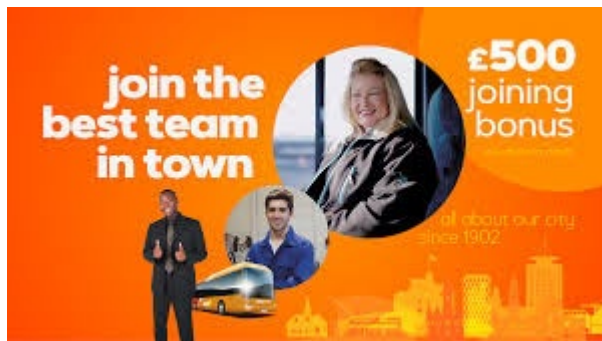


Addressing the current UK bus driver shortage in line with the Government's vision of a high wage, high productivity economy ?

This article is founded on **two truths** !

Truth One is that the most important fundamental components of a bus operation are buses and drivers.

If you do not have enough of both, you do not have the ability to run the business.



Right now, across the UK, **we see operators without sufficient drivers.**

There are a variety of reasons for that but the one which is least justified is the knee jerk reaction of '*Brexit*'!

Whether you like it or whether you don't, whether you voted for it or didn't, it is hardly an unexpected development !

We all saw it coming and those of us who know the UK bus industry knew full well it would pose a major challenge given the **multinational, multicultural workforces in large urban bus depots** across the country.



Maybe the failure to properly plan a post Brexit workforce was derailed by the pandemic?

Maybe the lack of testing facilities provided by DVSA hasn't helped?

However, we **DO** need a plan to deliver sufficient bus drivers from the core UK population as **Truth Two** is that the

Government which delivered Brexit has consistently made it clear that it is underpinned by a desire to develop a **high wage, high productivity economy.**

There are those who will say that, since you need one driver for every bus, how can you be more productive to generate levels of revenue which would allow you to employ more expensive drivers ?

The fact is that importing high volumes of bus drivers, particularly from Eastern Europe in the 2000's, was nothing to do with low pay. Those drivers were neither cheaper nor more expensive than UK nationals. They simply found a better standard of living driving buses in the UK and enjoyed it while they could.

Those days are now over.

So, how do we face reality and **plan for a more productive UK based bus driver workforce ?**

We take three major steps.

1. We **embrace the use of data** to better inform the scheduling and delivery of bus networks matching supply much closer to demand than we have ever done. Traditional methods of timetabling and scheduling contain excessive waste which can be eliminated using Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. See www.cityswift.com



serious levels of on street bus priority and urban traffic management to significantly increase bus operating speeds to further increase driver productivity.



3. We attack the twin evils of staff turnover and absenteeism by building a **loyal, committed and engaged professional driver workforce with better terms and conditions used productively and efficiently** taking full advantage of the better scheduling and traffic management measures.

Drivers are the biggest single cost in any bus operation and for too long the industry and government has put too much emphasis on seeking to control that cost through pay rates and **not enough emphasis on controlling it through higher levels of productivity and staff engagement.**

Looking forward, the whole package of '*Bus Back Better*' and '*Levelling Up*' through the UK Government's New Bus Strategy should be founded on **an engaged, well paid driver workforce, efficiently deployed in an industry generating modal shift and patronage growth.**



Government's role in this is to invest heavily in the '*Levelling Up*' process for the bus industry through '*Bus Back Better*' – not to provide visas to protect the status quo in a declining, low productivity industry.