

Speech: Buses that build a better society

Good morning everyone.

It's a pleasure to join you this morning.

I'd like to thank Transport Times for hosting this key event in the bus calendar. And ensuring buses remain high on the agenda as an important driver of mobility, economic growth and community cohesion.

One hundred and twenty years after the first motorized bus services were established in Britain – buses remain by far our most popular, effective, and flexible form of public transport.

Over that time, transport technologies have come and gone.

And travel patterns have changed dramatically.

Yet throughout, buses have remained a constant.

Part of the transport fabric of every town, every city and every region.

You may have seen reports last week that passenger journeys were down slightly.

But the fact remains that two thirds of all public transport journeys in Britain were made by bus and coach last year.

4.4 billion individual bus journeys last year in England alone.

And almost nine in ten passengers say they are satisfied with their bus services.

Which is a tribute to the whole industry.

But these numbers are so much more than just a set of statistics.

Mere figures don't reflect the purpose of those journeys – nor the benefits they bring to society. Benefits like taking children to school, young people to job interview and pensioners to medical appointments.

Buses are the glue that binds communities together. And they are a vital link for those who may otherwise be isolated and for those who live in rural areas.

But they also keep our high streets busy while tackling congestion and air pollution.

So I'd like to take this opportunity to talk to you about what we are doing in government to ensure that Britain's bus network not only serves people's

transport needs. But is also set up to continue contributing in all these ways to our society and economy.

First – if we want buses to thrive over the coming decades, it's vital that we continue to improve, to innovate and to move with the times.

And to do this we have to ensure that buses participate in the digital revolution all around us.

The rise of technology highlighted by innovations such as CityMapper's journey planning app, as well as ride sharing services like UberPool, are changing the way we get around and the way we think about transport.

Increasingly, mobility is being viewed more as a service planned and paid for via a smartphone. So if bus services are to continue accounting for three quarters of journeys, the industry has to reach out to customers to provide easy access to information about local bus services, fares, payment method and bus stops.

Customers are going to demand real time data about the journey all through easy and convenient apps. And there's a lot of great work going on to speed up the pace of change.

For example operators are developing contactless and mobile ticketing – making travel more convenient.

But as Secretary of State Chris Grayling said in a speech to the Confederation of Passenger Transport last week the industry also needs to respond to the growth of demand-responsive transport. Through initiatives like travellers being able to request journeys through a smartphone app or minibus services which take passengers where they want, when they want.

That's exactly what ArrivaClick does, which I saw when I visited Kent last week, as well as Go-Ahead's PickMeUp service in Oxford and it can do it at a lower cost than a traditional fixed-route, fixed-timetable bus.

Technology changes like these should be seen as an opportunity for the bus industry – not a threat.

For example, we can use innovation to make buses accessible to all.

Last summer I launched our [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#) – to help disabled people travel easily, confidently and at no additional cost.

And the Bus Services Act 2017 contained a range of measures to harness technology in order to create better, more accessible services.

Measures such as Accessible Information Regulations, which will speed up the delivery of audible and visible information on board local buses, with £2 million government funding to help smaller bus operators meet this commitment.

The Bus Open Data powers in the Act will also lead to improved services,

helping passengers to plan their journeys and secure the best value tickets.

I saw this already happening on a trip to Reading Buses last summer for the launch of their Innovation Centre.

Lastly, the Act enables local transport authorities to partner with local bus operators and introduce benefits like multi-operator smart ticketing, connecting bus timetables and ticketing with other modes of transport, such as rail, to provide more seamless journeys.

Today I also want to highlight greener travel.

Buses have a clear strategic advantage over other road transport in terms of the environment because they have the capacity to reduce car use, ease congestion and improve air quality.

Fifteen percent of the fleet already uses low emission technology, with electric buses now on the streets of Liverpool, Guildford and others, such as Harrogate, which I was pleased to see in person.

We're supporting innovators to make buses cleaner than ever and last year the government announced £40 million of funding for 20 local authorities through the [Clean Bus Technology Fund](#) – providing grants of up to £500,000 to upgrade buses operating in areas of poor air quality, with low emission technology.

And today I am delighted to announce that we are awarding [£48 million to operators and local authorities across the country to help buy ultra low emission buses and invest even further in charging technology](#).

