

# Driving change

FirstGroup plc  
Sustainability Report 2026





# About FirstGroup

FirstGroup is a leading private sector provider of public transport services. We run a diverse portfolio of businesses including bus, rail, coach and tram operations that provide convenient mobility, improving quality of life by connecting people and communities.



Find out more online:  
[firstgroupplc.com](https://www.firstgroupplc.com)



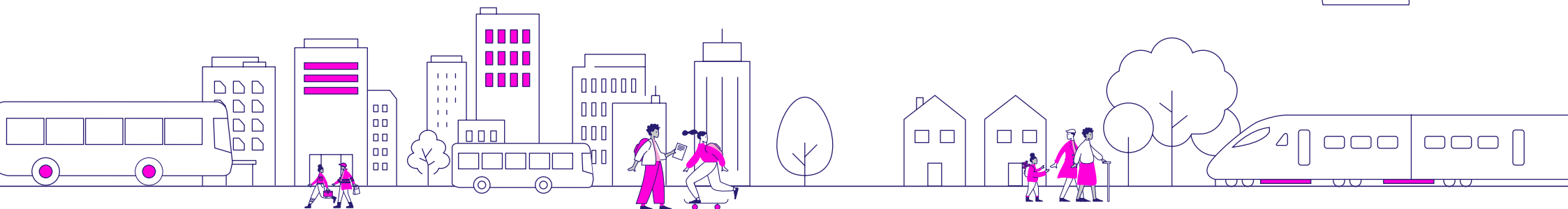
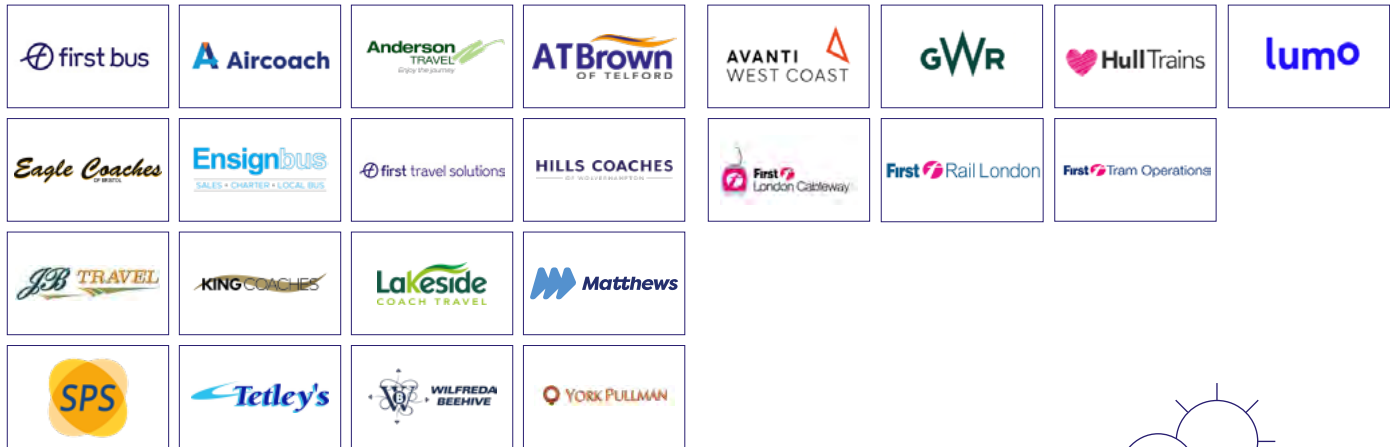
## First Bus

First Bus is one of the largest bus companies in the UK, with decades of experience working closely with local authorities and partners across the UK and Ireland. We carry more than 1.5 million passengers each day and serve more than a quarter of the UK population.



## First Rail

First Rail is one of the UK's leading rail operators, with more than 25 years of experience running passenger rail operations across the country, comprising long-distance commuter, regional and sleeper services.





