



Coach Chronicles

6th March 2025

The latest news, views, and announcements

Driving the Future of the Coach Industry

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The UKCOA is set to host its highly anticipated Annual Dinner, AGM, and Conference on 9-10 March, bringing together coach operators and industry partners for an event packed with valuable insights, networking opportunities, and key industry discussions.

The evening dinner at the Stratford Manor Hotel will provide a relaxed setting for members and industry partners to connect, reflect on the past year, and look ahead to the future of the coach industry. The following day, the AGM and Conference at Volvo Group UK Ltd in Warwick will feature an exciting lineup of speakers and panel discussions covering the most pressing issues facing operators today.

A highlight of the event will be the keynote address by Alex Mayer, MP for Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard and a member of the Transport Select Committee, who will discuss the importance of the coach industry and its role in national transport policy. Other key sessions include a regulatory update from Ian Jones of Backhouse Jones, a discussion on decarbonisation and alternative fuels with Claire Haigh from ZEMO, and an insight into the UKCOA Driver Academy, featuring a first-hand account from a recent recruit.

The conference will also shine a spotlight on inclusivity in the industry, with Candice Mason from Women in Bus and Coach discussing how operators can improve recruitment and retention of women in the sector.

This event reinforces the UKCOA's commitment to supporting operators through advocacy, collaboration, and practical solutions to industry challenges. With a strong programme and a fantastic turnout expected, it promises to be an essential occasion for those shaping the future of coach travel in the UK.

Dates for Your Diary



9th March

Members Dinner
The Stratford Manor Hotel,
Stratford Upon Avon

10th March

AGM & Conference
Volvo Group, Warwick

27th March

The Big Coach Conversation
Derbyshire County Cricket Club

12th & 13th April

UK Coach Rally, Blackpool

29th April

Online Members Meeting

Les Transformations de Southport

Sefton Council has launched a consultation on proposed changes to The Promenade in Southport, which could have significant implications for coach operators. The proposed redesign aims to improve pedestrian and cyclist accessibility, enhance public spaces, and reduce congestion, but it may also impact coach parking and drop-off locations.

Currently, The Promenade is a key area for coach access, allowing operators to bring visitors to one of Southport's most popular destinations. However, the proposed changes include measures that could alter traffic flow and parking availability. If implemented without careful consideration of coach movements, these changes could create operational challenges for the industry.

Sefton Council is inviting feedback from businesses and individuals, including coach operators, to help shape the final design. The UK Coach Operators Association strongly encourages all operators who serve Southport or may do so in the future to complete the online survey. Providing feedback now is crucial to ensuring that the needs of the coach industry are properly considered in the planning process.

The survey is open until Saturday, 15 March 2025, and can be accessed via the Sefton Council consultation [website](#).

A47 Upgrades Approved

The approval of the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction upgrade in Norwich is a welcome development to the UK's transport network. This £200 million project aims to ease congestion, improve safety, and support economic growth.

For coach operators, reduced travel times will be a key advantage. New slip roads linking the A47 and A11 will cut peak-hour journeys, and less congestion means more reliable schedules, improving efficiency for coach services.

The project is part of the Greater Norwich City Deal, which plans to deliver over 44,000 homes and 33,000 jobs by 2038. With more residents and workers in the area, demand for commuter and leisure coach travel is likely to grow, creating new business opportunities. Increased tourism and business travel in the region will further boost the need for comfortable and efficient coach transport, making it a vital component of the local transport network.



The upgrade is expected to prevent up to 26 fatal or serious collisions over 60 years by rerouting traffic and improving pedestrian and cycle access. Safer roads mean lower risk for coach operators and improved passenger confidence. Reduced congestion also decreases the likelihood of minor accidents, helping operators maintain better safety records and avoid unnecessary delays.

A 2023 survey by Transport Focus, an independent watchdog for transport users, found that fewer than half of lorry and coach operators were satisfied with England's major roads, citing concerns over road surface quality and congestion. Investments like this directly address these concerns, helping to improve industry satisfaction. The modernised junction will also support smoother traffic flow, minimising stop-start driving, which improves fuel efficiency and reduces emissions, aligning with environmental goals.

The A47 upgrade will deliver smoother, safer, and faster journeys. As work progresses, this project will play a vital role in supporting a growing regional economy. By providing a more efficient transport corridor, it will help operators meet increasing demand while maintaining service quality and reliability.