

Warrington's all-electric bus fleet is on the way

CILT's Environmental & Sustainability Forum visited Warrington's Own Buses' new electric bus depot at Dallam Lane to learn about the town's transition to an all-electric fleet. This initiative will reduce annual Nitrogen Dioxide emissions by 50 tonnes and Carbon Dioxide by 6,670 tonnes, helping address the estimated 145 avoidable deaths in Warrington each year due to poor air quality.

Warrington's Own Buses covers 85% of bus mileage in the borough, and by mid-2025, it aims to be the first UK town with a completely electric fleet. The £50 million project includes 105 new electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, with £19 million coming from the government's ZEBRA scheme.

The first Volvo BZL single-deck electric vehicles entered service in September, with double-deckers following in November. By the time of the visit, about 35 of the new 'rose yellow' buses were operational, with more arriving weekly. The fleet comprises 72 single-deckers of various lengths and 33 double-deckers, all built to high specifications for safety, comfort, and efficiency.

The new £10 million depot on Dallam Lane, designed specifically for electric vehicles, opened in March 2023. It features modern offices, workshop facilities, and 53 ABB E-mobility dual outlet charging units supporting 106 vehicles. The electrical systems were supplied by EO Charging, with charging primarily occurring overnight when electricity costs are lower. Each bus requires 4-5 hours to charge and has

sufficient battery capacity to complete a full day's service without needing to return for recharging.

Service improvements, including more evening departures and enhanced information, along with affordable fares (£2 cap and £1 for under-22s), have increased passenger numbers by 10% in 2023 compared to 2022. Passengers appreciate the quieter, smoother ride and amenities like USB ports and tracking information.

The complete electrification of Warrington's bus fleet represents a major contribution to environmental improvement and public transport quality in the town.

Geoff Clarke FCILT

Chair, Environment & Sustainability Forum, CILT(UK). ■

Fleet decarbonisation: Getting the approach right in the journey to net zero

This online event marked the start of a busy year for the Environment & Sustainability Forum which is planning at least 10 events with a mixture of online and in-person activities. Many are being organised in conjunction with other Forums and Regional Committees.

How do you get started in the decarbonisation of your fleet and get plans off the ground? This was the key theme of this February webinar. Stephen Fitter CMILT, a Fleet Decarbonisation Consultant and Committee member of the Environment & Sustainability Forum, explained the why, what, and how to ensure a successful decarbonisation project.

Change to how we operate is here and although this is currently being felt more by the larger operators, this is changing rapidly

and will soon be on everyone's agenda. With ever-increasing pressure on fleet operations to act and to do so on top of the day job, it is little wonder that getting started can be overwhelming.

Stephen explained the different decarbonisation options that are available. This covered making what you have already more efficient to much larger transformational initiatives such as modal switch, alternative powertrains, and renewable energy.

As decarbonisation projects are multi-faceted and complex, the discussion then moved into the approach that should be adopted to maximise the chance of success. This structured methodology covers Purpose, Process, Power, People, and Procurement. By adopting this method,

operators will ensure that they are clear on what they are trying to achieve, how they are going to achieve it and when they are going to achieve it by.

The Q&A session chaired by Geoff Clarke, certainly demonstrated how hot this topic is. Many of the 36 attendees wanted to dive into the solutions available and understand more about how they specifically impact their own fleet's unique requirements.

The engagement was high which is fantastic given that the transport sector is the highest emitting sector in the UK of CO₂e and therefore can make the biggest difference in the drive to net zero.

Stephen's bio

Stephen started his career in logistics in 1999 and worked a variety of transport operations roles until 2008 when he moved into Project Management working on new contract start-ups, efficiency projects, and governance. Since 2012, he has been an independent consultant working on large scale Programmes and Business Transformations across many different sectors and business types and in 2021 decided to combine the two to create Focus Net Zero which works to help operations decarbonise their fleets. He works with companies via auditing (on such schemes such as ESOS (Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme)) and also directly with companies wishing to reduce their footprint now.

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