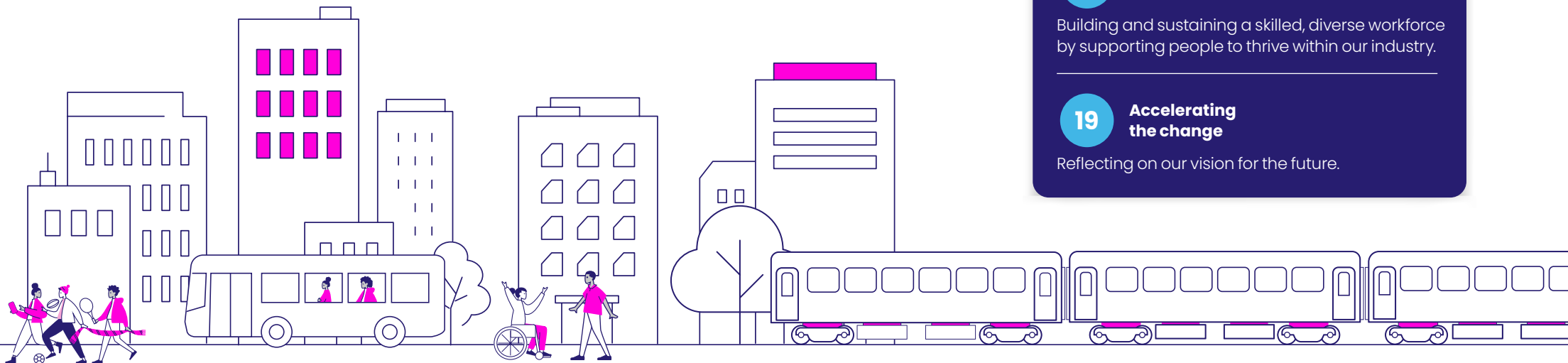
# We believe in system change

We know that the places we live, work and travel to are changing. The demands placed on our communities – by climate pressures, shifting demographics and evolving ways of living and working – mean we need to think differently about how we design and deliver the systems that support them.

At FirstGroup, we believe transport sits at the heart of this transformation. That's why we're using this Sustainability Report to shine a light on how our services can deliver better outcomes for people and the planet – playing our part in the system change our communities need.



For more on how we manage the environmental and social topics that are relevant to our business, please refer to our **Annual Report and Accounts 2026**



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# System change starts with transport

## Transport moves everyone forward together

Buses, trains and other forms of public transport enable societal transformation. Transport supports local prosperity, reduces congestion, improves air quality, and enhances social mobility by connecting people to jobs, education, and essential services. When we invest in sustainable transport, we unlock all the wider benefits that public transport creates beyond the simple journey itself. It's fair to say that few investments deliver as many benefits to local communities.

Our ambition is to be an active partner in delivering innovative, sustainable and socially impactful transport. Through our investments, we are shifting the system towards healthier, better connected communities while accelerating the transition to a net-zero world.

