Director at NBC HQ but in 1988 was taken from us far too early aged 46.



**EBM 729 - 100 Years of Route 86.** Alan Osborne adds to his article:

Some additional information about the suffix letters that were used by London General.

When the 86 started on 1 December 1924, the terminals were Stratford Broadway and Brentwood (Yorkshire Grey). On 15 April 1927, the 86 was extended to Brentwood (Robin Hood & Little John) for some journeys. As a consequence, all journeys that terminated at the Yorkshire Grey were then regarded as a short working and the main daily service became 86A. On 31 December 1930, the section to Robin Hood & Little John was withdrawn. The 86 route number was retained but was non-operational. A similar situation later applied in 1958/9 with the last 86/86A renumbering.

Other short workings introduced were :

- 86B Chadwell Heath - Brentwood (Yorkshire Grey) (introduced 31 July 1930)
- 86C Stratford - Gidea Park (Romford market day extras Wed & Sat, introduced 30 April 1931).

As reported last month, the 26A (Stratford - Upminster) became the 186 on 1 December 1924. The use of three digit numbers to signify further variations was a common LGOC practice. (Eastern National later also used this method for their 151/251/351/451 group.) Short workings to Romford Station were numbered 186A.

From 30 June 1928 further short workings were introduced :

- 186B Stratford - Goodmayes
- 186C Seven Kings - Romford Station

The LGOC timetable for Winter 1933 (dated 7 January 1934) for routes 86A, 86C and 186 shows the main service with a note about Romford market day Wednesday and Saturday extras to Gidea Park.

All this must have been most confusing for passengers, thankfully the 3 October 1934 LPTB renumbering made everything simpler, thus :

- 86A became 86
- 86C became 86 (market day extras)
- 186 became 86A

Why should the 86 have had such longevity? The TfL bus performance survey 2023/4 showed the 86 to be the fifth busiest route in London (10.7 million passengers annually, this compares with another Romford route, the 347 to Ockendon, that only carried 32,000 (and which has recently been withdrawn, see pages 1, 31-32).

**Below:** Last month we included a photo of the current allocation on route 86. These days, the Romford - Brentwood section of the original 86 is covered by route 498. Stagecoach London, Romford (NS) allocated, Enviro 400 MMC 10340 (SN16 OKZ) is approaching the M25 Junction 28 / A12 roundabout, thus moving from Essex to Greater London, in Brook Street on 6 December 2024, 100 years and five days after the introduction of the 86. Route 498 was introduced on Boxing Day 2005 and it has been operated by Stagecoach London since 27 June 2015, so there are 20 and 10 year anniversaries this year. **Andrew Colebourne**





**Above:** Grey Green Bedford YMT RYL **730R**, with a 53-seat Duple Dominant II body with coach door, having arrived at Walton-on-the Naze Railway Station car park (described in the timetable as 'Church Road') on the Essex Coast Express route 187 on Wednesday 16 August 1978. The service had one return journey a day. Unfortunately, I don't have a copy of the 1978 timetable, but in 1977 the route was from Tottenham (570 High Road, outside the Co-Op) leaving at 0820 via Stamford Hill, Clapton, Leyton, Walthamstow, Leytonstone, Wanstead, Gants Hill to St Osyth (Saturday only), Jaywick (Saturday only), Clacton, Holland on Sea, Frinton gates, Walton (Church Road), arriving at 1205.

From Sunday 22 May 1977 until Sunday 25 September 1977 it ran on Saturdays and Sundays. Surprisingly, the Saturday coaches serving St Osyth and Jaywick ran to the same times along the Clacton to Walton section. The coach also ran during the week from Monday 18 July 1977 to Friday 2 September 1977.

The Saturday service was clearly geared to changeover day for holidaymakers staying a week or two since it departed at 1350 and served Jaywick and St Osyth, whereas departure time on the other days was 1750 and did not serve those places. The timetabled journey time was the same in both cases, arrival times at Tottenham being 1735 and 2135 respectively.

By 1979, the weekday journeys had been reduced to Wednesdays only and ran from Wednesday 25 July to Wednesday 29 August. There was now no Sunday journey. The departure time from Tottenham was the same but the Gants Hill pickup point had been replaced by Hainault (Manford Way Co-Op). This, and an additional stop at Colchester Bus Station, delayed arrival at Walton to 1235 for the Wednesday coach and 1255 for the Saturday coach, so now there was 15 minutes extra allowed for the latter. Whether that was a reflection of reality or increasing congestion I don't know. Departure time for the Saturday coach remained at 1350 but the timetable allowed less time than in 1977, it now reaching Tottenham at 1720, 15 minutes earlier. The Wednesday coach now left at 1805, so the time allowed at the coast remained the same, but this journey was half an hour faster, arriving at 2120, again 15 minutes earlier. I suspect this reflected improvements to the A12 road and the fact that homeward

journeys by trippers left the coast over a longer period. Morning arrivals would be delayed by traffic jams building up on the coast caused by a shorter peak period and cars looking for places to park. I certainly remember long queues of cars entering Walton at weekends.

David Grimmett's excellent 2017 'East Anglian and Essex Coast Express' book states that the Colchester stop was added to services 186 and 187 in 1979, and doesn't give any changes to the 187 in 1978, so it is likely that the 1978 timetable was similar to the 1977 one. The book also states that the 187 was previously Grey Green service 11 Tottenham - Clacton, which was extended to Walton and renumbered 187 in 1974.

The coach later passed to Freestones of Beetley, Norfolk.

**Below:** Eastern National Leyland National 1828 (VNO 730S), allocated to Colchester, at Kino Road, Walton-on-the-Naze, on Sunday 19 August 1979, having arrived from Colchester Zoo on route 105. The Sunday service was summer only and that year operated from 17 June to 2 September. The 105 ran daily in the summer but only ran to the Zoo on Sundays, otherwise being Mondays - Saturdays Walton to Colchester, with Mondays to Fridays school journeys extended to Lexden.

Unlike the Mondays to Saturdays service, the Sunday 105 was solely operated by Colchester Garage. On Mondays to Saturdays CR only worked school journeys to and from Lexden, Norman Way Schools, a Clacton bus out stationed at Walton operated the main service. The school journeys were still crew worked with a Bristol FLF / ECW (in the mornings at least) but all other journeys were OMO.

The Summer Sunday service started with a 1000 out and back trip from Colchester to the Zoo, the next trip to the Zoo at 1200 returned as a through working to Walton, arriving at 1258. It then departed at 1305 to the Zoo, arriving at 1415 and then departing back to Colchester. There were then two out and back journeys from Colchester to the Zoo at 1600 and 1800. Meanwhile a different bus departed from the Zoo at 1720, arriving at Walton at 1830, departing back to Colchester at 1835. That is the journey depicted here. The timetable thus allowed for afternoon outings from Colchester to Walton giving passengers six and a half hours by the sea, and outings from Walton to the Zoo giving three hours there. For several years, a flyer for Eastern National services to the Zoo was issued, using the same design each year but with different colours. It included timetable details for route 19, the main service from Colchester to the Zoo, and the Sunday journeys on route 105. Both photos by **the author**.



## 'Love Your Bus' Grant Funding

In EBM 728 we reported on the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding allocations for 2025/26 to local authorities in our area. The BSIP funding for 2025/26 is split into two categories, capital spending (e.g., on infrastructure such as bus lanes, real time systems, etc.) and revenue spending (e.g., on tendered bus services, fares reductions, enhancements to existing services, etc.), with a small amount to fund staffing in the local authority public transport teams.

