



Little Owl Farm, Halebourne Lane, Chobham, Surrey GU24 8SL

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Members Meeting

Wednesday 11 August 2021 at 10:30 - Via ZOOM

Present

| | |
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| Stephen Telling | UKCOA Chairman |
| Richard Bamber | Anthony's Travel |
| Andrew Bassom | Golden Tours |
| Jim Baxter | London Pullman |
| Blaine Betts | Coopers Tours |
| Peter Bibby | Bibby's of Ingleton |
| David Blake | Blakes Coaches |
| Peter Bradley | Managing Director – UKCOA |
| Jamie Brown | Princess Coaches |
| Peter Brown | Princess Coaches |
| Alan Cooper | Coopers Tours |
| Shaun Concannon | Coopers Tours |
| Darren Curd | Wrightsure |
| Clive Edwards | Taf Valley Coaches |
| Peter Evans | MET Coaches |
| Steve Griffiths | South Mimms Travel |
| Tina Hailstone | Hailstone Travel |
| Paul Harnden | Chauffer Hire Coaches |
| Gemma Hoare | Bluebird Coaches |
| Ilir Hoxha | Big Ben Coaches |
| David Hull | Wrightsure |
| Laura Li | Membership and Administration Officer -UKCOA |
| Anthony Marett | Marett's Chariots |
| Richard Matthews | Princess Coaches |
| Terry McIntyre | Golden Boy Coaches |
| Ian Miller | Chauffeur Hire Coaches |
| Darren Nash | Falcon Coaches (Herts) |
| Neil Pegg | City Circle |
| Sarah Reilly | Bliss Travel |
| Elaine Scrivens | Southgate and Finchley Coaches |
| Val Sheppard-Evans | Longmynd Travel |
| Richard Slack | Slacks Coaches |
| Stephen Spiller | Centurion Travel |

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| Ceri Taylor | Applegates Coaches |
| Ivan Thomas | Edward Thomas and Son |
| David West | Westway Coaches |
| Robert Whelan | Corbel of London |
| Anthony Winson | Winson Coaches |

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

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|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Mark Anderson | Anderson Travel |
| Margaret l'Anson | Chandler's Coach Travel |
| Amy Baker-McCormack | Leoline Travel |
| Mark Ballam | Alexander Dennis |
| Graham Cooper | Cooper's Travel |
| Judy Dale | Royale European |
| Paul Flisher | Ready Tours Ltd |
| Mark Griffin | ITT Hub |
| Del Haggerty | DH Team Ltd |
| Kevin Mayne | Maynes Coaches |
| Andy Palmer | A Palmer Associates |
| Mark Peace | Cheney Coaches |
| Peter Rice | Southgate and Finchley Coaches |
| Ivan Shears | Chalfont Coaches of Harrow |
| Richard Telling | Falcon Travel (Surrey) |
| Mark Watts | Watts Way Travel |
| Kevin Wilde | Mitcham Belle |

2. **Minutes of last meeting 14 July 2021, and any Matters Arising**

Minutes agreed with no amendments. No matters arising.

3. **PSVAR**

Stephen Telling mentioned the letter that Graham Vidler (CEO of CPT) wrote in response to Baroness Vere. It was well written and sought to correct the misunderstandings about what the coach industry does. The UKCOA put across our views about "PSVAR Light" and Baroness Vere has accepted that wheelchair lifts may not need to be retrofitted from 1 April 2022 at least for now, although there may be a requirement to include destination equipment. All the trade bodies have been invited to a joint meeting with the DfT to discuss how we go forward (LATER – this meeting is now likely to be held during first half of September).

The Board met yesterday and would like to propose:

- In future all new coaches, from a point in time, are built to PSVAR standards – but further discussion needed as to what the new regulations will propose, especially regarding the lift, and that road infrastructure requirements also need to be taken into account;
- Only 10% of the applicable fleet will need to comply with full PSVAR (i.e., vehicles over 22-seats, which is determined by the regulations);
- All other vehicles used on qualifying Home to School transport services will need to

meet current PSVAR schedule 3 requirements, except possibly for the destination equipment (although it is likely that some way of displaying the destination will be required); this is what the Association is describing as 'PSVAR lite';

- All vehicles that meet 'PSVAR Lite' should not require any further retrofitting until the end of their useful life, rather than until a specific date. However, if one were given, we would push for 2035. That means that any coach bought in 2020 without a wheelchair lift would therefore have a 15 year life.
- Once a specific route is operated with a full PSVAR coach, it would need to remain operated with a full PSVAR coach, even if the lift was not regularly used and / or if the route changes operator.