### For every £1 invested

Local buses  
deliver up to

£7

of economic benefit<sup>1</sup>

Rail services  
deliver up to

£4

of economic benefit<sup>2</sup>

1 KPMG, An economic evaluation of local bus infrastructure schemes (2015).

2 Campaign for Better Transport, Making the connection: Rail and the sustainable growth opportunity (2025).

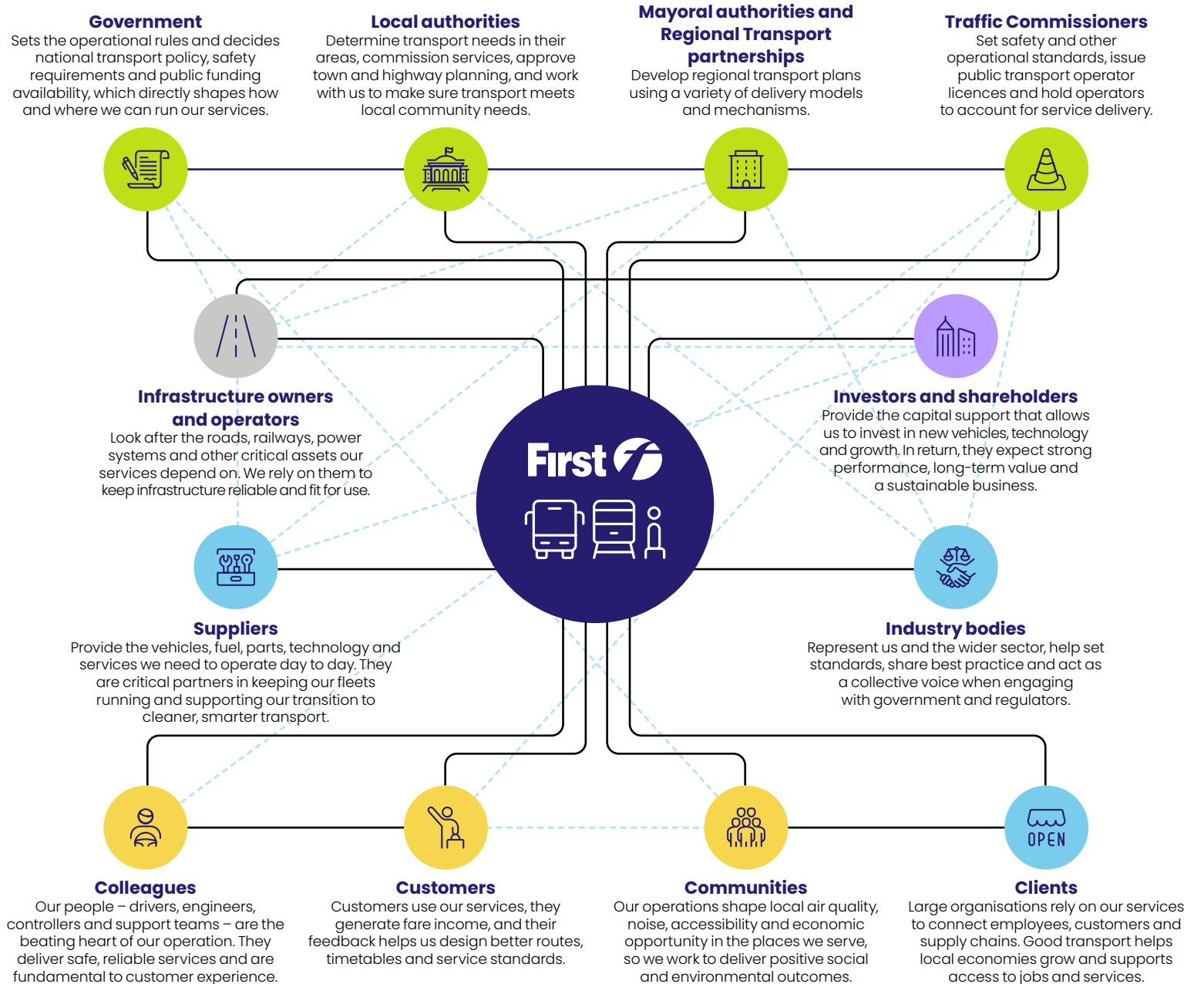




## Change is a multi-stakeholder challenge

Public transport is not delivered by any single organisation acting alone. It is a complex, interdependent system that relies on many stakeholders working together. Each plays a distinct but interconnected role, shaping how services are planned, funded, operated and used.

Because of these interrelationships, meaningful change cannot be achieved in isolation. Decarbonising networks, improving connectivity, enhancing safety and inclusion, and building a resilient workforce all require alignment around shared commitments and coordinated action across the system. It is only by working together that we can deliver a transport system that works better for people, places and the planet.



● Governance  
 ● Infrastructure  
 ● Market/industry  
 ● Finance  
 ● People  
 — Direct relationship  
 - - Indirect influence



# Decarbonising transport at scale

## Our climate commitment

Tackling climate change is a core responsibility for our business and a principal driver of how we plan for the future of transport. As a major operator of bus, coach and rail services, we recognise both the scale of our own carbon footprint and the role we must play in supporting the wider societal transition to a net-zero economy. That is why we have set ambitious targets to reduce our emissions, operate a zero-emission commercial bus fleet, and eliminate diesel-only trains from our operations.

Delivering on these commitments requires more than incremental change. It demands a wholesale transformation of all our vehicles, rolling stock, depots, infrastructure and operational and engineering capabilities – a genuine systems shift in how public transport is powered, operated and maintained. In doing so, we can cut our emissions at scale while delivering wider benefits, including cleaner air and reliable, accessible services for the communities we serve.



## Our commitments

### By 2035:

**we will operate a 100% zero-emission commercial bus fleet**

**we will reduce our Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 63% compared to a FY 2020 baseline**

### By 2040:

**we will no longer operate any diesel-only trains**

### By 2050:

**we will achieve net zero emissions**



For more on our group-wide climate strategy, refer to our **Climate Transition Plan**





## Spotlight

# Designing bus depots for a net-zero world

Our ambitious goal is to operate a fully zero-emission commercial bus fleet by 2035, and with 25% of our fleet now zero emission, we're making great progress. Achieving our target is not just swapping diesel vehicles for electric ones. It means transforming the entire operating model – from workforce skills and network scheduling to depot and energy infrastructure.

As electrification accelerates, our depots are being redesigned around high-capacity grid connections, smart charging systems and sophisticated power load management. These transformations turn individual projects into wider structural change – influencing local energy systems and embedding public transport more deeply into the wider energy transition. These are not short-term fixes but permanent features of how transport networks must function in a net zero future.

Find out on the next page how we're electrifying our bus network





**Spotlight continued**



**1. Building partnerships and securing investment**

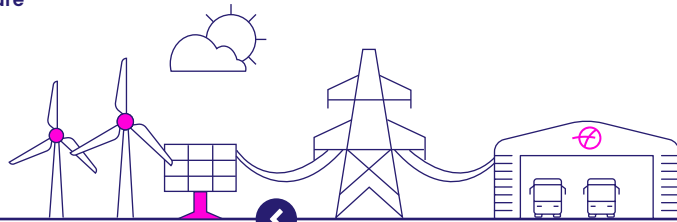
Transforming our vehicles and depots requires significant capital investment. We work with financiers, local authorities, energy providers and technology partners to plan infrastructure and fleet, shape investment plans and access funding streams.