Essex County Council received £7.3m in revenue funding and is now inviting Parish and Town Councils in Essex (within ECC only) to bid for funding to support and grow their local bus routes, under the 'Love Your Bus' grant funding initiative. £500,000 of the £7.3m has been set aside for this. The maximum available is £50,000 per project. The objective of the fund is to enable Parish and Town Councils to invest in measures which would enable the growth of key local bus services and increase patronage on the bus services(s) which serve their communities.

The 'Love Your Bus' grant fund was officially announced on 20 December 2024 with the deadline for applications being 21 February 2025. Examples of the proposals that would be considered are:

**Attract new passengers:** Improve information through marketing, leaflets, timetables and maps, and / or community-led engagement events.

**Service enhancements:** Increase bus service frequency during peak hours, introduce late-night or early-morning services, and / or create new route extensions to connect underserved areas to key destinations. However, the grant cannot be used to support the creation of entirely new bus services.

**Community engagement and promotions:** Targeted marketing campaigns, community-led engagement events, and / or school and community group partnerships.

**Passenger experience improvements:** Improved passenger information. Provide information on bus routes and schedules using maps, leaflets, posters, and / or other accessible formats. Advertise bus services at bus stops by creating route maps and displaying bus ticket information. Collaborate with the bus provider to gather the necessary information and ensure it is up to date. Utilising the notice board space at bus stops for this purpose can effectively inform the public about available services and encourage bus usage.

### Some other points:

Each council can submit up to three bids.

Joint applications with another council are encouraged. However, only the lead Parish / Town Council can submit the application.

In cases where a bus service runs through several parishes or town councils, they can apply for different types of projects for the same service.

The project description should include objectives, investment details, expected outcomes, specific groups who will benefit, and a sustainability plan. Quarterly reporting and a brief end-of-project report will be required.

The main areas the grant will be spent on need to be specified. These include staff costs, resources, equipment, and evaluation, along with the estimated amount for each area.

The grant funding is for revenue projects only and does not cover capital projects such as the physical replacement of bus shelters, poles and digital displays.

The grant funds will be allocated to the Parish Council, and they would deal directly with the bus provider. In practice, this means that the Parish Council would need to coordinate with the bus provider to implement the improvements. They may need to draw up a contract with the bus company to outline the terms and conditions of the service improvements and ensure compliance with the grant requirements.

Evidence of need is required. This could include community surveys, feedback from residents, or data on current bus service usage and gaps. Demonstrating a clear need will strengthen the case for funding.

Support from the local County Councillor is required.

Alignment with Strategic Goals - how the project aligns with Essex County Council's strategic goals, such as improving access to education, healthcare, reducing car journeys, and promoting independence, needs to be shown.

## Local Government Reorganisation in Essex

Part of the new (July 2024) Labour Government's manifesto was to introduce reform into Local Government. A White Paper on this has been issued. (The 1997 Labour Government's legislation had led to the formation of Southend and Thurrock unitary councils, separate from Essex County Council.)

Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council have agreed to work together to seek significant change in the way local government operates in Essex. On 10 January 2025, they agreed to jointly write to the government to request inclusion to the government's Priority Programme for devolution. The programme includes a commitment to local government reorganisation. Essex County Council and Thurrock Council also requested the postponement of elections scheduled for May this year in their areas. Southend-on-Sea City Council has no planned elections for 2025.

This followed a series of formal council meetings that took place that week. Plans for devolution and local government reorganisation will see powers taken from Westminster and given to local government, which it is claimed can better drive change, growth and prosperity for Essex's residents, communities and businesses.

The current two-tier structure in Essex would be replaced by unitary authorities, similar to the current Southend and Thurrock ones. Essex County Council and its 12 City, Borough and District Councils, plus the present Southend and Thurrock unitary authorities, would be abolished and replaced by three or four new unitary authorities. A new strategic authority for Essex would also be created along with a directly elected mayor. The authority would be a separate legal entity with its own board and governance arrangements. These arrangements will be agreed prior to the first mayoral election, which would take place in May 2026.

The key functions of the strategic authority would include **strategic transport functions, such as support for buses, trains and concessionary fares** (giving better co-ordination of transport across the whole county), skills and driving economic growth. It is possible that this may lead to bus franchising across Essex but that would depend on the policies of the candidates who stand for election to mayor and available funding.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, the Leader of Essex County Council, said:

"Following today's [10 January] debate, we are one step closer in our ambition to bring devolution to Essex, and I want to express my gratitude to all the councillors who contributed. Today's meeting showed that despite our differing political views, we all want to make Essex as great as it can be for our residents and businesses. Devolution is key to making this happen. It presents us with an opportunity for growth and productivity across the county like no other. I would also like to thank our partners in Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council for their continued collaboration. Together, we are embarking on a journey that will transform Essex for the better."

The councils will now wait to hear from the Government on whether Greater Essex has been accepted as part of the Priority Programme for Devolution. They have committed to working together to develop proposals for local government reorganisation, with full proposals set to be submitted in Autumn 2025 in line with the Government's timeline.

### Further Information from the ECC Website

Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from central government to local authority level, meaning decisions are made closer to the local people, communities and businesses they affect. The Government's intention is for devolution to be accompanied by a directly elected mayor. It is expected that the mayor will ultimately take on the current role of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex. The mayor will have the ability to speak directly to government ministers and secure funding for local projects. They will be able to make strategic decisions, help attract investment and improve infrastructure.

Interim plans for reorganisation need to be submitted in March 2025 followed by full plans in the autumn. Timelines for the remainder of the process are subject to the proposals received. However, elections to shadow authorities could be expected in May 2027 following the 2026 consultation, with the new unitary authorities going live in April 2028.

The postponement of council elections would be for an initial period of a year, but if proposals to reorganise the local authorities are agreed, it is likely that there would be no further elections to ECC, Southend and Thurrock until their abolition, other than by-elections.

With thanks to Essex County Council.

## 21 October 2024

**A** (Sch Only) Little Canfield, Warwick Road - Bishop's Stortford Birchwood High School **Acme**. AM journey starts 10 minutes earlier with revised running time (Closed School Contract).

## 4 November

**C** (Sch Only) High Easter, Gepps Close - Bishop's Stortford Birchwood High School **Acme**. AM journey starts 10 minutes earlier, with revised running time (Closed School Contract).

## 26 December

**X1** Lakeside Bus Station - Southend Travel Centre **Ensignbus**. Boxing Day only service, revised this year to run hourly. 0831 to 2031 ex Lakeside, 0800 to 1900 ex Southend.

**X2** Upminster Station - Southend Travel Centre **Ensignbus**. NEW SERVICE. Boxing Day only, hourly. 0856 to 1956 ex Upminster, plus 0826 Basildon to Southend, 0730 to 1830 ex Southend.

## 17 January 2025

**347** (M-S) Romford Station - Ockendon Station **Arriva London**. TfL service withdrawn after operation on this date due to low passenger numbers. This corrects the information published last month. See front cover, page 1 and pages 31-32.

## 23 February

**1** (M-S) Shrub End, Walnut Tree Way - Greenstead Library **Arriva**. Revised timetable. Frequency increased between Colchester City Centre and Greenstead, but reduced between City Centre and Shrub End. Sunday service introduced, with buses extended to Stanway Sainsbury's store.

**2** (M-S) Great Horkesley, Malvern Way - Highwoods Square **Arriva**. Revised timetable for punctuality, additional M-F AM peak journey introduced from Great Horkesley.

**8** (Daily) Monkwick, Gosfield Road - Highwoods Square **Arriva**. Revised timetable for punctuality. Saturday frequency reduced from x12 to x15 minutes.

**45** (M-F) South Woodham Ferrers Asda - Bradwell Waterside, Parker Court **NIBS**. Revised timetable and rerouted to serve Maple Way in Burnham.

