



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

Email: info@uk-coa.co.uk

Tel: 0333 7333 222

Members Meeting

Tuesday 5 July 2022 at 10:30 - Via ZOOM

Present

Stephen Telling	UKCOA President
Kevin Wilde	UKCOA Chairman
Margaret L'Anson	Chandler's Coach Travel
Richard Bamber	Anthony's Travel
Blaine Betts	Coopers Tours
Peter Bibby	Bibbys of Ingleton
David Blake	Blakes Coaches
Peter Bradley	Managing Director – UKCOA
Jamie Brown	Princess Coaches
Scott Burke	Asset Alliance Group
Paul Flisher	Ready Tours Ltd
Steve Griffiths	South Mimms Travel
Tina Hailstone	Hailstone Travel
Paul Harnden	Chauffer Hire Coaches
Ilir Hoxha	Big Ben Coaches
Colin Inman	Chandler's Coach Travel
Laura Li	UKCOA Membership and Admin Officer
Lennox Mackie	Mackie's Coaches
Anthony Marett	Marett's Chariots
Richard Matthews	Princess Coaches
Kevin Mayne	Maynes Coaches
Terry McIntyre	Golden Boy Coaches
Andy Palmer	A Palmer Associates
Mark Peace	Cheney Coaches
Steve Price	Gallaghers Insurance
Andrew Scott	Stanley Travel

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Kevin Wilde welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Mark Ballam	Alexander Dennis
Graham Cooper	Coopers Tours

Darren Curd	Wrightsure
Peter Evans	MET
David Hull	Wrightsure
Andy Repton	Reptons Coaches
Peter Rice	Southgate and Finchley Coaches
Elaine Scrivens	Southgate and Finchley Coaches
Ivan Thomas	Edward Thomas & Son
Jackie Thomas	Edward Thomas & Son
Robert Whelan	Corbel of London
Simon Wood	Alexander Dennis

2. Minutes of last meeting 14 June 2022, and any Matters Arising

- **Andy Repton's** apologies were missed from the minutes, and this will be corrected.
- **Peter Bradley** commented that he is having difficulty contacting NCP re Gatwick Airport.
- Some items are not on the agenda for this short meeting and will be picked up again in September.

3. Fuel Prices

Recent experience has not been the same for all operators. It was reported that in Norfolk diesel, having been at £1.90 a litre in mid to late June, was now stuck at £1.99 with dealers seemingly reluctant to cross the £2.00 threshold. Another operator however reported that a bulk supply of diesel had actually dropped from £1.65 to £1.54 per litre in the first week of July. In West Yorkshire bulk purchase was reported to be currently £1.61 a litre. A couple of operators in the southeast were concerned about the rise in the cost of AdBlue with one commenting that it is priced so much higher than diesel.

4. New Members and Membership Drive

Peter Bradley thanked members who have paid this year's subscription. Unpaid invoices will be followed up in the next few weeks. There are one or two new member enquiries pending, which will be followed up during the quieter period in August.

5. Membership Q & A

A general discussion about topics most important to operators at the moment covered:

The opportunity of raising coach hire rates to ensure that operations remained profitable despite the increase in fuel and (in most cases) staff costs.

Peter Evans from Met Coaches in Watford has used the template letter to schools explaining the increase in contract rates and was very pleased with the way that some recipients had reacted to it. Some other members however were still having issues with local authorities not recognising the significant difficulties that were being experienced with cost increases.

There is plenty of private hire work around, but not all of it was able to be covered. For some members this meant that they could pick and choose what work they undertook.

Many members are receiving requests from schools for day trips located well outside their normal catchment area. Anecdotally this was either because the school's regular operator has ceased trading or had significantly shrunk their fleet and / or the type of work they were undertaking. Shortage of drivers rather than the number of vehicles available dictated what operators were able to cover.

Many members said that they have never experienced anything like the demand over the past couple of months and was bringing well needed revenue into their businesses. Some were covering the work by driving themselves during this very busy spell. Some schools appear to be postponing some school trips until the early autumn when the students return, and many are booking for trips in spring / summer 2023 already given the high demand for coaches. It seems that schools were keen not to lose out next year.

Looking to the future members were optimistic. Although there was some talk about it being a smaller industry in the future there was a feeling that customers will stop going through brokers and using operators who have let them down. This creates an opportunity to pick up more work and to increase prices. One operator reported an increase in rail replacement contract prices.

Finance is being offered to new operators who can't afford the repayments. In the short-term they offer lower prices, which has a negative impact on more established and reputable operators. It was decided to arrange a speaker on this topic at a future meeting.

Stephen Telling gave a brief summary of his recent meeting with Equipmake. Equipmake can retrofit diesel coaches to electric power. They convert vehicles up to eight years old giving an extra lifespan of 10 years. Approximate cost is £170,000 and the best estimate is that a single charge will last around 200 miles. Extra MSN have joined with Equipmake and are looking to trial a charging plate at their Leeds service station. They are now looking for an operator to use it on a regular basis and **Tom James** is working on finding a suitable UKCOA member.

There is a potential deal with Zenobe the main finance provider for batteries in the UK. They are willing to fund the first coach out of a minimum order of 20 across the industry. Zenobe are currently working closely with National Express and assessing converting a number of vehicles.

Equipmake are working on an Action Plan and Marketing Package. In addition to the cost of conversion there is the problem of installing the charging plates. It costs between £125,000 - £250,000 depending on the size of the plant and what is available on the grid. **Peter Bradley** added that this is a significant challenge and one that will likely need to be dealt with nationally.

6. **AOB**

Tina Hailstone has been experiencing problems with tachograph software. **Peter Bradley** agreed to pass on contact details for someone at the DVSA and ask Novodata to get in touch.

Peter Bradley advised he would like to include a summary of the membership discussions for his Route One column this month. No detailed commercial information would be disclosed. There were no objections.

Kevin Wilde reminded members to share any good news stories for the BBC.

7. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 13 September 2022 at 10.30 – Speaker TBC