We've already invested  
**+£500m**  
in electric vehicles and charging infrastructure

**2. Powering up our depots**

Electric buses can't operate without a charging-ready home base. We work with energy grid operators to build new power connections and infrastructure, turning our depots into critical nodes in the emerging energy system.

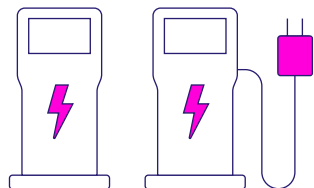
**66%**  
of the substation capacity installed to electrify our Caledonia depot goes toward reinforcing Glasgow's electricity network



**4. Preparing for electric operations**

Once power supply is secured, we redesign our depots to install smart charging systems and support new traffic flows.

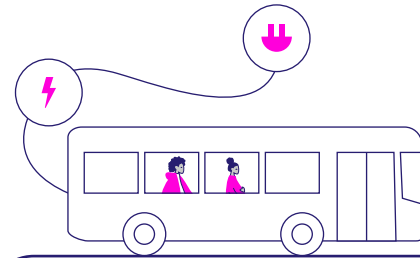
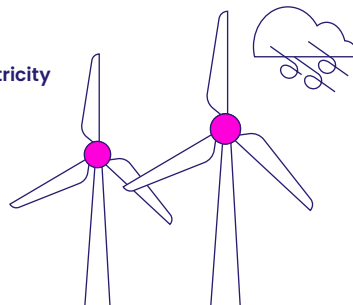
**+20**  
of our depots now operate electric vehicles



**3. A resilient energy supply**

We buy fully renewable electricity to operate our buses and install solar panels where possible for on-site generation. We also install Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) which create additional storage capacity for the grid, helping to make our national electricity infrastructure more resilient.

Our buses run on  
**100%**  
renewable electricity



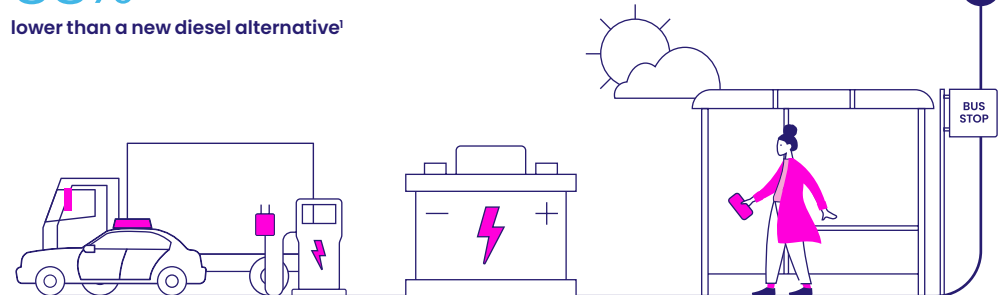
**5. Sourcing vehicles**

We order new electric buses from manufacturers or "repower" existing diesel buses, turning them into electric vehicles.

The carbon emissions of an electric bus powered by renewable electricity are  
**88%**  
lower than a new diesel alternative<sup>1</sup>

**6. Driver, shunter and engineer readiness**

We train drivers in electric driving techniques, ground support staff in efficient charging procedures, and upskill engineering teams to maintain electric vehicles.



**9. Welcoming others onto our sites**

Over two million electric vehicles are now registered in the UK. We're here to support the transition by sharing our charging infrastructure with other users.

**8. Repurposing old bus batteries**

When batteries can no longer be used to power buses, they are converted into BESS units. In their new form, the batteries help smooth spikes and dips in national electricity generation and demand, creating a more stable power supply for everyone.

**7. Launching electric buses into service**

With infrastructure, vehicles and staff prepared, the electric fleet can serve customers. On the roads, these buses are quieter and less polluting, making streets more pleasant for everyone.

Our zero-emission vehicles are used for around **189m** journeys each year

<sup>1</sup> Zemo Partnership, Vehicle life cycle GHG emissions study to show the role of renewable fuels in meeting net zero (2024).



## Electric buses are already here

We have 1,450 zero-emission buses in our fleet, serving communities every day. Our electric buses are not only quieter and more comfortable for customers, but are also making communities safer. Air pollution is the largest environmental risk to health in the UK, causing an estimated 30,000 early deaths each year. Electric buses have been linked to reductions in Nitrogen Dioxide of up to 24%, meaning everyone can breathe easier when they're on the road.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institute for Health and Care Research, Public health benefits of battery electric buses in Oxford City (2025).



