

Key rail passenger operators to return to UK ownership

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Abellio UK and Nederlandse Spoorwegen have announced a management buyout — resulting in a UK-run transport company that will operate four of the country's rail passenger operators and over 50 London bus routes by the end of this year.

The affected rail companies are East Midlands Railway, Greater Anglia, Merseyrail and West Midlands Railway.

A management buyout from the state-owned rail company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen will pave the way for a new UK-based company to take over all Abellio UK's existing services, serving millions of rail and bus passengers in London, Liverpool, the Midlands and East Anglia. The new company will be called Transport UK Group Limited.

Led by Managing Director Dominic Booth, who has decades of experience running public transport services in the UK, this deal has been widely welcomed by industry partners and experts. Completion of the buyout deal is subject to formal approval from partners including the Department for Transport, Transport for London and Merseytravel as well as regulatory consent from the Office for Rail and Road.

After 20 years in the UK Nederlandse Spoorwegen has decided to withdraw from the UK market to focus on domestic service provision within, and international railway services to and from, the Netherlands.

Mr Booth said today: "I've been a railwayman all my life. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to return key public transport services back into UK ownership at a time when some of our competitors look destined for overseas ownership. We expect the business to transfer by the end of the year, following which we will focus all our energies and expertise on continuing to deliver the best possible services for our passengers, investing in our train and bus routes, and helping to develop a future ready, low emission UK transport network.

"Our wish to buy the company from Nederlandse Spoorwegen demonstrates our confidence in the existing Abellio UK team, both in our Head Office and on the ground. It's the dedication of our 15,000 employees, together with a continuity of management, that will ensure our new company is a great success.

"We are grateful for the support and backing that we have received from Nederlandse Spoorwegen to date, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them to manage this process to a successful conclusion."

Bert Groenewegen, acting CEO of Nederlandse Spoorwegen, which will continue to support the new company during a transition period, said today: "After a successful 20 years in the UK passenger transport market, NS is proud to support this natural next step for Abellio UK as it transitions with our blessing into a new management owned passenger transport group."

Abellio UK is responsible for running four of the UK's rail passenger services – East Midlands, West Midlands, Greater Anglia and Merseyrail – as well as being the fastest growing operator in the London bus network. The emergence of a new UK transport group reflects the management team's confidence in the long-term prospects for the UK transport sector and its support for the Williams-Shapps review for Great British Railways which it has been helping to shape and implement.

Mr Booth added: "This deal will put us in a strong position to continue the smooth operating of our current routes as well as giving us the capability to grow the business and bid for new franchises in the future. Beyond that, we are, and will continue to be, thought leaders in our sector determined to play a long-term and vital role in future of UK transport."