

National  
Coach  
Week

20  
23

# THINK Co.A.C.H.E.S.

## THE RHA'S MANIFESTO FOR THE COACH INDUSTRY

**For National Coach Week 2023, the RHA is inviting politicians across the country to support the coach industry nationwide, to support coach operators that stop or are based in their constituencies, and, crucially, to **Think Co.A.C.H.E.S.****

**At every level of politics, from Westminster, to Mayor's offices, to local councils, our Government needs to understand the challenges facing the coach industry - as well as the vital role it plays in the wider economy.**

**Coaches are vital for tourism (domestic and international), school transport, workplace access, professional and amateur sports, and being there when other forms of transport fail.**

**We therefore call on Government to address the following key issues:**

**Co (Costs & Regulation)** - Coach operators missed out on most of the Government financial support offered to businesses in the pandemic. Cost pressures from fuel, spare and replacement parts, and the cost of essential maintenance are hammering coach operators and restricting the growth and sustainability of the industry.

We're calling for targeted support to ease these pressures, as well as support to comply with planned accessibility regulations - making sure anyone can travel on a coach without overburdening the industry with regulations that significantly increase costs. Reforms to driving hours regulations to better reflect the working patterns of coach drivers are also vital.

**A (Abroad)** - More stringent passport checks and a lack of capacity and infrastructure in the face of impending border changes are damaging the prospects of international coach travel. Reduced capacity on Eurotunnel services, and a lack of infrastructure at ports led to significant delays in April this year. With the impending EU Entry/Exit system, European Travel Information and Authorisation System and UK Border Target Operating Model, the risk of further damaging delays only increases.

We're calling for the Government to work with the EU to introduce pre-registration and online documentation to speed up border crossings, ensuring that coach travel remains a viable option for international journeys. Visa rules for drivers also need to be changed, with drivers currently being prevented from operating cross-border due to time restrictions.

**C (Conditions)** - Good working conditions are vital to recruitment and retention. At all levels of government planning there is a lack of consideration of the needs of coach travel. A lack of coach parking at rest stops - particularly in high travel areas like Kent, make it difficult for drivers to comply with the strict time regulations they must follow to keep their passengers and other road users safe. Inadequate urban infrastructure, most acute in tourism hotspots, leads to increased emissions and potential accidents as coaches are forced to consistently circulate without a place to stop.

We're calling for the Government to consider the needs and role of coaches in infrastructure projects, as well as in our cities and major tourist areas. Barriers to building rest stops and passenger drop-off zones must be lowered.

#NATIONALCOACHWEEK

12 MAY - 19 MAY

RHA



**H (Highways)** - The Government must work with industry partners and local authorities to invest in our road infrastructure across the country. This includes improved port and border facilities, roadside facilities and parking, and forward-thinking technologies which support the transition to a low-carbon economy. Nationwide, potholes and poor roads create dangers for drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and other road users.

*We're calling for our road infrastructure to be made fit for purpose, and consideration made for the needs of coaches in the design and planning of new roads. Port and border facilities must be updated, with the needs of the coach industry taken into account in their design.*

**E (Environment)** - Per passenger, coach travel is one of the lowest-emission forms of long-distance and international travel, comparable to rail travel. However, current environmental policies, like Clean Air Zones and Ultra Low Emission Zones, unfairly discriminate against coach drivers. The market for low emission coaches is still too immature to support current policy intentions, and retrofitting is not cost-effective for operators.

*We're calling for the Government to lower the cost and increase the availability of low carbon alternative fuels and help coach operators support our shared environmental and air quality goals. The industry needs actions to stimulate the development of electric and hydrogen coaches, with a focus on the distinct role coaches play compared to buses and other vehicles. Finally, the RHA is calling for the Government to work with industry and the market to develop a zero-emission coach travel roadmap - sparing coach operators the burden of complying with varying Low-Emission and Clean Air Zones.*

**S (Skills)** - Finally, the most serious issue facing the coach industry is the ongoing and worsening skills shortage. Changing work patterns post-pandemic and a long-term struggle to recruit young people into the industry is creating a perfect storm for driver recruitment. The coach and bus industry has an estimated shortage of 5,000-10,000 drivers. As older drivers retire and others leave the industry, recruitment is not keeping up, and that shortage will only grow.

*We're calling for the introduction of more flexible training, including more non-driving role training and a Skills Bootcamp for Category D licenses. The current restrictions on 18 year old drivers should be lifted to allow them to undertake non-scheduled or occasional journeys, thus allowing them to be more viable to employ, making coach driving a career choice for school and college leavers.*

**Coaches occupy a unique position in the transport sector - it's the only mode that can transport large numbers of people point to point without significant additional infrastructure investments.**

**The industry employs approximately 45,000 people nationwide, and coach travel plays an irreplaceable role in communities across the UK and in the wider economy.**

**But despite its importance, the coach industry faces real challenges that threaten its future.**

**Now is the time for Government to act and support this vital industry by implementing this manifesto.**

For more information, contact [policy@rha.uk.net](mailto:policy@rha.uk.net)