**"The new electric buses are a great addition!"**

**"I love the electric buses. When my sister visited, she was bowled over by how fortunate I am to have this great service."**

**"The bus service in Bristol is first rate... We have a fleet of all-electric buses which are great; I often plan my trip to travel on an all-electric route to reduce emissions in the city."**

**"Bus travel is better than driving, quieter and cleaner with the electric buses."**

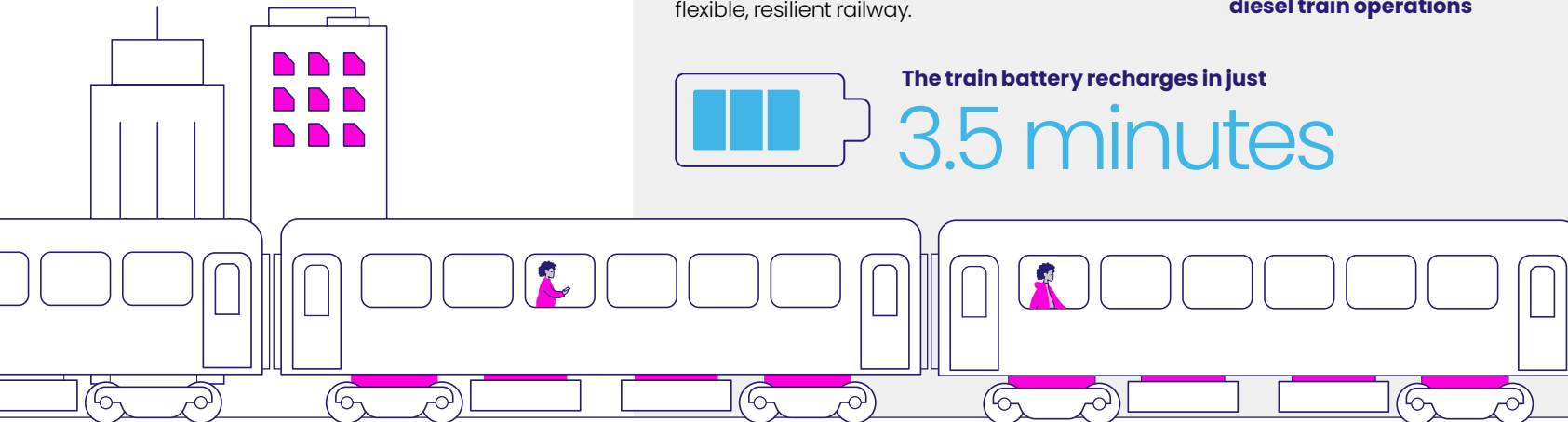
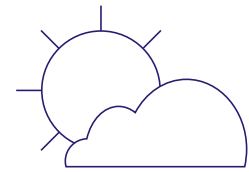
## Number of zero emission buses in our fleet





## Advancing the industry

Decarbonising transport isn't something we can do on our own. The biggest challenges need interconnected solutions that connect infrastructure, skills, energy supply, technology readiness and policy. That's why we focus on sharing and scaling our knowledge: investing in new technologies, repurposing existing assets, and working closely with partners across the transport world. By testing ideas under real conditions and sharing what works and what doesn't, we can help accelerate progress in both our own services and across our wider industry.



### Spotlight

## Trialling new solutions for regional rail electrification

Many UK rail branch lines and regional services rely on older diesel trains. Busy mainline routes are electric, but electrifying quieter lines can be slow and expensive. Great Western Railway (GWR) investigated how to cut carbon and modernise local rail services without waiting decades for major infrastructure programmes.

In 2024, GWR successfully trialled rapid-charging battery technology on the Greenford branch line proving that battery trains supported by targeted charging points work reliably in real-world conditions. The train entered passenger service in 2026 as the UK's first rapid-charging battery train in regular operation.

Many regional routes are years away from full electrification. GWR's battery train points to a credible alternative which could enable ageing diesel fleets to be replaced much sooner, reducing emissions and supporting a more flexible, resilient railway.



The train emits

**80%**

**fewer carbon emissions and**

**30%**

**less noise compared to diesel train operations**



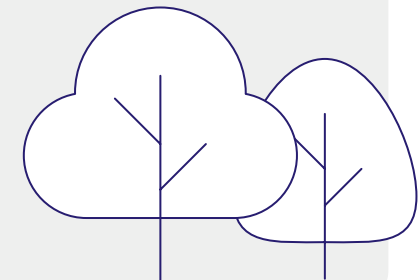
Read more:

**Fast-charge battery technology: A viable option for regional rail**



The train battery recharges in just

**3.5 minutes**





## Spotlight

# Opening depot charging infrastructure to third-party fleets

More and more commercial and public sector vehicle operators are investing in electric fleets, yet many struggle to find suitable charging. Public chargers are not typically built for larger vehicles, the charging speeds can be limited when they're busy, and they don't offer the security that a commercial vehicle driver needs. Meanwhile private depot infrastructure is normally closed to third parties, and operationally is not set up to manage payments, presenting barriers for external usage. With the UK set to require all new cars and vans to be 100% zero emission by 2035, demand for charging will only grow.