**84/784** (M-S) Colchester Bus Station / Norman Way School - Sudbury Bus Station **Chambers**. Revised timetable.

**132** (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Braintree Interchange **Arriva**. Revised timetable.

**133** (Daily) Stansted Airport Bus Station - Braintree Interchange **Arriva**. Revised timetable.

**251** (M-S) Waltham Abbey, Upshire Shops - Hammond Street, Smiths Lane **Arriva**. Revised in Waltham Abbey to operate via Parklands instead of Broomstick Hall Road and Farms Hill Road.

**322/323/324** (M-S) Bishop's Stortford Interchange - Lindsell / Great Dunmow / Stebbing **First Essex**.

Revised route, to serve the housing development at Blackwater Drive, Great Dunmow.

**511** (M-S) Bishop's Park Tesco - Thorley Park High School **Arriva**. AM timetable revised, to suit Avanti Grange School times. Additional evening journey introduced.

With thanks to Paul Harvey and Omnibus Society.

**Below:** Timetable alterations from February 89 years ago.

NEW EMPRESS CITY SALOONS

**NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC**

# INTERMEDIATE TIMES ALTERATIONS

Commencing **MONDAY, 17th FEBRUARY, 1936**, certain **Altered Intermediate Times** will be in operation — See Time Table, Issue **9G**

## Colchester

Transferred here on 8 January 2025 was Enviro 200 3985 (GN07 DLK). It had been at Ware until mid-December 2024 and then underwent repairs at Southend. It is seen right at Derwent Road, Highwoods on 18 January.

**Daniel Pretty**

It has replaced 4011 (CX08 DJO) which has a blown engine and is presumed to be withdrawn.

Also presumed to be withdrawn is 4012 (GN58 BTU) which also suffered a blown engine, last September. It moved to Southend for assessment / possible repair, but has not re-emerged since.



The average age of the Colchester fleet is currently 14.6 years. The fleet as at mid-January comprised:

|                               |                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| DAF SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar: | 3761                                            |
| ADL Dart / Enviro 200:        | 3985, 4013/5-8/20/1/37-9/44/7/8/52/3/7/9/63/5/6 |
| ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC:    | 4122-5                                          |
| ADL Trident / Enviro 400:     | 6458/61                                         |
| Total:                        | 28                                              |

As we went to press, 4059 (GN09 AXO) and 4063 (GN59 FVE) were expected to transfer to Maidstone on 26 January, with similar but newer 4072 (SK15 GXs) and 4075 (SK15 GXV) returning to Colchester for use on route 133. Both 4072 and 4075 were new for Colchester Park & Ride and have air conditioning; originally all black they are now in current light blue livery. Confirmation of these moves next month.

## Southend

There is one final vehicle due in the swap of Enviro 400 MMCs for older VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2s from Maidstone; 6504 (SN66 WHX), which was withdrawn from Southend early in November (see EBM 728) and sent to ADL at Harlow for accident repairs, remains there at present; Southend are due to receive 4452 (MX61 AYL) from Maidstone once 6504 is able to be transferred there.

Of the newly acquired VDL DB300s, all are in the current light blue Arriva livery except for 4459 which retains the previous turquoise.

Versa 4242 (KX13 DHM), ex Hemel Hempstead as mentioned last month, entered service at Southend on 17 January 2025 as replacement for 4204 (qv). It is in the current light blue Arriva livery.

Versa 4185 (KX62 JJO) which has been in store at Southend, ex Ware depot, entered service on 23 January.

Versa 4204 (YJ61 CHZ) was burnt out on the evening of 15 January whilst returning dead to the depot and is withdrawn.

A short term loan saw Versa 4186 sent to Ware, replaced here by similar 4194 (KX62 JWA) from 3 January (and still ongoing as these notes were prepared). This was to enable Southend's technicians to diagnose an intermittent electrical fault on 4194. See photo on next page.

The average age of the Southend fleet is currently 11.9 years, compared to 11 years before the start of the E40D cascade out. The fleet as at mid-January comprised:

|                                         |                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Optare Versa:                           | 4182/5-6, 4201-3/5-12/25/6/33-5/40/2/5-60 |
| VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2: | 4450/5/9/60/3/4/8-71                      |
| ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMC:              | 6499, 6502/6/7/15                         |
| Total:                                  | 52                                        |

(Versa 4186 is currently on loan to Ware, replaced by 4194).

Of the remaining Enviro 400 MMCs, 6499 is in heritage Southend Corporation livery, 6506 is in Remembrance livery, 6507 is in Pride livery and 6515 is in Southend City / Sir David Amess memorial livery. However, correcting EBM 727, 6502 is not in a special livery, it is in current light blue.

**Below:** 4194 (KX62 JWA) on route 8 at Southend Travel Centre on 4 January 2025. **Richard Delahoy**



Harlow

#### **Acquired Vehicles**

Correction to EBMs 728 and 729, ex Fastrack Enviro 200 MMCs 4103, 4104, 4105, 4107, 4109, 4110 and 4112 came from Arriva Kent Thameside not Arriva Kent & Surrey (though it was correct that 4106 and 4108 came from AK&S).

#### **Disposals**

Part correction to EBM 729. We reported that VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2 3770, 3774, 3797, 3798 transferred within Arriva Herts & Essex, but out of our area, to Stevenage. The first three are correct, but the fourth should have read 3799 not 3798.

#### **Other News**

Of the remaining VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2s, one, 3771, has been in regular use whilst another, 3798, is now back in service, but 3772 (December) and 3773 (November) have not been used since last year.

There has been a plethora of cuts in January due to poor vehicle availability.

With thanks to John Card, Matthew Evans, Adam Kelleher, Keith Sadler, Steve Thompson and M&D & EK Bus Club.



Photos of two recently acquired Colchester buses in less usual livery variations, as reported last month.

**Above:** Enviro 200 4057 (GN09 AXK) was transferred in from Northfleet on 28 November 2024. This and similar 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. 4057 is seen on route 133 near Takeley on 9 January 2025. **Adam Jones**

**Below:** Enviro 400 6461 (SN58 EOD) was transferred in from Ware on 18 December 2024. 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. It is seen on route 1 in Crouch Street, Colchester, on 17 January 2025. **Daniel Pretty**



Adam Kelleher

### Vehicles on Loan

Correction: in EBM 728 we reported 37140 as a disposal to First Eastern Counties at Norwich on 2 November 2024. It now transpires that this was only a loan and it returned to Colchester on 30 December. A photo of it whilst operating from Norwich was in last month's EBM.

A structural failure in 30 First Glasgow ADL Enviro 200 EVs (issues with stability of the roofs due to batteries being located there) has led to these vehicles being taken out of service until the issues can be resolved. This has resulted in many loans of vehicles from other First Bus subsidiaries to Glasgow to cover. Two Euro VI buses (due to air quality regulations in Glasgow) have moved there from First Essex, 63454 and 63455, two of the last batch of new StreetLites, in Essex Bus green. They moved north on 4 January 2025.

Ensignbus Enviro 400 MMC 132 (34432, YX66 W LH) returned for a third time on loan on 17 January 2025. It was at Chelmsford, intended to cover for accident damaged Scania 36843 on route X30. However, it was required back at Ensignbus and was due to return the following weekend without being used.

Further to last month, Ensignbus Enviro 400 33593 was still parked (out of service at the back) at Basildon depot on 6 January.

### 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 11 2023/24 (21 January - 24 February) - additional to EBM 719

69148 CR (oos)-FG (loan)

On loan to First Eastern Counties at Norwich

#### Period 12 2023/24 (25 February - 30 March) - additional to EBM 720

69148 FG (loan)-CF (DS)

Returned from loan at First Eastern Counties at Norwich.

