



Coach & Bus Live 2015 reports 6% increase in attendees

Coach & Bus Live, organised by Diversified Communications UK, has reported a 6% increase in attendees for 2015.

Featuring 219 exhibitors, a packed programme of master classes and workshops, and a 'live' Skills Test area (supported by Mercedes-Benz), the biennial event took place earlier this month at the NEC Birmingham. Over two days (30 September-1 October), it welcomed 6,081 industry professionals – including senior executives from the major bus groups, coach operators, drivers, suppliers, local authority and community transport providers from across the UK.

Firmly established as the essential domestic showcase for the UK's coach, bus, mini/midi vehicle and passenger transport technology sectors, the halls (both inside and out) were packed with thousands of highly-focused, informed, and engaged visitors looking to research everything from new vehicles, accessories and workshop equipment, to IT solutions, legislation updates, and essential business services.

Significantly, the rise in footfall has been backed by glowing testimonials from across the show floor. Busy, important, interesting, fantastic, successful, and enjoyable – are just some of the words attendees have used so far.

"Coach & Bus Live is the best event in the industry," says Peter Robinson, operations manager at Stagecoach UK Bus.

"It's great to see the energy, enthusiasm and passion right across the industry here," says Fiona Kerr, managing director, First Glasgow, who was visiting and speaking at the show for the first time.

"It's a great opportunity to see what's new in the industry and to improve my fleet," says Monier Kiblawi, director of Panache Travel.

As a snapshot of the UK's coach and bus market, the event reflected an upbeat – and united – industry ready to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. With the market growing in confidence, the proliferation of new ideas, vehicles and cutting-edge innovations for 2015 – many on show first time at Coach & Bus Live – were eagerly received by operators looking to meet the evolving needs of their customers. Indeed, for many, the continued success of the show (and its sister event – Euro Bus Expo) is a clear sign that the public transport sector has now turned the corner of the recession and is going from strength to strength.

"Based on the reaction from our industry, Coach & Bus Live 2015 was one of our best editions to date," says event director Helen Conway. "There was such a great range of new vehicles and products on display, which provided a real buzz. We're delighted with the feedback we've received from our visitors and exhibitors. Hearing news of significant business deals and orders being done over the two days, illustrates, once again, just how important this autumn event is in the industry's calendar.

"We're particularly grateful for the continuing support of our event partner – the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) and also our speakers, sponsors, visitors and exhibitors. Thanks for helping us put on a fantastic show!"

Big name speakers draw in the crowds

The Master Class Theatre and Workshop Live enjoyed a host of standing-room only sessions across the two days. The 2015 line-up included leading industry's players like Bob Montgomery, managing director of Stagecoach UK Bus, Fiona Kerr, managing director of First Glasgow, Martijn Gilbert, chief executive officer of Reading Buses, Philip Hitchen, managing director of Belle Vue Coaches, transport consultant Mark Yexley, and Jonathon Backhouse from transport law specialists Backhouse Jones.

"It's useful to have a broad mix of people come together and get the opportunity to have insightful discussion about topical issues," says Bob Montgomery, about speaking at this year's show.

His Master Class session, entitled 'The power of partnership – delivering best outcomes for customers', discussed the importance of staying "relevant and dynamic" to ensure long-term growth and move the industry forward. It outlined his thoughts on the need for the proposed Buses Bill and what could be achieved, examples of Stagecoach Bus's partnerships with local authorities, a checklist for making partnerships work, and the necessity for implementing "world-class standards" on operators to ensure "a world-class transport system".

"We do need an industry that thinks about the future and how to do things differently," he says, "things have to move forward."

The need for change also came under the spotlight in Fiona Kerr's session 'Bus and Beyond'. Fresh from winning 'Manager of the Year – large operator (over 150 vehicles)' at this year's routeONE Awards, she spoke about the importance of putting customers at the core of the business.

Citing examples of best practices and personalised campaign marketing from leading brands like easyJet and Coca-Cola, she illustrated the significance of understanding who your customers are (whether they be existing, lapsed or potential new passengers) in order to adapt to and

meet their needs “at eye level”. And reflecting their diversity is key.

Although half of all bus customers are female, one in eight are of an ethnic minority, and one in 20 are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, they are all under-represented within the bus and coach workforce, she says.