This funding will support the purchase of 263 ultra-low emission buses, ensuring that communities from Cardiff to Nottingham, from Yorkshire to London, from Coventry to Newport, from Manchester to Brighton and many more places around the country can enjoy the benefits of cleaner, greener bus services that benefit society as a whole.

It will also provide £14.2 million of investment in charging infrastructure, further supporting our progress towards greener journeys.

Indeed, this latest investment reinforces the bus industry's role as a leading contributor to the government's Road to Zero Strategy and also to our [Future of Mobility Grand Challenge](#), which encourages greener journeys through technological innovation.

But buses also benefit society because of the role they play in improving lives on an individual level.

As lead minister on the role of transport in tackling loneliness, this is a matter close to my heart and it's essential that we act.

Research by campaign group Greener Journeys found that two thirds of people sometimes feel lonely – while a third admitted that they deliberately catch a bus to ease these feelings.

There's some really imaginative thinking going on in the industry to examine if there's more we can do.

For instance, last week [Go Ahead launched the Chatty Bus campaign](#) – meaning that from Newcastle to Brighton, Chatty Bus ambassadors were on board buses talking to anyone who wanted a chat.

Stagecoach also redesigned one of its open topped buses, previously used to transport holidaymakers around Skegness into a community bus which provides a friendly place for people to chat and have a cuppa.

And National Express and First Group have been running their own campaigns aimed especially at preventing loneliness among older people.

But stopping the scourge of loneliness will require a much more concerted effort.

Which is why we made a commitment last year, in the [government's Loneliness Strategy](#), which was itself inspired by the visionary work of my late colleague Jo Cox to work with the transport sector and take action.

So today I am delighted to make a further announcement. That the department is launching a major collaboration with Greener Journeys to explore how we can use buses to further address the issue of loneliness.

This initiative is supported by a pledge from four bus companies, Go Ahead Group, Stagecoach, National Express and First Group to examine the vital role of buses in addressing loneliness.

Whether that's looking at how bus interiors can be designed to help with social interaction or considering how to roll out even more chatty buses - which have so far proved to be a great success.

This is just the first step and there is huge potential for the transport industry to make a real difference to the lives of people who want more human contact. So I look forward to seeing more great initiatives over the coming year.

I want to finish by talking about a theme which has run throughout this speech – and that's partnership.

I firmly believe that the quickest and most effective way of improving bus services is through partnership – whether it be through initiatives with government, working with local communities or effective collaboration between operators and local transport authorities to tackle congestion.

I know that many of you are already involved in collaborative initiatives – whether they're as a result of the government's £2.5 billion Transforming Cities Fund. Or whether you are taking advantage of the collaborative opportunities afforded by the Bus Services Act. Legislation which provides new and improved ways for local transport authorities to partner with bus operators, like in York, where the city council and operators have launched a customer charter which sets out the standard of service that passengers can

expect.

But while we can legislate to encourage partnerships the impetus must come from you.

So I would encourage all of you – operators and local authorities to continue to forge strong relationships which are so critical for achieving many of the goals I've spoken about today.

Because if we can build a bright future for this industry, we will also achieve a bright future for the communities you serve.

This will be built on new technologies, like the ultra-low emission buses we are supporting today.

On effective legislation, like the Bus Services Act.

On understanding what customers want.

And on collaboration to tackle issues like loneliness.

These are our objectives for the future – not just to boost bus services and not just to provide better journeys but to build a better society too.

And we will build it through partnership.

Thank you.

[Press release: Environment Agency approves permit variation](#)

The new permit variation includes a number of improvement conditions, required in order to meet the environmental standards within which industry can operate, as laid out in our [sector guidance](#).

In addition to the permit variation a separate new bespoke Radioactive Substances Activities permit has also been issued for the handling of naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM) which result from standard oil and gas production activities.

In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, all relevant considerations and legal requirements have been taken into account. Comments received during the public consultation period, held between 20 February and 20 March 2017, were also considered as part of the decision process.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

This variation is necessary following our review of all oil and gas permits granted before October 2013. Although the activities at Palmers Wood have not changed significantly since the existing permit was issued, this variation updates the permit to the current regulatory requirements.