Although these transfers of 69148 were recorded in EBM at the time, they were not actually included under Allocation Changes, apologies.

#### Period 9 2024/25 (24 November - 28 December) - additional to EBM 729

32547 CR (oos)-Disposal, 37004 CR (oos)-Disposal, 37006 CR (oos)-Disposal,  
44909 BN-BN (oos)-CF (oos)-Disposal (expansion of EBM 729 entry to add Disposal)

#### Period 10 2024/25 (29 December - 25 January)

33567 BN-BN (oos), 33991 BN (oos)-BN, 34453 HH (oos)-HH, 37016 CR-CR (oos), 37042 CR-CR (oos),  
37140 FG (loan)-CR, 63329 CR-CR (oos), 63339 BN-BN (oos), 63454 HH-FG (loan), 63455 HH-FG (loan)

At the start of 2025, just five Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Geminis remained in service, all at Colchester, 32673 (in Remembrance livery), 37016, 37037, 37042 and 37054. However, the MOTs of 37016 and 37042 expired during January, leaving only three in use. 37016's last day in service was 17th (see photo on page 17) and 37042's was 4th.

63329 is out of service after being involved in an RTC on 9 January.

### Disposals

December 2024: 32547, 37004, 37006, 44909.

Correction to EBM 728: as noted above, 37140 was a loan to First Eastern Counties, not a disposal.

### Repairs

33685 from Essex Bus green to new corporate livery (without vinyls) at TVS, back in service at Hadleigh on 16 January 2025. It had only received Essex Bus green in August 2022.

33687 from Urban livery to new corporate livery (with vinyls), seen at Mardens on 10 January. This is the first double-decker to receive the new style logo and fleet names. On double-deckers this includes a large white logo above the entrance doors / driver's cab, although it does not form a complete circle, the top part is missing.  
34453 from Essex Bus green to new corporate livery (without vinyls) at TVS, following accident repairs, back in service at Hadleigh on 8 January. This is the second ex Arriva Enviro 400, after 34462, to be thus treated.

### **New Year's Day Services**

The routes that ran on New Year's Day 2025 were outlined in 'Service Revisions' last month.

Vehicles reported:

C1 44171, 44660

S1 33682, 33690, 33713, 67197

S4 33663, 37621

X10 67191, 67192, 67193, 67195, 67196

X20 34421, 34422, 34423, 37613, 67190

X30 34424, 36837, 36839, 36840, 36841, 36842, 67163, 67164, 67169, 67735, 67742, 69432

The unusually high number of single-deckers on route X30 may have been because of the strong winds overnight and into the morning of 1 January.

### **Around the Depots**

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot. All dates January 2025.)

Following the change to the maximum fare on most journeys from 1 January 2025, the '£2 to Stansted' adverts on some Airlink double-deckers (as illustrated on page 14 of EBM 725) have had a £3 sticker added over the £2. However, they still show the X30 as serving Great Dunmow and the X10 not, even though from the 5 January 2025 service changes (as reported last month) the majority of X30 journeys no longer serve Great Dunmow whereas most X10 journeys now do. At least one bus (36839) has had these adverts replaced by ones for 'Jet2.com' on both sides.

Essex escaped the worst effects of Storm Éowyn on Friday 24 January. Route X20 was mainly operated by single-deckers rather than double-deckers, with 63336, 69515, 69518, 69519, 67190 and 67197 used during the day (of these, 67190 is in Airlink livery and is a regular on the route). 34421 made one return journey from Colchester to Stansted and back around lunch time, then in late evening it and 34423 took over the service. However, route X30 continued with its regular double-deckers, with 67164 being the only single-decker used, but one single-decker a day is not unusual.

### **Colchester**

StreetLite 47669 has received a white based super rear advert for 'Freedom Direct Cremations'.

Further to last month, the disposal of 32547, 37004 and 37006 is confirmed (see above). On 12 January, 32672 and 37007 were still on the scrap line, now joined by out of MOT 37042 and 47668 (awaiting a new engine). 37016, also now with MOT expired, joined them by 19th.

47656 (24th), 63337 (21st), 69515 (23rd) and 69520 (17th) single-deckers on route 320.  
63334 on X71 (25th).

News of the Harwich routes (27 December 2024 - 23 January 2025).

Some services had revised timetables from 5 January. The 102/104 timetables did not change, but two of the three vehicle duties that bring double-deckers to Harwich did change (the previous workings were shown in EBM 728):

- 1) 0630 Colchester - Halstead 88 & 0718 return, 0835 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1010 return, 1552 Colchester Norman Way Schools - Harwich 104 & 1745 return, 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104, this vehicle duty is unchanged.
- 2) 0630 Colchester - Maldon 75 & 0735 return, 0905 Colchester - Maldon 75 & 1015 return, 1135 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1310 return, 1513 Colchester North Station - Great Notley 320.
- 3) 0645 Great Totham - Maldon 75, 0710 Maldon - Colchester 75, 0835 Colchester - West Mersea 86 & 0925 return, 1005 Colchester - Maldon 75 & 1115 return, 1235 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1420 return, 1613 Colchester North Station - Great Notley 320.

In addition, 0720 Harwich - Colchester 104 can be single deck or double deck operated. If single deck, the bus then works as required, often on S4 or S5. If double deck, the bus later works 1405 Colchester - Maldon 75 & 1515 return, 1640 Colchester - Maldon 75.

In theory, on Mondays to Fridays schooldays, all journeys on 102/104 can be covered by ten buses, but due to roadworks and traffic congestion causing delays, there can be changeovers at Colchester Bus Station leading to eleven or twelve buses reaching Harwich. A few examples:

7 January: 33670, 33681, 37133, 37140, 47482, 47630, 47658, 63333, 69516, 69518, 69519.

14 January: 33669, 33674, 33697, 37613, 63330, 63331, 63333, 63334, 63335, 69517, 69519, 69520.

21 January: 33674, 33690, 33692, 33713, 47483, 47667, 63335, 69517, 69518, 69519.

Exceptions to these types of buses have been Volvo B7TL 37016 on 3rd, 37037 on 9th, 10th & 17th; ADL Enviro 200 MMC 67190 (Airlink livery) on 22nd, 67197 on 17th.

The Saturday vehicle duties are unchanged, requiring four single-deckers. However, on 18th, 33674 worked the evening 102 journeys at 2035 ex Colchester, 2215 ex Harwich and 2335 ex Colchester.

The Sunday vehicle duties on 102 now require five buses, with interworking on 75, S4 and S6.

## Chelmsford

On 13 January, due to a serious accident, Wood Street was closed from about 1700 until at least 2100.

Routes 14, 300 and C1 all diverted, some via Van Diemens Road, Baddow Road and Beehive Lane (outbound), some via Three Mile Hill and A12 to the Galleywood Junction; inbound via Beehive Lane and Baddow Road.

Bustimes showed some C1 journeys tracking at 80-90 minutes late, with lots of missed journeys as a result.

33657 (18th) and 33714 (24th) non MMC Enviro 400s on X30.

DS69148 on driver training in Brentwood (9th).

## Basildon

44001 on 9 (25th).

63342 & 63381 long StreetLites on 251 (19th).

67168 on 9 (3rd).

Airlink liveried 67191 (22nd) & 67193 (24th) on school route 625.

## Hadleigh

Mini Enviro 200 44927 unusual on Z4 (18th & 20th).

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Jack Benee, Richard Delahoy, David Edwards, John Lidstone, John Podgorski, Ian Ransom, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Rob Webb, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

## First Essex News in Pictures

**Right:** Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37037 (YJ06 XLC) parked outside Quayside Depot, Colchester on 24 January 2025. It failed at Mile End on an S1 journey to Highwoods on 22nd and was towed back.