It will be a good outcome if we can achieve all of this. We hope to be able to convince both the CPT and the RHA to buy in to this plan, although there are differing views. However we believe that it is very important that we go back to the DfT with a similar viewpoint .

Discussion revolved around:

- Should smaller vehicles be included in the fleet size for determining percentage of compliant vehicles? The regulations are clear it is 22-seater and above. We want to minimise the number of changes we are asking for. Reducing it to 12-seater vehicles may prompt the DfT to include all vehicles within the regulations;
- A fleet of 4 vehicles would presumably need 1 compliant vehicle which is actually 25% of the fleet. There was general agreement that this was much better than 100%;
- Issues with retrofitting and maintaining structural integrity of vehicles:
 - Smaller companies may not have the right equipment/knowledge needed to do the work properly and safely;
 - A number of manufacturers are retrofitting their own vehicles. **Richard Matthews** confirmed that ADL Plaxton are currently working through their own fleet with engineering support to ensure vehicles are safe;
 - **Stephen Telling** asked **Richard Matthews** when ADL Plaxton made the move to producing coaches that were compliant under Section 3 of the regulations, barring destination equipment. Richard will forward the date for circulation to members later, but commented that Section 3 DDA compliance (other than for destination equipment) has been in force for years;
 - There are long delays in re-certifying retrofitted coaches. There is a worldwide parts shortage;
- Does the 10% apply to the whole fleet or only commercial school routes? To keep things simple, it should be the whole fleet. That also allows vehicles to be used across a range of purposes; however, there may be some instances where a distinction between different fleets within one company may be appropriate.
- Vehicles registered before 1973 are not covered by the regulations;
- Home to School transport:
 - There are some local authorities are already requesting that all vehicles used on school routes have a wheelchair lift;

- How will this be funded? The higher costs have to be borne by the local authorities without any extra funding, which in turn have the knock-on effect of reducing other vital services;
- **Richard Slack** has two school routes that are paid for by parents. A PSVAR coach for that run will not be financially viable leaving 140 children with no transport;
- CPT are proposing that unless a passenger asks for a wheelchair lift the route does not need to be PSVAR. It is unclear if this is already in the derogation;
- The biggest issue is the value of the fleet. If you don't have a residual value, technically you are broke and trading illegally;
- It might be better to run a separate business with a smaller fleet for school transport
- We are increasingly seeing time expired buses on school runs; although they can't be used in many Low Emission Zones, both in London and elsewhere;
- Having PSVAR vehicles is an opportunity to attract the 10 million disabled people living in the UK;
- A lot of elderly people will want to use a wheelchair lift if there is one, slowing down boarding times;
- Higher costs/selling journeys with PSVAR vehicles:
 - It is discrimination to charge a higher fee to individual wheelchair passengers;
 - Can charge more for a different vehicle;
 - Losing three seats to a wheelchair puts up the price for everyone on the trip (or it has to come off the margins);
 - Using cost as a barrier is how we have ended up in this situation;
 - Quote for each job and build in the time needed to take out and replace seats;
 - The key to private hire quoting is the way you sell it. Make sure to take full requirements and even ask the customer if they need a wheelchair accessible vehicle and quote accordingly. There is a way to sell this;
 - Don't wait for requests for wheelchair journeys. Put the word out!
 - It might be better to have more than one wheelchair space – can then advertise to residential homes. Opportunities are there;
 - It is physically not possible to test the ramp as part of the daily vehicle check; Steve Spiller said he was told to buy a bigger yard or move the vehicle out to do the check, which would add to the time and cost;
- The coach industry has embraced accessible vehicles and does well with hidden disabilities. Operators are successfully accommodating disabled passengers. We come across as anti-disabled when we are the opposite; we need to be more positive;
- Twin axle coaches with a full load of 53 passengers plus luggage will most likely be over the legal weight limit. Add in a lift and it will definitely be over. Nobody seems to be testing for or taking any notice of this.

Stephen Telling concluded the discussion by saying the Board believes that their proposals are the most cost-effective way forward at this point. They will keep members informed of progress with the DfT. He thanked **Peter Bradley** for all his hard work with PSVAR.

Peter Bradley reminded people to complete their exemption forms if they haven't already done so. Peter agreed to circulate a form completed by **Mark Peace** (with commercially sensitive information removed) as an example.

4. **Any Other Business**

Gallaghers are considering becoming a member and will let **Peter Bradley** know.

5. **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 10:30 (LATER – as this clashes with the first day of the British Tourism & Travel Show 2021 at the NEC Birmingham, the meeting will be brought forward by one day to Tuesday 21 September, still at 10:30)