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Go North East proposes ACAS talks in attempt to break pay deadlock

Go North East, the region's largest bus operator, has proposed ACAS-brokered talks with trade union, Unite, in a bid to prevent industrial action.

The company has made hundreds of its drivers an exceptional offer to increase pay by £2,400 per year. If the proposal is agreed payments will be backdated to 1 July.

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 – which also involves some standardisation of working practices across its six depots – is accepted, drivers will also be guaranteed a further inflation linked pay increase next year.

Unite the union has so far refused to engage with the offer.

Go North East business director, Ben Maxfield, said, “The two most talked about inflation measures, CPI and RPI are currently running at 6.4% and 9.0% respectively. Our offer of 9.11% beats both these figures and means our driver pay package will be among the very best in the region.

“Unite is claiming - without any attempt at justification - that drivers have been offered a below inflation pay increase. The bottom line is that this simply isn’t true, which means that Unite would be striking for something they have already been offered.

“It’s not in our interests, or our passengers’ interests, to have a strike. Unfortunately, it appears some elements within Unite are hell-bent on this course of action, but we believe most of our drivers will want to see successful ACAS negotiations.

“Of course, we value our drivers highly, and want to do the best for them. We never take them for granted, and we will be entering talks – if Unite accepts them – in that spirit”.

14 September 2023

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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.

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