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that all oil and gas sites must adhere to. We do not issue an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

View the [oil and gas mining waste permit](#) issued for Palmers Wood Oilfield, Surrey.

For further information, please email KSLE@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Speech: A message from the British Ambassador to Ireland on the Common Travel Area

You may have read recent news reports about the Common Travel Area.

I would like to reassure you that the UK and Irish governments have worked intensively on measures to ensure the continuation of the CTA. We have an agreement which is almost ready to sign. This work reflects the fact that, right from the start of the EU Exit process, and throughout the negotiations, the Prime Minister has been clear that maintaining the UK and Ireland's Common Travel Area is a top priority for the UK.

The same is true for Ireland, and the EU has fully accepted that the CTA – a bilateral arrangement – will continue whatever the final outcome of the negotiations. I can assure all British citizens living in Ireland and all Irish citizens in the UK: you don't need to take any action to protect your status under the CTA, or the rights associated with it.

The CTA is a long-standing arrangement between the UK, the Crown Dependencies (Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man) and Ireland that has its origins in the 1920s, long before either the UK or Ireland joined the EU. As Dr Butler said in his article, it is complex, and has never been codified into a coherent collection of documents. So officials across the whole of government in both countries have worked together to create a solid framework for the CTA, to ensure that the rights and privileges UK and Irish nationals enjoy in each other's countries will continue, whatever the circumstances of the UK's

exit from the EU.

British citizens in Ireland and Irish citizens in the UK will continue to be able to live and work in each other's countries, and to access healthcare, education, social welfare and benefits including state pensions. They will also still be able to vote in certain elections in the other's country as they do now. The UK has taken steps to ensure legal certainty of the status of Irish citizens in the UK, and to provide clarity for them.

The Immigration and Social Security Coordination Bill that is currently before the UK Parliament preserves the rights that Irish citizens have in the UK. This reaffirms the UK Government's intention to protect these arrangements and preserve the special relationship we have with Ireland after the UK leaves the EU. Where new domestic legislation in the UK is needed to ensure the continuation of the CTA and the rights that come with it, my Government is taking urgent action to put it in place before 29 March.

On Friday 1 February, the UK and Irish governments signed an agreement guaranteeing continued access to state pension and benefits for UK and Irish nationals and their qualifying family members when in the other's state. The agreement ensures that the rights of UK and Irish nationals living and working in each other's state are protected after the UK leaves the EU.

Specifically it ensures that workers only pay into one social security scheme at a time, and provides for the export of certain benefits between the UK and Ireland. It also ensures that social security contributions paid by UK and Irish nationals can be used to meet entitlement criteria for accessing benefits in each other's state. Other agreements covering all aspects of the CTA are close to completion.

I advise British Citizens living in Ireland to subscribe to alerts on the UK's [Living in Ireland guide](#) and to follow to the Embassy's [Twitter account @briemdublin](#) for updates.

[News story: Resilient technologies to improve UK railways: apply for funding](#)

The [UK rail industry transported 1.7 billion passengers and 110 billion tonnes of freight between 2017 and 2018](#).

New technologies are needed to help meet passenger needs, offer better journeys and increase sustainability in rail services.

£5.5 million is available from the [Department for Transport](#) for organisations to develop 'first of a kind' demonstrators. These should use existing technologies and develop these further for the rail industry.

This is a Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition.

Rail Minister Andrew Jones said:

We have already seen some truly innovative projects developed for the benefit of passengers in these competitions, helping to drive forward a greener, cleaner and more reliable rail network.

This additional funding will spark even more innovation and ideas that deliver for commuters.

We are also investing £48 billion to modernise our railways over the next 5 years, ensuring people have the safe, frequent and punctual journeys they deserve.

Improving resilience

The competition aims to reduce costs, double capacity, lower carbon emissions and improve customer experiences.

It is across 4 themes:

- infrastructure resilience, including protection against adverse weather conditions
- operational resilience, such as using data to inform train maintenance activities
- freight, including improved routing and tracking capabilities
- noise and environment, including innovations mitigating engine noise

16 projects are expected to be funded across all 4 themes.