There are more than  
**100,000**  
electric vans operating  
in the UK<sup>1</sup>

Demand for electric van  
charging is expected to grow  
**309%**  
by 2035<sup>2</sup>

First Bus saw an opportunity to help. Our depots are busy overnight, but during the day our electric buses are out on the road – offering available charging capacity. That insight led to First Charge, our commercial charging initiative which shares our electric charging infrastructure with other users.

We work with a range of partners – from police vehicle fleets to last mile logistics operators – offering reliable daytime charging. By sharing existing infrastructure, we're helping fleets transition faster without waiting for new grid connections or dedicated charging hubs. And by reaching agreements with roaming card providers such as Puaa and Allstar, First Charge allows fleets to visit, charge and pay using their existing payment method, removing friction and reducing cost.

- 1 Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, One in 22 vehicles now zero emissions as UK fleet reaches record high (2026).
- 2 Element Energy, Analysis to identify the EV charging requirement for vans (2022).



**“The charging infrastructure isn't there for large vehicles. You can't just pull into a motorway service area and plug in; the bays are too small, the access is tight and the vehicle takes up all the space. We need sites designed for large commercial vehicles, not cars. Operationally, First Charge is a game changer.”**

**Giles Warren**  
Managing Director at Calibre D2D Ltd

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First Bus sites offer  
charging for external  
vehicles



**“Moving to electric vehicles is a key part of our environmental journey and access to suitable charging infrastructure is essential. Working with First Bus through First Charge allows us to expand our electric fleet while maintaining operational resilience.”**

**Jason Tyrrell**  
Acting Head of Fleet at Essex Police

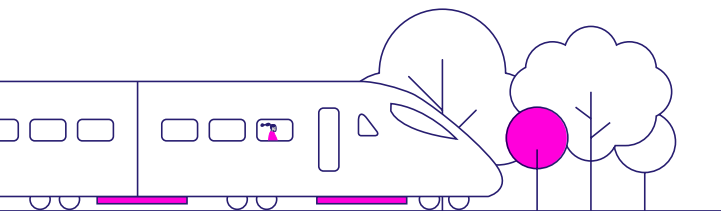




# Driving economic growth and social mobility

When transport is unreliable, indirect or inaccessible, people struggle to meet everyday needs and access opportunities, leaving some communities cut off from work, education, social lives and essential services. Through rail, local bus networks and targeted transport solutions, we reduce those practical barriers. We provide direct links to major economic centres, support everyday journeys and connect people to friends, families and jobs that sit beyond the reach of conventional public transport.

By designing transport around real demand patterns, we contribute to stronger local labour markets, more resilient regional economies, and communities where people are better socially connected and able to participate in growth.



## Spotlight



## Enabling economic opportunity in the Humber region

Before Hull Trains started, there was just one train a day each way between Hull and London, leaving people with limited options for work, business or leisure travel. Today, we run seven trains in each direction, giving Hull, Beverley and the wider Humber region regular, reliable connections. As the service expanded, passenger numbers grew strongly on our routes, even while rail use was falling elsewhere. This shows how dependable, well-timed trains can buck wider trends and change travel habits: making it easier for residents to visit friends and relatives, workers to reach jobs, businesses to stay connected, and visitors to come to the region.

Since its launch, Hull Trains is estimated to have brought up to £380 million in economic benefits. This comes from clear, practical gains such as time and fare savings, fewer car journeys, stronger links to London that support productivity, and the jobs Hull Trains helps sustain. These benefits also show what open access rail could do elsewhere.

As we look to expand open access into other parts of the UK, the lessons from Hull will shape better connectivity for even more communities.



Spotlight

## Connecting people to workplaces

Every day, our local bus services are used for around 700,000 journeys to work and school. But in some parts of the UK, getting to work isn't straightforward. Large employment sites – from major logistics centres to complex industrial operations – can sit far from regular public transport, and shift patterns rarely match available services. For people without access to a car, this can mean limited job options or long early morning or late night commuting journeys.

We work directly with businesses to fill that gap by coordinating transport that connects communities with workplaces that are otherwise hard to reach. These services operate on a mix of employer-

funded and part-subsidised models, supporting staff at large commercial sites and logistics hubs across the UK.

Using a wide network of reliable operators alongside our own fleet, we shape routes and timings around when people actually need to travel, supporting shift work across a range of sectors. The result is tangible social value: better transport connectivity reduces barriers to employment.

By improving access to work, we're helping create opportunities for people who might otherwise be left out – and strengthening the resilience of the employers who rely on them.



Our workplace transport  
services move

**+4m**

passengers over  
the year



# Making travel safe and accessible for all

Public transport only delivers its full social value when people feel safe, confident and able to use it. Safety and accessibility are not add-ons – they are essential conditions that let people take up work, education and social opportunities. We work with partners to embed these principles throughout our operations and the wider industry, ensuring people feel safe and confident using transport.