However, it was back in service on 25th.

**Derek Stebbing**



As reported last month, Enviro 200 44473 (YX62 BNU) returned to service on Christmas Eve 2024 after 13 months out of use. It is seen at Chelmsford Bus Station between duties on route 351 on 6 January 2025.

**Adam Kelleher**



A minor correction to EBM 697 (May 2022). When 44467/9/71/3 were acquired they were reported as having yellow stanchions. That is correct for the first three, but as seen here, on route 351 on 6 January 2025, 44473 has silver / grey ones. Note also the double seat at the front offside of these four vehicles, most First Essex Enviro 200s have two sidewards facing tip up seats here.

**Adam Kelleher**



Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37016 (WX55 VJD) on route 75 in Maldon High Street on its last day of service, 17 January 2025.

**Dave Arnold**



## First Essex Fleet & Allocation Summary January 2025

This information is up to date to the end of Period 9 2024/25 (28 December 2024).

### Fleet List

The fleet list is summarised under main types. Figures / letters in brackets are registration periods.

Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini: 32672-3(55), 37007/16(55), 37037/42/54(06)

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini: 36216-20(12), 37133-6/8-40(57), 37613/21(58), 37985/6(11)

The 57 & 58 regs have Eclipse Gemini bodywork, the 11 & 12 regs have Eclipse Gemini 2 bodywork.

Alexander Dennis Trident 2 / Enviro 400: 33411-2/4-6/8-9(56), 33424-5(59), 33504/7(08),

33544-6/8-9/51-2/5/7-9/61-3/7-8/70/2-4(58), 34451-65(59)

33424 is 10.8m long and low height, the rest are 10.1m and full height. 33425 has bonded glazing, the rest have gasket.

Alexander Dennis E40D / Enviro 400: 33656-7/63/8-72/4/6/8/80-2/4-90/2/7/705/13-4/8/25/8/30/3/50(12)  
33825 (63)

Alexander Dennis E40D / Enviro 400 MMC: 33981/3-9/91-2/4-8(65), 34421-6(17)

Scania N250UD / Alexander Dennis Enviro 400 MMC: 36837-43(69)

Alexander Dennis Enviro 200: 44001/6(57), 44080-1(58), 44171-8(11), 44467/9(12), 44471/3(62),

44537-51(13), 44596(60), 44597(58), 44598(57), 44900(08), 44914-5(09), 44927(11)

The 12, 62 & 13 reg are E20D chassis, the rest are Enviro 200 Darts. 440xx & 44171-8 are 10.2m, 444xx & 44537-51 are 10.9m, 44596-8 are 10.8m and 449xx are 8.9m.

Alexander Dennis E20D / Enviro 200 MMC: 44659-62(66), 67161/3-5/7-9/71(66), 67189-97(66)

44659-62 are 10.5m, 67161/3-5/7-9/71 are 11.6m and 67189-97 are 11.8m. 67164-5 retain luggage racks from their original use on airport routes X10 & X30, 67189-95 have had luggage racks fitted for their current use on airport routes X10 & X20 and are now all in Essex Airlink blue livery.

Wrightbus StreetLite DF: 47421/7/30/61(63), 47482-3/521-30(64), 47595-602/4-8/25(14), 47630/3/43-58/65-69(15), 47696-7(22), 63061/3-5(63), 63161-70(64), 63312/28-31/3-44(65), 63370/2-3/5/81/3(16), 63454-66(72)

The 63 series are StreetLite DF Max and are 11.5/6m in length, the 47 series are 10.9m.

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban: 66846/8/60/3(05), 66886(55), 69148/51/5(06),

69421/31-4(58), 69515-20(11)

69515-20 are Eclipse Urban 2. The 58 & 11 reg are 12m, the rest 11.9m. 66846/8/60/3/86, 69148/51/5 are permanent driver trainers, all in red driver training livery, except 66886 and 69155 in acquired yellow and green driver training livery.

Alexander Dennis E30D / Enviro 300: 67406(13), 67735-9/41-42/50/5-6/79(62), 67805(13)

### Allocations

Basildon: 33411-2/4-6/8-9/24-5/504/7/44-6/8-9/51-2/5/7-9/61-3/7-8/70/2-4, 33981/3-9/92, 44001, 47595-6/648-54, 63167-70/338-40/42-4/70/2-3/5/81/3, 67165/8/91-6

Chelmsford: 33656-7/705/14/30, 33994-8, 34424-6, 36837-42, 44006/80-1/171-8, 44467/9/71/3, 44537-51, 44596, 44659-62, 44914-15, 47597-602/4-8/57, 67161/3-4/7/9/71, 67406/735-9/41-2/50/5-6/79/805, 69421/31-4

Colchester: 32673, 33663/8-72/4/6/8/80-2/4/6-90/2/7/713/8/25/8/33/825, 34421-3, 37016/37/42/54, 37133-6/8-39/613/21, 47421/7/30/61/82-3/630/55-6/8/65-7/9, 63312/28-31/3-7/41, 67190/7, 69515-20

Hadleigh: 33685/750, 34451-2/4-65, 36216-20, 37985-6, 44927, 47521-30/625/33/43-7/96/7, 63061/3-5/161-6/454-66

Driver Trainers (at Chelmsford): 66846/8/60/3/86, 69148/51/5

On loan to First Eastern Counties at Norwich: 37140

Out of Service / Stored: 33991, 44598 (at Basildon), 36843, 44597, 44900 (at Chelmsford), 32672, 37007, 47668, 67189 (at Colchester), 34453 (at Hadleigh). 44598 is being used as a bike shed at Basildon Depot.

Total 326 vehicles.

## Changes During 2024

| Type                         | Total      | +         | -         | Into Fleet                                                                                                                                                                                  | Out of Fleet                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B7TL / Eclipse Gemini        | 7          | [2]       | 25        | [32551, 32641]*                                                                                                                                                                             | 32526, 32530, 32532, 32540, 32547, 32551, 32628, 32641, 32642, 32669, 32676, 37004, 37005, 37006, 37010, 37015, 37017, 37020, 37027, 37034, 37035, 37036, 37047, 37053, 37062 |
| B9TL / Eclipse Gemini        | 9          |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| B9TL / Eclipse Gemini 2      | 7          |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Trident / Enviro 400 10.1m   | 45         |           | 1         |                                                                                                                                                                                             | 33553                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Trident / Enviro 400 10.8m   | 1          |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| E40D / Enviro 400            | 33         | 27        |           | 33656, 33657, 33663, 33668, 33669, 33670, 33671, 33672, 33674, 33676, 33678, 33680, 33681, 33682, 33684, 33686, 33687, 33688, 33689, 33690, 33692, 33697, 33718, 33725, 33728, 33730, 33733 |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| E40D / Enviro 400 MMC        | 21         | 6         |           | 34421, 34422, 34423, 34424, 34425, 34426                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| N250UD / Enviro 400 MMC      | 7          |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Enviro 200 8.9m              | 4          |           | 2         |                                                                                                                                                                                             | 44908, 44909                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Enviro 200 10.2m             | 12         |           | 2         |                                                                                                                                                                                             | 44003, 44004                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Enviro 200 10.8/9m           | 22         |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Enviro 200 MMC 10.5m         | 4          |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Enviro 200 MMC 11.6/8m       | 17         |           | 3         |                                                                                                                                                                                             | 67160, 67162, 67166                                                                                                                                                           |
| Enviro 300                   | 13         | 1         |           | 67406                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| StreetLite 10.9m             | 55         | 6         |           | 47461, 47482, 47483, 47625, 47630, 47633                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| StreetLite Max 11.5/6m       | 50         |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| B7RLE / Eclipse Urban        | 13         |           | 3         |                                                                                                                                                                                             | 66806, 66817, 69430                                                                                                                                                           |
| B7RLE / Eclipse Urban 2      | 6          |           |           |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Total (320 last year)</b> | <b>326</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>36</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |

\* These were already in the fleet before 2024 but were not included in last year's list as they were on loan to First Eastern Counties at the time. They did return to Chelmsford for a couple of months but were then withdrawn.

