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Go North East plans to recruit more women drivers, aiming for 50% gender equality by 2035

- *Go North East supports a nationwide campaign to achieve 50% gender equality by 2035*
- *The campaign is a joint effort for parent company, The Go-Ahead Group and all its bus companies*
- *The Group plans to invest £8 million to create inclusive environments and training opportunities*
- *New recruits will receive eight weeks of fully paid training estimated to be an investment of £7.5 million in total*

Today, Go North East announces the launch of an exciting new campaign to attract and recruit women drivers across its bus operations in the North East.

With the 'Go-Ahead Women' initiative, Go North East is embarking on a mission with the Go-Ahead Group and all its bus companies, to achieve 50% gender equality by 2035, marking a significant step in the traditionally male-dominated transport sector.

Recognising the need for greater representation, Go-Ahead is also investing £8 million in upgrading bus depot facilities which includes work to create inclusive working environments where women colleagues have opportunities, feel supported and empowered to thrive.

According to recent data from Women in Bus and Coach, women make up 10% of the workforce in the bus industry. At present, 11.5% of bus driver roles are occupied by women within Go-Ahead's bus companies and the group is outlining its commitment on International Women's Day to bridge this gender gap to achieve true gender diversity by 2035.

Matt Carney, Bus CEO for Go-Ahead said: "Gender equality isn't just a goal – it's a commitment to building a better future for all. By setting an ambitious target to achieve 50% gender parity by 2035 and investing £8 million to support women drivers in their work environment, we are taking decisive steps to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace."

Carolyn Ferguson, Chief People Officer for the Go-Ahead Group said: "We firmly believe that diversity drives innovation and success. We're investing in training and development opportunities for women drivers, and by doing this we're not only enriching our workforce but also paving the way for a more sustainable and inclusive future."

Samantha Smith joined Go North East 11 months ago. Based at the company's Riverside depot, Samantha said: "What attracted me to becoming a driver was the new challenge of driving a large vehicle and my knowledge of the area. What I love most about driving is the friendly faces I get to meet and the satisfaction I get once passengers get to where they need to be. No two days are the same."

"Bus driving was always seen as a man's job, but times are changing. Anyone sat at home thinking they might like to give driving a go, I'd say 'do it'. Step

outside of your comfort zone with a can-do attitude – you'll not regret it."

In addition to the recruitment drive, new hires will benefit from a comprehensive 8-week fully paid training program in the newly launched Elite Bus Driver Training Academy, designed to equip them with the skills and confidence needed to excel in their roles. This initiative underscores Go-Ahead's commitment to lead the industry in nurturing talent and providing equal opportunities for career advancement.

"Here at Go North East, we're all about creating an environment where everyone feels included and welcome," says Nigel Featham, Managing Director. "That's why we've put a lot of effort into our Elite Driver Training Academy. It's all about making sure everyone feels wanted, improving our induction process, and bringing in more female trainers.

Since launching the academy in January we've had a fantastic increase in female applicants – up by 65%! And to keep the momentum going, we're planning to have a female-only recruitment day later this month."

While Nigel Featham acknowledges that they're still on the journey to reach gender equality by 2035, he's proud of the progress they're making: "We're really pushing forward to create more opportunities for women in our sector to shine."

The company's first-ever female-only Elite recruitment day will take place on Thursday 21 March. Anyone interested in a career as a bus driver can find out more by emailing recruitmentteam@gonortheast.co.uk or calling 0191 4229239. Applicants can also apply directly [online](#).

Notes to editors:

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

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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

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