Projects should produce an interactive and innovative demonstrator that shows rail industry stakeholders and customers how a technology will work in a real-world rail environment. This can be:

- within a railway station
- in rolling stock
- on railway infrastructure
- in the environment close to the railway

Competition information

- the competition opens on 25 February 2019 and the deadline for registration is at midday on 17 April 2019
- organisations of any size are eligible to apply, working alone or collaborating with others as subcontractors
- total eligible costs can be between £250,000 and £350,000 including VAT
- projects will be 100% funded
- briefing events will be held in London on 26 February 2019, Manchester on 28 February 2019 and Cardiff on 7 March 2019, where organisations can

find out more about making an application

[Speech: Getting the right leadership is vital for patient safety](#)

“Trust me, I’m a doctor.” A phrase so reassuring that it’s a punchline.

We trust doctors and nurses more than any other profession. It’s a bond of trust that is both implicit and unspoken. You see us at our weakest, our most vulnerable. You hold our lives, and the lives of our loved ones, in your hands.

I was reminded of this unspoken bond of trust last week on a visit to The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. I met a mother with her newborn. Everything had gone well with the delivery and she was looking forward to taking her healthy baby home.

The visible joy, and relief, in her face is something every parent has felt. I’ve felt it myself with all 3 of my children.

We trust nurses and doctors, we trust the NHS, with something more precious to us than life itself. You have saved the lives of people I love.

We trust you because we know that you’ll do everything you can to help us. That you won’t give up on us. That the safety and life of my child is as important to you as it is to me.

But we can’t take that trust for granted. It has to be earned, and it must be protected. I think that’s why, when that trust is forsaken, the shock is so profound. When I learned what happened at Gosport, I was shocked.

Families had entrusted their loved ones into the care of doctors and nurses. Elderly relatives, at their most vulnerable and frail, were failed by a system that took that trust for granted. Think about your grandmother, your grandfather: how would you feel if the people you trusted most had let you down?

I get it. I understand. As Health Secretary, I’m sorry to those families in Gosport, Liverpool Community Hospital, Mid Staffs and everyone else who has been let down. But I’m not here today to point fingers and blame people.

Instead, we must learn the right lessons about creating a caring, compassionate culture, about protecting and renewing the bond of trust between the public and the NHS – our nation’s most loved and respected institution.

Because the other thing I was reminded of last week is that leaders create

the culture. Because after I spoke to that new mother I spoke with the Chief Exec, Lance McCarthy, and I asked him what they do when things go wrong. What's his approach to mistakes?

And he gave me a brilliant answer. He said: "If we've made a mistake, then we've made a mistake. We should be open and honest, and apologise. And not be afraid to apologise because of any potential legal action."

As Secretary of State, that's exactly what I want to hear. Because we all make mistakes. We should strive to avoid them, of course, but the fact of a mistake isn't the biggest problem. It's how we respond to them and how we learn from them, that's what's most important. And we must never let our fear of the consequences, stop us from doing the right thing.

So what Lance has done at his Trust is introduce a 'behaviour charter'. Patients, their families and medical colleagues know what they can expect: openness, honesty, trustworthiness.

That way when mistakes do happen there's an honest conversation: this is what went wrong, we're sorry, this is what we're doing to fix it.

It's not an admission of liability. It's an acknowledgement that we can do better. It's often the first step towards acceptance for the patient and their family. And it's a vital part of the process of continuous improvement we need to see everywhere in the NHS. Taking responsibility, learning the lessons that need to be learned, continuous improvement.

And what Lance has found is that clinical negligence claims haven't gone up at his trust since they introduced this new charter. In fact, Lance believes, when people feel like they've been treated with honesty and candour, they're less likely to resort to legal action.

The simple act of saying sorry maintains the bond of trust with the public even when things don't go as planned. But this isn't just a moral issue for the NHS – as important as that is – it's a financial issue as well.

Compensation pay-outs have quadrupled from half a billion to £2 billion pounds a year over the past decade. That is unacceptable and it's clearly unsustainable.

If we don't do something about the growing number, and value, of clinical negligence claims, it threatens to swallow up the record £20.5 billion a year we're putting into the NHS, and derail our Long Term Plan to transform the health service.

And that infuriates me, because it's an injustice for taxpayers and our hardworking NHS staff. This is a once in a generation opportunity to put our health service on a forward footing so we can look to the future with confidence.

