

Starpal.AI Making AIR Compliance Simple

The UKCOA is delighted to welcome Starpal.AI as our newest Industry Partner.

Do you want your existing coach fleet ready for Accessible Information Regulations (AIR) compliance, without a costly retrofit? Starpal.AI's plug-and-play, tablet-based assistant delivers audible and on-screen announcements, answers passenger questions by voice, and moves effortlessly between vehicles. It's perfect for rail replacement and local services, requiring minimal installation and causing no disruption to operations.

Trials are free to UKCOA members, fully funded by the Department for Transport, giving operators the chance to test the solution risk-free. The technology has already been tried and approved on live rail replacement routes by several UK coach operators. Starpal.AI provides full setup support and ride-alongs to monitor results, ensuring a smooth and effective implementation.

To find out more or arrange your trial, contact Tanguy at Starpal.AI:

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We're excited to have Starpal.AI join the Association and look forward to seeing how their smart, flexible technology helps more operators deliver accessible, passenger-friendly coach travel.

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Revocation of A303 Upgrades

The Department for Transport has published a draft Revocation Order that would cancel the Development Consent Order (DCO) previously granted in 2023 for the long-planned upgrade of the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down, including the controversial Stonehenge tunnel.

If confirmed, this would mean that all permissions granted under the 2023 DCO are null and void, effectively halting progress on one of the most significant road infrastructure projects in southern England.

The A303 is a key strategic corridor, heavily used by coaches heading to destinations such as Devon, Cornwall, and the West Country. The Amesbury to Berwick Down stretch is particularly notorious for congestion and delays, often adding significant time to long-distance journeys and disrupting driver hours compliance.



The revocation process is being carried out under the Infrastructure Planning (Changes to, and Revocation of, Development Consent Orders) Regulations 2011, which allows the Secretary of State to cancel a DCO in “*exceptional circumstances*.” While no formal explanation has yet been given, this move suggests a major policy rethink or legal reconsideration following long-standing challenges to the Stonehenge tunnel element of the project.

The Revocation Order is currently in draft form and subject to confirmation.

Supporting efficient, sustainable coach travel relies on ongoing infrastructure investment. If plans for the A303 upgrade are being reconsidered, the government’s outline for alternative solutions will be vital to avoid increased congestion and to maintain strong transport links to the South West.

Upgrade Your Workshop with Totalkare

Looking to boost efficiency, safety, and turnaround times in your workshop? Many operators are now enhancing their maintenance facilities with Totalkare's industry-leading lifting and testing equipment, designed specifically to meet the demands of busy coach fleets.

Totalkare's G9DC washbay-ready mobile column lifts offer the perfect blend of strength and flexibility. Each column lifts up to 8,000kg, operates wirelessly for smooth, synchronised lifting, and is fully galvanised making it ideal for outdoor and washbay environments. With configurations of up to 48 columns, they provide exceptional versatility for mixed fleets.

To further increase operational uptime, the Totalkare mobile brake tester enables fast, accurate brake performance testing on-site. The standard unit handles axles up to 16,000kg, with an upgraded model available for heavier vehicles – keeping fleets compliant without costly downtime.

Enhance safety during prolonged maintenance tasks with Totalkare axle stands, rated at 7,500kg each and available in tall or short options for secure vehicle support.



If you're looking to modernise your workshop and keep your fleet on the road with confidence, Totalkare offers proven solutions trusted across the industry.

☎ 0121 585 2724

✉ sales@totalkare.co.uk

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Dates for Your Diary



18th November

Members' Meeting
Guest Presenter:
Miles Dorrington,
Traffic Commissioner

24th January

UKCOA Winter Ball,
Royal Garden Hotel, London

22nd March

UKCOA Members Dinner
Location TBC

23rd March

AGM & Conference
Volvo UK, Warwick

18th & 19th April

UK Coach Rally, Blackpool

Help Shape the UKCOA's Priorities for 2026

As the UK's leading voice for the coach industry, the UKCOA works to represent your interests – but we can only do that effectively if we hear directly from you.

Our Member Priorities & Engagement Survey is now open, and we're asking all members to take a few minutes to share their views. Your feedback will help us identify what matters most to operators in the year ahead and ensure our work continues to deliver real value for your business.

We want to know:

- What challenges would you like us focus on in 2026
- What information and resources you find most useful
- Where we can do more to support you to operate effectively

The survey only takes around five minutes to complete, but your input will have a lasting impact on our focus, our campaigns, and the support we offer.

Take part today and help shape the future direction of your association.

[**UKCOA Member Priorities & Engagement Survey 2026 - Fill in form**](#)

PCV Pass Rates Highlight Challenges

The latest figures from the DVSA show that the PCV test performance for 2024-25 varies significantly across categories, revealing both strengths and weaknesses in the driver qualification pipeline.

Test Category	Tests Conducted	Passes	Pass Rate
PCV Vocational	6,296	4,507	71.6%
PCV CPC	7,184	3,607	50.2%
PCV Hazard Perception	7,950	6,440	81.0%
PCV Multiple Choice	10,123	5,910	58.4%

The data paints a mixed picture. Success rates are strong in the Hazard Perception test, where more than eight in ten candidates passed, showing that most trainees have good situational awareness and understanding of on-road risks. However, only half passed the CPC test, while the Multiple Choice theory test achieved a pass rate of just 58.4%, suggesting that knowledge of the technical and regulatory framework is proving more difficult. On a more positive note, the vocational (practical) test results remain encouraging, with over 70% of candidates passing once they reach the on-road stage.

These results highlight an imbalance in the driver training process with many prospective drivers falling short before they reach the vocational test which extends recruitment timelines. This additional time increases the overall cost of bringing new drivers into the workforce. Lower pass rates for theory and CPC elements suggests that candidates may not be sufficiently preparing or don't have access the ongoing support needed to progress efficiently through the qualification process.

For operators, this means longer lead times before new recruits can enter service and continued pressure on staffing levels at a time when demand for experienced drivers remains strong.

The figures serve as a reminder that securing the future workforce requires more than recruitment alone. It demands a consistent, high-quality training pathway that equips candidates for every stage of the licensing process.

To view the full data set, visit:

[**Driving test and theory test data: passenger carrying vehicles \(PCV\) - GOV.UK**](#)

Industry Partner Insight:

VEV share their perspective on the opportunities for coach operators in the move toward fleet electrification.

Shared Charging Hubs: Powering the Next Phase of Fleet Electrification

Electrification is transforming passenger transport, with bus and coach operators leading the shift to zero-emission mobility. Yet, while electric vehicle technology advances, charging infrastructure remains a vital hurdle to overcome, especially for operators under pressure to decarbonise quickly and cost-effectively.

The solution lies in closer collaboration between operators to share commercial-EV charging hubs - maximising charger utilisation, opening new revenue streams, and accelerating electrification without heavy capital outlay. By opening depots to third parties during off-peak hours, coach operators can monetise underused chargers while supporting wider adoption of commercial electric vehicles.



VEV is already helping operators make this vision a reality. Take Stagecoach's Nuneaton depot, for example, their shared charging model is already demonstrating the benefits. The opportunity is clear: shared hubs mean higher uptime, lower costs, and stronger resilience. From grid connection and depot design to smart charging and energy optimisation, VEV delivers end-to-end infrastructure solutions that future-proof operations and cut total cost of ownership.

The coach industry now has the chance to lead the charge - driving collaboration, unlocking new income, and creating the backbone of a truly zero-emission transport network. Partner with VEV to turn your depot into the next shared charging hub.

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 vev.com