



Oct 25, 2023 13:52 BST

## **Go North East bus drivers set to become highest paid in the region as bosses move to avert strike action**

Go North East, the region's largest bus operator, has reached a breakthrough in talks with union representatives. This would propel its drivers to the top of the regional pay league and avert a looming 12-week strike scheduled to begin on Saturday, 28 October.

Under the landmark offer hourly rates for drivers will reach £14.15. This boosts pay for drivers working a standard week by almost £2,700 yearly, marking a 10.3% jump in pay. Those clocking overtime could see rises of over £3,000 per year.

Bosses at the firm have agreed to stick with an inflation-busting pay proposal despite making losses of £4.3 million in its most recent published accounts.

If the proposal is accepted, drivers will also be guaranteed a further above-inflation pay increase next year.

Go North East business director, Ben Maxfield, said, “An end to strike action would bring a huge sense of relief. Staff have been worried sick about the damage a 12-week stoppage will cause, and passengers face massive and unnecessary disruption to their daily lives.”

Ben Maxfield said, “We have spent a lot of time listening to colleagues and worked collaboratively with the union to fine-tune our pay proposals. We are proud that this milestone move will see our drivers top the earnings league in the North East.”

The next move is for Unite to ballot its members. An endorsement for the new pay rates should allow the union to call off its indefinite strike due to start on Saturday 28 October.

Ben Maxfield said, “We are urging all our employees to support the deal so we can get back to focusing on providing the high quality, reliable, and growing bus transport network the region deserves”.

- Ends

Notes to editors:

Go North East runs a network of bus routes across the North East region including Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham and surrounding areas.

The Go-Ahead Group is one of the UK’s leading providers of public transport, enabling more than a billion passenger journeys each year on its bus and rail services. Go-Ahead places great importance on partnership, adopting a collaborative approach with governments, local communities and strategic partners; developing and operating services that create long-term value for all.

For more information about Go-Ahead Group visit [www.go-ahead.com](http://www.go-ahead.com).

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