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In Memoriam

Another Tourist Attraction Turns Its Back on Coaches

Birling Gap and the iconic Seven Sisters cliffs are among the South Coast's most popular beauty spots, attracting thousands of visitors every year. But once again, the coach industry is being pushed aside.

We have been informed that coach parking and coach drop-off are no longer permitted within the car park at Birling Gap, located in East Dean near Eastbourne, East Sussex. This decision significantly impacts group travel access to the site and is yet another example of a tourist destination making it harder for coach passengers to enjoy what the UK has to offer.

While alternative parking is available in Eastbourne, it's far from ideal. Free all-day coach parking is offered at College Road, and paid parking (up to four hours) is available on King Edwards Parade, with limited drop-off options in surrounding roads.

The National Trust website suggests that regular buses between Eastbourne and Brighton stop at East Dean, but this is 1.5 miles away and the most direct route along Birling Gap Road has no pavements or walkways, making it impractical and unsafe for visitors with accessibility needs.

The UKCOA will be challenging this decision with the National Trust and pressing them to reconsider their stance. If you've encountered similar exclusions elsewhere, please let us know so we can strengthen our case for improved coach access to key visitor destinations.

For more information on coach parking in Eastbourne, visit [Coach and motorcycle parking | East Sussex County Council](#)

Dates for Your Diary



29th April

- Online Members Meeting
- Health & Safety presentation by Gallagher

20th May

- Online Members Meeting

15th July

- Online Members Meeting

Spotlight on Health & Safety

We are pleased to announce that Gallagher, a UKCOA Industry Partner, will be delivering an important presentation at our next members meeting on Tuesday, 29th April. Their session will focus on Health and Safety and responsibilities that legislation places on coach operators.



Gallagher's expert team will provide valuable insights into:

- Health & Safety legislation affecting coach operators
- Understanding roles and responsibilities
- Practical steps to ensure compliance and mitigate risks
- Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

This is an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from industry professionals and gain a clearer understanding of Health & Safety legislation. Whether you are an operator, manager, or involved in compliance, this session will provide the knowledge and guidance you need to keep your business running smoothly.

As always, there will be an opportunity for members to ask questions and discuss any concerns they may have about Health & Safety regulations. Gallagher's team will be on hand to provide tailored advice and best practices specific to the coach industry.

We encourage all members to attend this session and take full advantage of the expertise available.

Strengthening Security with SCaN

Ensuring the security of your operations has never been more important. Whether at the depot or on the road, everyone needs to remain vigilant to potential threats. Many of us have seen something that doesn't look quite right but are not always sure what to do.

The National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) provides essential guidance through its **See, Check and Notify (SCaN)** framework, designed to help businesses enhance their security awareness and response, and focuses on simple changes with smarter use of existing resources, not increased spending or extra staff.

The SCaN modules are **FREE** and delivered by qualified trainers, helping to develop your staff's ability to identify suspicious activity and respond effectively. Integrating these principles into daily operations enhances both security and workforce confidence.

The core principles are:

- **See:** Being observant and identifying unusual behaviour or activities.
- **Check:** Assessing whether a situation is genuinely suspicious.
- **Notify:** Reporting concerns promptly to the appropriate authorities or security.



Coach depots and bus stations are high-traffic environments, making them potential targets for unauthorised access or suspicious activity. The NPSA provides detailed advice on measures such as access control, staff awareness training, and reporting protocols to help businesses reduce risks.

Drivers and crew also play a crucial role in ensuring security while on the road. The NPSA also offer guidance on recognising and responding to suspicious behaviour, monitoring unattended items, and reporting concerns effectively. Reviewing these resources and incorporating their best practices can help operators take a proactive stance against potential threats.

To find out more, and access the training, visit [See, Check and Notify \(SCaN\) | NPSA](#)

A Fantastic Weekend at the UK Coach Rally!

The 69th UK Coach Rally, held this past weekend in Blackpool, was a true celebration of our industry – showcasing excellence, camaraderie, and some of the finest vehicles and drivers in the business. Mild weather and great spirits set the scene for what was a memorable event for all involved.

The UKCOA was proud to be in attendance once again, and we would like to extend a huge thank you to Richard Telling and his team at Falcon Coaches for their outstanding support. They generously provided a Volvo B12BT with Van Hool Alizee T9 bodywork as the UKCOA's stand vehicle, proudly displaying our logo. The vehicle, adorned in the original Tellings Golden Miller livery, previously won Coach of the Year in 2005 and was a fantastic gesture that helped raise the profile of the Association throughout the weekend.



We are especially delighted to recognise the incredible achievements of our members who took home silverware from this year's event:

Trophies and Awards

- **Alan Goodwin Trophy** (highest placed operator in all classes): *Archway Travel*
- **Peter Bostock Trophy** (highest placed driver): *Sam Archer, Archway Travel*
- **Directors' Challenge**: *Tim Southby, Heathside Travel*

Concours d'Elegance

- **Top Mini/Midi Coach:** *Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Cento, Williams Coaches*
- **Top Touring/Express Luxury Coach:** *Mercedes-Benz Tourismo, Williams Coaches*
- **Top Coach (5+ years old):** *Volvo B12B Van Hool T9 Alizee, Ingleby's Luxury Coaches*

Concours Manufacturers' Awards

- **Irizar Trophy:** *Irizar i6S Efficient integral, Centurion Travel*
- **Mercedes-Benz Trophy:** *Mercedes-Benz Tourismo, Williams Coaches*
- **Plaxton Trophy:** *Volvo B8R Plaxton Leopard, South Staffs Coach Hire*
- **Volvo Trophy:** *Volvo 9900, Brethertons Gold Line Tours*

Special Awards

- **Bernie Porton Memorial Trophy** (coach of the year voted by drivers): *Volvo B12B Van Hool T9 Alizee, Ingleby's Luxury Coaches*
- **Boon's Award** (best co-ordinated décor): *Mercedes-Benz Tourismo, Williams Coaches*
- **Cymru Trophy** (top coach from Wales): *Mercedes-Benz Tourismo, Williams Coaches*
- **Martin Wrightson Memorial Shield** (oldest employed participant): *Michael Collins, Heathside Travel*
- **UKCOA Martin Cornell Trophy** (highest placed UKCOA member): *Mercedes-Benz Tourismo, Williams Coaches*

A huge congratulations to all our members who participated, and especially those who came away with awards. You continue to demonstrate the best of what the coach industry has to offer. We're already looking forward to next year's event!

In Memory of Valerie Margaret Rice

Co-Founder, Southgate & Finchley Coaches

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Valerie Rice on 2nd April 2025. Val was not only a much-loved wife, mother and grandmother, but also a pioneering figure in the coach industry, whose legacy lives on through Southgate & Finchley Coaches.

Val was born on 5th October 1942 in Ensbury Park, Bournemouth. In 1959, she met Mick, and they married the following year, on 6th June 1960, going on to raise two children, Elaine and Peter.



Together, Mick and Val founded Southgate Coaches in 1963, purchasing their first vehicle and beginning what would become a family business known for its dedication and service. Val played a central role in those early days and remained a guiding presence in the company for many years.



Sadly, Val suffered a stroke in November last year and, despite great courage, she never fully recovered. Her passing is deeply felt by all who knew her.

The Rice family have expressed their heartfelt thanks to everyone who has sent condolences and good wishes during this time. We at the UKCOA extend our deepest sympathies to Elaine, Peter, and the whole family.