**Type out of / into the fleet:** No types left the fleet and no new types joined the fleet in 2024. A reminder that we publish a fleet list with allocations and livery details on our website and Facebook page every month.

## Disposals

Further to EBM 728, Wrightbus StreetDecks 168, 169 and 170 (LX71 AOB/C/D) were sold to Preston Bus where they are numbered 40846/7/8.

Volvo B7L / Ayat Bravo City open toppers 370 and 371 (EU05 VBL/O) departed the fleet in October 2024.

## Tap & Cap

This was introduced on Ensignbus services on Monday 20 January 2025. Details of how it works are shown **below**. Return tickets were withdrawn and normal child fares are no longer available, the only child tickets are now the Child Week and Four Week tickets via the First Bus app.

With thanks to LOTS.



# Tap & Cap

and **save** on two trips or more!

When you **use your contactless card or device to Tap & Cap**, you'll never pay more than the price of a two-trip, day or week ticket\* - whichever is the cheapest for the number of times you travel!

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you'll never  
pay more than  
**£30**  
in any week\*

from Monday to Sunday,  
no matter how your taps  
reach the cap.

To pay with **Tap & Cap** simply place your contactless card or mobile device onto the card reader as you board and wait for the beep that confirms your purchase has been registered. Remember, you must use the same payment method each time.

You'll find more information and FAQs at [ensignbus.com](https://www.ensignbus.com)

\*fares towards the weekly cap reset every Monday



**Above:** 160 (35707, LX23 BJK), the Wrightbus StreetDeck that was new as a demonstrator to Kowloon Motor Bus, is usually used on Amazon route Z1 or rail replacement services but it does also make appearances on local routes. On 20 December 2024 it was on local routes all day, on 22 and 73. It is seen on the former, passing Grays Railway Station. **Richard Lewis.** A photo of this bus in KMB livery was in EBM 708 (April 2023).

**Below:** Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 127 (36316, LX15 GOK) has advertising for the hire of the heritage fleet. It is seen at Southend Travel Centre on 26 December 2024 on the Boxing Day only service X1 to Lakeside. This bus has white LED destinations at the front but orange at the rear. **Richard Delahoy**



At his presentation to the Omnibus Society on 18 January 2025, Bill Hiron quoted the current fleet peak vehicle requirement as follows:

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Rochford              | 10 |
| Boreham               | 21 |
| Maldon                | 13 |
| Braintree             | 10 |
| Frating               | 10 |
| Haverhill             | 18 |
| Ely                   | 7  |
| Wickford (NIBS fleet) | 23 |

Total 112. Spare vehicles are at Rochford (2), Boreham (11), Haverhill (5) and Wickford (4), total 22; grand fleet total 134.

There is some fluidity in these figures, for example Frating may cover work for other depots as necessary.

The new Bishop's Stortford base, reported last month, is scheduled to open on 27 January, initially with just one or two vehicles. The location, at the local Bishop's Stortford football club in Birchanger, has been used in previous years by various other operators.

Transmach electronic ticket machines will be introduced at Rochford and across the mid-Essex depots in late January / early February, completing the replacement of Ticketer, to be followed by new websites and apps for both Stephensons and NIBS.

With thanks to John Lidstone, John Podgorski, Rob Webb and the companies.

**Below:** One of the two remaining Solos in service, 328 (YJ58 PHN), made a very rare appearance in Southend on 15 January 2025 on route 17. This happened due to 328 being at Rochford engineering for MOT and the allocated ADL Enviro 400 MMC 804 (EU74 KTT) needing some attention. **Daniel Pretty**. This bus was then on NIBS routes 71/72 on 24 January, once again bringing a Solo back to Brentwood.



**New Vehicles**

By the time this issue of EBM had gone to print, all nine ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMCs on order were expected to have been delivered. Six are for Central Connect at Harlow / Stansted and three are for Simmonds, Diss. All are expected to be delivered to Simmonds for initial assessment. Three had arrived there by 21 January, two are seen **right**, YY74 OBT, nearer the camera with an interesting destination display, and YY74 OBU. **Omar Atiallah**

**Other Vehicle News**

The four ex-Arriva London Enviro 400s 585-8 (LJ59 LYA/C/G/X) have all now been converted from dual to single door.

Now that Enviro 200 924 (YX12 DHO) has been converted to a driver trainer (as reported and illustrated in EBM 728), Dart 900 (KP02 PVO) is now in reserve pending withdrawal.

**Disposals**

The withdrawn Scania OmniCity double-deckers had gone from Stansted depot by late December 2024.

**Workings**

In recent months we have reported on the red ex Arriva London Enviro 400s being used on Essex and Hertfordshire routes, which continued into January, but very unusual was Simmonds ex-London Borough of Redbridge (new to First London) Enviro 400 SN12 EHC, still in Redbridge livery and still dual door, on route 25 on 9 January 2025. (See EBM 726 for acquisition details.) Use of these acquired Enviro 400s on stage services is likely to cease once the new Enviro 400 MMCs are in service, they will then be confined to schools work.

Mercedes-Benz Tourismo 415 (W15 VEC) was seen on Wickford schools work on 8 January.

With thanks to Omar Atiallah, John Card, John Podgorski, Allan White and the company.

**Below:** Mercedes Benz Sprinter / EVM Cityline 217 (RX23 TUV) was illustrated in EBM 712 (August 2023) with Vectare, in an all-white livery. It also appeared in the background of a photo on the rear cover of EBM 726 (October 2024), repainted into fleet livery with Vectare fleet names. It has now received Central Connect fleet names, as seen approaching Grays Bus Station on route 375 on 20 December 2024. **Richard Lewis**





## Acquired Vehicle

Further to last month, the fleet number of acquired ADL Trident / Enviro 400 Y7 THG, ex Go North West (TfGM Bee Network), is confirmed as 652, as can be seen in the photo **above** taken in Colchester High Street working on route 88 (note route number in windscreen) on 17 January 2025. **Daniel Pretty**

## Withdrawn Vehicle

Enviro 400 640 (LX56 EUC) - see below.

## Significant Allocations

817 YN06 JYB KN - Konnect, worked in Norwich 18 December 2024. Returned to KN by 13 January 2025.  
877 PN09 ENO SY - KN, 10 to 17 January.

## Fleet News

652 (Y7 THG) entered service from Sible Hedingham on 6 January 2025 working the HD6 Hedingham School contract and by 16/17 January had completed limited duties on 89 and 88 routes respectively. 817 (YN06 JYB) was recorded as working for Konectbus on 18 December 2024 but only seems to have had limited days in service before returning to Kelvedon by 13 January 2025.

640 (LX56 EUC) was de-roofed in an accident when it hit Kirby Cross railway bridge, post TTC contract travelling in the direction of Clacton. Luckily there were no passengers on board and no injuries to the driver, but the bus roof was taken clean off the vehicle and deposited to the rear of the vehicle. Trains were prohibited from using the bridge so could not terminate at Walton-on-the-Naze for a period until the bridge structure had been checked.

642 (LK08 FLN), illustrated last month, was still working at Konectbus during mid to late January 2025.