For more on our approach to safety, refer to page 45 of our **Annual Report and Accounts 2026**

## Spotlight

### Safer travel for women and girls

Buses and trains are lifelines that connect people with work, education, healthcare and their loved ones. But for some women and girls, their journeys are clouded by fear.

We're taking practical steps to help women and girls feel safe by preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG) in transit networks. First Bus worked with partner organisations to develop a national training module on VAWG, which gives drivers the confidence and practical tools to recognise, respond to and report harassment and violent incidents. Launched early in 2026, the training will be completed by all new bus and coach drivers across the country as part of their qualification training.

We're also helping to expand the reach of Strut Safe, a volunteer-run phone service which people travelling home alone can call for companionship and reassurance. We promote Strut Safe across buses nationwide and fund longer phone hours so women can access support late at night and on weekends.

The challenge is vast and cultural, but we are taking the right steps forward across FirstGroup. First Bus, GWR, Avanti West Coast, Hull and Lumo are accredited by White Ribbon, the UK's leading charity to end VAWG, reflecting our commitment to creating a positive and safe organisational culture, raising awareness among staff, and influencing wider societal change. Together, with partners, we believe we can deliver a transport system where safety is a right, not a privilege.



**“Bus and coach drivers are on the front line of our public transport network. They see first hand the responsibility that comes with ensuring passengers feel safe and supported when they travel. Embedding VAWG training into the industry’s national driver qualification is an important step to creating a safer environment for everyone who uses public transport.”**

**Keith McNally**  
Operations Director at the  
Confederation of Passenger Transport

More than  
**50%**  
of young women  
say they feel unsafe  
travelling alone<sup>1</sup>

1 Girlguiding, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2025 (2025).



## Spotlight

# Empowering everyone to travel by bus and rail

Accessible bus and rail travel depends on people feeling confident, capable and supported to make journeys independently. Over half of disabled people say they don't feel confident while travelling, and more than three-quarters travel less often because of the barriers they face.<sup>1</sup> Across our rail and bus networks, we make journeys easier to understand, easier to navigate and more welcoming for everyone.

Our rail operators run regular "Try the Train" days, helping people who may face barriers to travel build practical skills and confidence. Participants visit stations, experience train travel in a supportive environment, and learn about the tools and assistance available to help them travel independently.

Last year

# +5,000

people participated in  
Try the Train days

We also use digital tools to provide additional reassurance, such as Avanti West Coast's messaging service for disabled customers and Lumo's virtual train tours.

By working closely with the communities we serve, we improve how our transport systems work in practice. Building confidence, learning from lived experience and reflecting those insights in everyday operations all help make bus and rail services more inclusive and easier to use.

**"We know how important public transport is for blind and partially sighted people, whether it's for travel to work, visiting family or social activities. We also know that many people are still reluctant to get on a train because of a lack of confidence and sometimes accessibility. This event helps people feel more confident and empowered to travel by train in the future."**

**Kelly Barton**  
Engagement Manager  
at Sight Loss Councils

<sup>1</sup> National Centre for Accessible Transport, Understanding and identifying barriers to accessing transport (2024).





# Supporting a workforce for the future

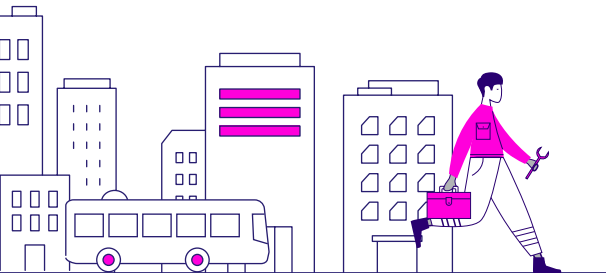
System change in public transport depends on the people who deliver it. That means attracting new talent into the industry, supporting colleagues to build and refresh their skills as roles and challenges evolve, and creating the right conditions for people to stay and thrive. Through apprenticeships, ongoing training and development, and wellbeing support, we give colleagues clear routes into the business, opportunities to grow and develop in their role, and the confidence to build sustainable, rewarding careers over the long term.



For more on diversity and inclusion, refer to our **UK Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2025**



For more on how we support colleagues, refer to page 43 of our **Annual Report and Accounts 2026**



## Spotlight

### Providing pathways to employment

Creating clear, inclusive pathways into transport careers is essential to building future skills and capabilities. Our apprenticeship programmes provide structured industry entry points, supporting early careers as well as those looking to change direction. Across FirstGroup, more than 500 apprentices are currently training in engineering, business administration and other specialist areas.

GWR runs one of the sector's longest established programmes, which has grown from just 15 apprentices to a multi-award-winning initiative which supports more than 300 apprentices annually. At Lumo, apprenticeships are the foundation of the business: 90% of the workforce has joined through apprenticeship routes. In First Bus, we've created the UK's first dedicated bus and coach engineering academy with Reaseheath College, training apprentices to maintain the next generation of zero-emission vehicles.