“The customer is king, the customer is queen, and the customer is everything in between,” says Kerr, calling for a more pro-active approach to creating an inclusive, and population-representative industry that reflects the communities it serves.

Skills Test 2015

The popular Skills Test area (supported by Mercedes-Benz) was another big draw for 2015. Having built an exciting reputation for testing drivers’ dexterity (and nerves), this year’s onlookers were treated to an exciting display of precision and skill (peppered with a few cone collisions along the way). Commenting that this year’s course wasn’t for the ‘faint-hearted’, Mercedes-Benz asked competing drivers to perform 11 manoeuvres (including accurately reverse parking into four bays) in a 2-axle Tourismo Euro VI.

Jamie Cutting of Logistics Support and Zack Yarranton of Yarranton Bros were the two winners of the 2015 Skills Test (on Wednesday and Thursday respectively).

Exhibitor testimonials

“Fantastic show! It’s a good opportunity to see visitors from all across the UK and Ireland in one place,” says Paul Leigh, UK key account manager at Altro.

“Coach & Bus Live is an important show for us because the coach and bus industry is a key sector in our business. It’s a busy show, and we wouldn’t want to miss it. It’s definitely worth coming to,” says James Radford, sales and marketing manager at Totalkare Heavy Duty Workshop Solutions.

“We witnessed enthusiasm returning to levels not seen for several years,” says John Roe, managing director at Roeville. “We had a record number of positive commitments from new customers and expect to be busy for many months to come.”

“I would recommend Coach & Bus Live to other industry companies. It’s a great opportunity to showcase your products and services and entertain your customers in a great environment,” says Chris Mobbs, regional sales manager at Dawsonrentals Bus and Coach.

“It’s a great showcase. Over the past three years that we’ve exhibited, we’ve had fantastic footfall, and found that it really has elevated the brand to another level,” says Mark Noone, sales director at Brian Noone.

“Here at Wrightsure we think that it’s always important to be at Coach & Bus Live (or Euro Bus Expo). It’s where we need to be to meet our clients and all perspective operators,” says Darren Curd, associate director at Wrightsure Insurance Group.

“The show is our showcase. It’s a way of getting our product seen by our customers. Not just the UK market, but also customers coming in from abroad,” says Keith Watson, group customer development director at Alexander Dennis.

“We’ve been coming to Coach & Bus Live for the past eight years. It’s attracted new customers for us, we’ve displayed new products, and we always get lots of positive feedback, which encourages to come back year on year,” says Neil Widdowfield, sales director at Rescroft (accessibleSolutions by Rescroft).

“We’ve exhibited at Coach & Bus Live (and Euro Bus Expo) every year since 1997 because we have lots of customers spread throughout the UK and overseas, and we find that this is where our customers come. We’ve already booked our stand for next year’s Euro Bus Expo,” says Carol Crichton, director of Omnibus.

Save the date for Euro Bus Expo 2016

The next event – Euro Bus Expo is already 90% sold out of exhibition space a year before doors open. It returns to the NEC in Birmingham on 1-3 November 2016. Coach & Bus Live will take place the following year, in 2017.

For further information, please visit www.coachandbuslive.com.

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Media enquiries to:

Emma-Louise Jones, Head of PR

t: +44 (0)1273 645134

e: ejones@divcom.co.uk

Website: www.divcom.co.uk

Twitter: www.twitter.com/DiversifiedUK

Event Director:

Helen Conway

t: 01926 45269

e: hconway@divcom.co.uk

Exhibitor sales enquiries to:

Martin Laverton, Group Sales Manager

t: 01733 405735

e: mlaverton@divcom.co.uk

Website: www.coachandbuslive.com

Twitter: www.twitter.com/coach_buslive

Notes:

High resolution show and speaker images are available upon request:

Fiona Kerr: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CBL-243.jpg>

Bob Montgomery: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CBL-1391.jpg>

Bob Montgomery: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CBL-182-Bob-Montgomery.jpg>

Wide shot: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DSC5695.jpg>

Master Class Theatre: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DSC4832-1024x681.jpg>

Aisle: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DSC4977-1024x681.jpg>

Aisle: <http://www.coachandbuslive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DSC5368.jpg>

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