602 (SN10 CFF) worked the Witham town service 40 on 13 January, it is unusual for an Enviro 400 to be allocated to this route. Another unusual working on 20 January was 827 (YN57 FYB), ex Brighton & Hove Scania OmniDekka, on route 77 Aingers Green to Tufnell Way, Colchester, working one return morning run, with usual provider Enviro 200 279 (YX57 BXH) taking over for the afternoon / evening.

Vehicles off road or limited availability in January 2025 were:

266/292/293/470/502/510/524/539/540/640/815/824/852/873.

### Other News

On 8 January, a closure to St John's Road Colchester in the morning rush hour saw service 11 divert from Highwoods via Ipswich Road, St Andrew's Avenue, Harwich Road, Hazelton Road, Broadmead Road and Churnwood Road to pick up the normal route at Bromley Road / Harwich Road. It was very rare to see an in service 11 running around the Hazelton Road loop which is the service 14 route. Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 531 (LX59 DCF) was spotted at 0743 running only about six minutes late, despite the huge double back diversion route.

With thanks to Dave Arnold, David Edwards, John Podgorski and the Heddingham website.

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## Other Operators

Roger A Smith

### Acme Bus, Widdington

YN53 SVX, an Optare Solo M920 (B33F), is now with Star Travel, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

### Don, Great Dunmow

Setra FHD14 (C59FT) YJ05 FXH has been scrapped.

### New Horizon, Frating

The last vestiges of this former coach & bus operator closed in November 2024. It was latterly a van rental and van sales business. The school bus side had been sold to Stephensons in January 2022 with the coaches sold separately.

### Peter Godward, Basildon

Reported as brand new here is TT74 PGC, a Yutong ZK6938HQ with C34FT body. BH16 ACH, a Yutong ZK6938HQ (C32FT) has gone from here.

### Roman Coaches, Colchester

Yutong ZK6129HQ (C51FT) YL17 BFP is here from Creigiau Travel, Creigiau, South Wales. It has been re-registered to V123 ROM. YN67 VDD, an Irizar i6, has been re-registered to V21 ROM.

### REL Tending, Thorpe Le Soken

The following have been transferred from other operators within the REL group: M55 FXO (ex-YN06 CYT), a Mercedes-Benz O814D with Plaxton B29FL body, from Felixstowe Travel, and YX57 BZN, a Mercedes Benz O826D with Ferqui C31F body from REL Davian, Rayleigh.

With thanks to John Podgorski and the PSV Circle.

**Right: Hailstone Travel, Wickford** Iveco 70C21 / UNVI HT73 BUS, named 'Thunder', new in January 2024, parked up at the Thames Embankment on 8 November 2024. **Allan White**



After the Bridge family sold their Benfleet & District / Canvey & District bus companies to the State in 1951 it's easy to forget that a residual contract / private hire business remained. The picture below from **Michael Dryhurst** sent me investigating.

When the British Transport Commission bought the Benfleet and Canvey companies, they were absorbed into the Westcliff Motor Services business. The sale included the depots at Canvey (now the bus museum building) and Hadleigh - the latter, today much rebuilt, remains with Westcliff's successor, First Essex Buses. Westcliff had a small depot of their own in Oak Road, Hadleigh, on the London Road on the Southend side of the town centre, acquired in 1935 through the takeover of Thundersley, Hadleigh & District Motors. As part of the sale to the BTC, one of the Benfleet / Canvey directors, H R Bridge, bought the Oak Road premises and transferred it to a newly created company named Benfleet Garages Ltd. As well as housing some coaches of the north London based Superior Coaches fleet (run by H R Bridge's sons Stanley and Henry), the garage became the base for some buses used on contracts taking construction workers to the newly developing oil refineries at Thames Haven between 1952 and 1954.

Benfleet Garages bought five AEC Regent double-deckers and two AEC Regal saloons. One of the former, DGX 264, was the subject of **Michael Dryhurst's** photo **below**, taken in central London at Victoria in August 1953. A sign in the nearside front window reads "Swiss Youth Visit to Edmonton" and the flag looks to be emanating from one of the bus's upstairs windows!

It rather looks like the bus has been repainted from London Transport colours to the same livery as used on Benfleet / Canvey buses, sage green and cream. Just visible on the dash is a fleet name in the same style as used on the bus fleet, but with the word "Garages" on the underline below the Benfleet name. Apologies that it doesn't reproduce very well when blown up as seen opposite. For comparison, we have also illustrated the standard bus fleet name as used prior to the sale to the BTC, in this case from utility Daimler KNO 72.

The use of the plural "garages" was because the company also owned some service / filling stations, as well as acting as agents for new Austin, Hillman, Humber and Singer cars. The contract fleet was presumably disposed of after 1954 but the company had also bought new a Crossley coach and that lasted until 1962, although we've not been able to establish exactly when the garage business ceased, possibly about 1968?

DGX 264 had been new to London Transport at the end of 1936 as STL1720, initially at Twickenham. Post-war the body was rebuilt by Mann Egerton. At the end of 1951, it gained LT country area green and was allocated to Grays where it was used on the former Eastern National services transferred to LT then, such as the short 32A, Grays to Nutberry Corner. Withdrawn by LT in July 1952, it passed to the well-known dealer Norths of Leeds and on to Benfleet Garages, probably in Spring 1953. Judging by the gleaming dumb irons, it looks freshly repainted in the photo taken that August.



Benfleet Garages took at least two other STLs, 810 (BXD 471) and 1420 (CXX 208), but those two only stayed in the fleet for brief periods of one and five months respectively.

We've not been able to trace details of the Crossley coach or the other contract fleet buses, any updates would be welcomed. There is a present-day connection to all of this, in that members of the Bridge family are still involved in coach operation, Kimberley & Ian Bridge with SBC Leisure and Toby Bridge with Coach Stop (Truck & Bus Engineering Ltd). How we got from the late 1950s / early 1960s to the present day is however beyond the scope of this short article.



**Left:** the name with the "Garages" strapline.



**Right:** as used on the bus fleet prior to the sale to the BTC and Westcliff control.

The story behind the various contract operations to the massive 1950s building sites for the refineries at Coryton / Thames Haven, the power station at Tilbury and the refineries over the water on the Isle of Grain is a fascinating tale about which not a great deal is known. For example, Eastern National were providing up to 25 buses daily to Tilbury (we have some lists of these, and photos). We are continuing to research all of this and will write up the story one day! Meanwhile, to conclude this story, we have included **below** a shot of another of the contract buses, an AEC Regent, Roe-bodied AUM 437 (new to Leeds Corporation in 1935) of Victoria Coaches of Leigh on Sea, nicely set up to take workers to the Vacuum Oil Company New Refinery site at Coryton. It's parked in their yard at Leigh, The Elms. The bus displays the brand name of the Vacuum Oil Company, Mobil, the company adopting the Mobil name in 1955; today it is ExxonMobil. Photo courtesy **Alan Cross**.

Sources: The Bridge Family and its Buses, F D Simpson & P F Clark (Omnibus Society), unpublished research notes by Peter Clark, web site Ian's Bus Stop at [www.countrybus.org/](http://www.countrybus.org/), [www.coachstop.co.uk/our+history](http://www.coachstop.co.uk/our+history), Bus Lists on the Web, Wikipedia.



# Duke Street Bus Depot / Station Demolition



It was 20 years in January since the Chelmsford Bus Depot and Bus Station building which had opened in 1936 was demolished. It had closed after service on Saturday 23 October 2004. Here is a selection of photos taken by **Chis Stewart**.