We can't afford to let it go to waste. There is a moral and financial urgency to act. We must improve patient safety, so there's:

- less paperwork for medical staff and more time for patients
- faster resolution for those who are wronged
- more money for frontline NHS services and less taxpayers' money going to lawyers

That's what I want to see. That's the approach we'll be taking in our new patient safety strategy.

Creating a more just culture in the NHS, a more open, honest and trustworthy culture, starts at the top. Getting the right leadership is vital. We need more people with clinical backgrounds and more people from outside the NHS.

We need to ensure they get the right support, training and development so they can lead their organisations effectively and create the right culture for staff and patients.

How do we strengthen this leadership? How do we encourage more inspirational leaders into the NHS? And how do we ensure we can hold to account that leadership once in place?

First, and perhaps counter intuitively, I think we must cut the turnover rate at the top. To improve leadership in the NHS we must fire fewer people and attract the best talent. NHS leaders have some of the toughest – yet most rewarding – jobs in the country. So let's support them to do the job they need to do – and that will encourage more to step up.

Next, we need to have a better structure, both to support and hold to account. Today we're publishing Tom Kark's review into how we can improve NHS leadership. I'd like to thank Tom for his work on this and I welcome his recommendations.

Kark recommends that all directors must meet minimum competency standards to sit on the board of any health organisation, and where training is needed to meet those new standards, then it should be made available

He also recommends a central directors' database where information about qualifications and employment history can be easily accessed

These new recommendations will ensure the fit and proper persons test is met and that unqualified or unsuitable staff can't just move somewhere else in the NHS. We accept these recommendations in full and will get on with implementing them immediately.

I've asked Dido Harding to consider the further recommendations, and how we can implement these recommendations, throughout the health service.

Third, we're working with the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch and NHS Improvement to give more support to families when things go wrong.

A new family engagement model will ensure relatives play an integral part in any investigation, that their concerns, and their complaints, are listened to and acted on.

Nobody should feel like they're being fobbed off or a nuisance. We must give families all the information in an open and transparent way. And ensure they're treated with sensitivity and compassion before, during and after any investigation.

That's the same approach we'll be taking when independent medical examiners start being introduced across England from April. Every death will be scrutinised by either a coroner or a medical examiner.

Medical examiners will be someone bereaved families can talk to about their concerns. They will ensure investigations take place when necessary, help detect and deter criminal activity, and promote good practice.

This new system will be overseen by a new independent National Medical Examiner. And training will take place to ensure a consistency of approach and a record of scrutiny.

Finally, we need to encourage whistleblowing. Despite our best efforts, mistakes happen. We're all human, we're all fallible. Any doctor who says they've never made an error isn't telling the truth. And the truth is more important than any one error.

Mistakes should be seen as an opportunity to learn and improve, not a need for cover-up and denial. Honest feedback is a gift.

So whistleblowers are doing the NHS a great service. Someone, who has the courage to speak up and put their head above the parapet, should be encouraged and embraced. Yet, sadly, all too often, they're ignored, bullied and worse: forced out.

Making someone choose between the job they love and speaking the truth to keep patients safe, is morally abhorrent and operationally foolish. It's an injustice I am determined to end.

We must change the way the system views whistleblowers: from a problem, to part of the solution. We must embed a 'learn not blame' culture in every part of the NHS, and ensure there are protections for staff and the public who speak up to save lives.

So we must get the right leaders to create the right culture. A just culture, an open, honest and trustworthy culture. A culture of learn not blame. Saying sorry when we get it wrong, earning the public's trust, never taking it for granted. Encouraging and supporting people with the bravery to speak up.

There's no one solution to patient safety. It's a series of steps. It's a path of continuous learning and improvement. There will always be more we can do, and we must always keep striving to do better.

I want Britain to be the best country in the world to be born. That begins with making the NHS the best – and safest – place in the world to give birth. I want every parent to experience the same joy the mother of that newborn did, thanks to our brilliant NHS. Thanks to our brilliant NHS staff.

So let us renew that bond of trust with the public. Make it a public, spoken, bond of trust: we will always be open with you, we will always be honest with you.

When things go right and when things go wrong, you can always trust the NHS to be there for you and your family.