**"I've completed two apprenticeships with First Bus, starting with my Engineering Apprenticeship and then the Accelerate Programme. The apprenticeships have opened up so many opportunities for me that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I've built my confidence and developed both technically and personally thanks to the great support around me. Since completing the apprenticeships, I'm proud to now be working as an Engineering Supervisor at the Leicester Depot."**

**Hasan Girach**  
Engineering Supervisor

We have  
**500+**  
apprentices in training



## Spotlight

### Investing in training and skills

The transport industry is changing quickly. We're helping colleagues move with it – learning new skills, growing in their roles and stepping into new opportunities, so they can build confidence today and shape what comes next.

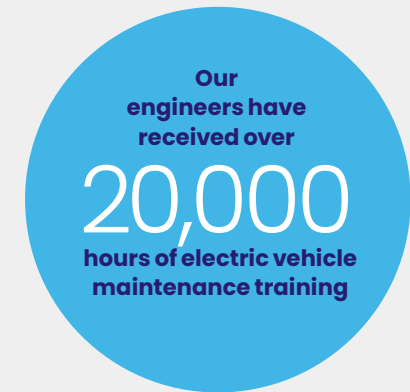
In First Bus, our engineers are at the forefront of the industry's shift to electric vehicles. As new technology changes how buses are powered and maintained, we invest in hands-on training to build the skills and confidence to work safely with high-voltage systems and new diagnostic tools. By creating space to learn, we help engineers grow in their roles, develop specialist expertise and see long-term career opportunities as the industry evolves.

Beyond engineering, we have invested in a national network of learning centres, delivered in partnership with Unite the Union. These centres provide thousands of frontline colleagues with access to vocational and non-vocational learning, alongside digital skills development through partners such as the iDEA digital skills charity. Together, these opportunities strengthen skills, support career progression, and help colleagues build confidence and capability at every stage of their working lives.



**“Ten years ago, you’d listen to a diesel engine and know what the fault was. Now we’re figuring out what the new version of that skill is. It’s varied and interesting, and there are so many opportunities. If we can run cleaner vehicles, reduce pollution and move people more sustainably, that’s something to be proud of.”**

**Andy Knowles**  
Master Technician





## Spotlight

# Raising the bar for colleague support



When colleagues are well, they are healthier, happier and better able to do their jobs and sustain long working lives. This in turn helps deliver better services for passengers and communities. We care for colleagues, supporting physical health, emotional resilience and financial security.

First Bus is the only UK transport operator to offer colleagues Simplyhealth medical cover from day one, providing immediate access to healthcare, removing barriers to staying well and supporting healthier, more sustainable working lives.

Beyond physical wellbeing, we encourage a culture of support for mental health across the group. We have established Mental Health First Aiders training programmes in both First Bus and First Rail, and now have more than 600 colleagues certified. These individuals are equipped to spot early signs, offer informed guidance and help colleagues access support.

We recognise that financial security can be major source of stress and are proud that many of the businesses within FirstGroup are accredited Real Living Wage employers. In First Bus, we are also training key members of staff to be Money First Aiders. These colleagues can hold effective, confidential and compassionate conversations about money, and signpost others toward appropriate resources and professional help.



## Andy's story

Andy Wyatt, a First Bus driver in Glasgow, completed his Mental Health First Aid training in 2024. Andy's motivation to get involved came from personal experience. He lost his brother to suicide in the 1980s, at a time when conversations around mental health were far less common and stigma was widespread. The impact of that loss stayed with him for many years and shaped his determination to help others where he can.

The Mental Health First Aid training gave Andy practical skills, but also the confidence to turn that motivation into action. The day after completing the course, he told his team he was available if anyone wanted to talk. Within an hour of arriving at work, three colleagues had already approached him for support. Since then, he has helped dozens of people navigate challenges ranging from work-related stress to financial and personal pressures. For Andy, the most important thing is simply being someone colleagues know they can approach – offering a listening ear and helping point them toward the support they need.



# Accelerating the change

System change is more than the theme of this report. It's an overarching belief that only through collective effort can we create a transport system that delivers lasting benefits for our communities.

The stories here show what is possible when we reimagine how transport supports people and places. As public transport networks become lower-carbon, better connected and easier to use, more people can rely on them for work, education and everyday life. This supports economic participation, promotes convivial social lives, creates cleaner air, and builds healthier, more resilient places.

This transition depends on coordinated action across operators, policymakers, industry and communities, enabled by long-term planning, supportive policy and smarter, cleaner technologies. At FirstGroup our role is to help build momentum through continued investment and by sharing our expertise and infrastructure with partners. We're calling on others to work with us to accelerate change so that together we can deliver a more inclusive, sustainable and effective transport system.





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