**Above:** Preparing for demolition, 8 December 2004, with a Foden lorry and skip. Plus a rogue Leyland National, ULO 379R, has sneaked onto the Bus Station forecourt! This was owned at the time by Laurence Kinsella of Maldon. It had been West Yorkshire RYG 767R but had latterly been with Stort Valley Coaches. It passed to Mike Nash (dealer), Ockley in January 2005 and then to Fast Productions, Shepperton Studios. With a National Greenway, it was used on the set of the film 'Fast & Furious 6', delivered to the set at Hackney and then afterwards collected for scrap by MC Tractors, Ramsey.



**Left:** Inside view with roof demolished, 24 January 2005.





**Above & Below:**  
10 January 2005 and demolition was well under way.





**Above:** Two weeks later, and significant progress had been made. 24 January 2005. See also photo on page 28.

**Below:** The view from Chelmsford Railway Station bridge after the demolition had been completed.



**Brian** writes:

TfL route 347 (Romford Station - Ockendon Station) only ran four round trips during Monday to Saturday shopping hours and was due to be withdrawn last year when the 346 was extended from Upminster over part of the 347 route to Harold Wood. This increased the service over that section from four buses a day to three buses an hour (from early to late, seven days a week).

The rest of the 347 was not considered worthwhile retaining by TfL, despite four pairs of stops within Greater London losing their service completely, and another few stops, still within Greater London, losing all TfL services, but retaining NIBS route 269. However it had a short stay of execution, partly because of protests by the regular users, but also because politically it would have looked bad getting rid of it back then before elections.

This part of London is rather odd, in that the boundary goes out beyond the M25 to include a lot of nothingness, but also includes North Ockendon Village, whereas South Ockendon, where Ockendon Station is located, is in Thurrock (formerly Essex).

I suppose it was inevitable that a route ending so early in the day would attract a lot of enthusiasts, but most people were not expecting quite so many! I reckoned on the last journey we had a maximum of 58 people on the 53 capacity (24 seats and 29 standing) bus at any one time, but others think it was many more, as some people were sitting on the floor. Even then we left about 10-15 people behind at various stops, but the driver made sure his regulars were picked up, even though they had to force their way in via the centre doors and stand. The poor bus was really struggling on the hilly parts of the route, and I thought we would be out pushing it up the hills before long!

**Above Right top:** Arriva London Enviro 200 ENL111 (LX11 AWP) ready to work the final departure from Ockendon Station to Romford Station at 1500 on 17 January 2025.

**Above Right bottom:** ... and at the other end of the route, ready for the final journey back to Ockendon at 1600. Not everyone got on here, so I am unsure how I managed to after taking this photo!

Both **Brian Bell**



**Andrew** adds:

The Romford Station - Ockendon Station version of route 347 had started on 6 November 2004 (see front cover photo), so it lasted just over twenty years. The extension of route 346 from Upminster Station to Harold Hill from 9 March 2024 had probably taken away most traffic from the common sections and the remaining roads not served by other routes had limited traffic potential.

By the last day, the route 347 E-tiles had been removed from bus stops common with other TfL routes. The joint 269 Monday to Saturday / 347 Monday to Saturday E-tiles on stops in North Road, Ockendon had been replaced by new 269 Monday - Saturday E-tiles. However the two TfL Request Stops in West Road and the stop at the station retained their 347 Monday - Saturday E-tiles along with 269 Monday to Saturday E-tiles, probably because they will be replaced by Essex County Council stops in due course. Similarly, the stops in St Marys Lane served only by the 347 still remained complete with E-tiles, pending removal.

Unusually the TfL diagram of routes on the 'Route 347 will be withdrawn' stop notices (see page 1) showed non-TfL route 269 (operated by NIBS Buses) as an alternative in Ockendon.



**Above Right:** The TfL Bus Stop flag at Nelson Road Village Hall "towards Upminster or Brentwood" in North Road, South Ockendon on 13 November 2024. Like the others in this road it had joint E-tiles for routes 269 Mon-Sat / 347 Mon-Sat, a 370 E-tile and a white blank. The blank tile was previously (at least between 2012 and 2021) used for the one day a year Ensignbus heritage route X81. The 269 tile has now reverted to an individual tile following the withdrawal of the 347.

**Below:** ENL111 again, on the last day, 17 January 2025, at Home Farm Cottage, North Ockendon, passing the Thurrock boundary sign. Both **Andrew Colebourne**



# TfL Route 608

Andrew Colebourne

Additional information **Nick Street** and **Adam Kelleher**.

As well as the main route 498, as illustrated on page 5, there is another TfL route which comes to Brentwood, the school days only 608. This runs from Gallows Corner via Hilldene Avenue, Harold Hill and Petersfield Avenue to Brentwood and terminates at Shenfield High School. It was introduced on 4 September 2006; like the 498 it was introduced to bring low floor buses to routes serving Greater London. It replaced First Essex route 851 which had been withdrawn at the end of the preceding summer term. Originally operated by Stagecoach London from Romford North Street (NS) garage, it later passed to Go Ahead. On 2 July 2016, Go Ahead transferred the operation into River Road (RR) garage in Barking, where it has remained since. This was a new base for the Blue Triangle fleet then, but more recently Go Ahead has dropped the public use of the individual operating names. River Road neither applies its code to the sides of buses nor does it display duty numbers.

The 608 is one of eight school routes operated by River Road depot. The others are the 646, 652, 656, 677, 679, 686 and 687. Of these the 677 (Ilford - Debden) is the only other one that enters Essex. The number of different types of buses used to cover all the duties at the garage and the mostly random allocation of them to the school routes means that over the last six months of 2024 (according to London Vehicle Finder) the 608 has seen buses of the E, EH, LT, MHV, WHV and WVL types. It is the only Essex route where LT (New Routemaster) type buses could be seen apart from route 215 (Walthamstow - Lea Valley Campsite) where they are currently the official allocation. Grays (GY) also has an LT allocation but the buses do not run on any of its Essex / Thurrock routes. River Road appears to share its allocation with Henley Road (DS - 'Docklands Buses', which also does not apply its code to buses) which means buses can be working on central London routes one day and to Brentwood the next.

**Rear Cover, top:** Go Ahead London E173 (SN61 BGE) in Shenfield Road, Brentwood, heading to Shenfield High School on the last of the three route 608 school journeys on the morning of 6 December 2024. The others were worked by EH22 (YX13 B1F) and WHV4 (LJ61 GVZ), so all different types. **Andrew Colebourne**

It is anticipated that around this time next year Brentwood will see electric buses on route 9 (Basildon Bus Station - Brentwood Railway Station). However, electric vehicles came to Brentwood on Wednesday 15 January 2025 when Go Ahead started to use new EBD class BYD B11s on TfL school routes whose buses are based at River Road. This is probably a temporary measure and was done to release diesel buses needed for new contracts for TfL routes in South East London (88, 269 and 401 operating out of Bexleyheath) that started on 18 January. BYD B11s are a new type, completely built by BYD. They supersede the previous BYDs with ADL Enviro 400 City bodies. ADL also have their own new complete successor, the Enviro 400 EV.

**Rear Cover, bottom:** EBD5 (LF74 TZE) negotiating the double roundabout at Wilson's Corner, Brentwood on route 608 on 17 January 2025. Of note is the rear exit door set back as far as possible, harking back to early London low floor double-deckers of the late 1990s / early 2000s. The same buildings can be seen in the background of both photos. The other two buses on the afternoon journeys that day were EBD2 (LF74 TZB) and EBD18 (LF74 TZU). **Nick Street**

**Right:** The former Arriva Kent Thameside Fastrack Enviro 200 MMCs transferred to Harlow are now regular performers on route 724. 4110 (SN17 MXJ), repainted into corporate livery, is at Pepper Hill, Great Amwell in the (rare) winter sunshine on 10 January 2025.  
**Owen Woodliffe**





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