

Tyne and Wear Metro's oldest ever driver bids farewell to job

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After 40 years of service and at the age of 75, The Tyne and Wear Metro's oldest ever driver has taken a well-earned retirement.

Richard Neesham has bid an emotional farewell to a job which became a life-long career spanning more than four decades.

Richard, of Fawdon in Newcastle, first started driving Metros in 1981, not long after the network first opened.

And he has been there ever since, rain or shine. Even the 3am starts haven't put him off after all these years. Richard's length of service makes him the oldest person to drive a train on the Metro system.

His retirement brings the curtain down on a 50-year career in the public transport industry, having spent ten years as a bus driver prior to joining Metro.

Richard said: "I love the job and I am going to miss it greatly. I am really proud to have worked as a Metro

driver for so many years. I've worked with some great people.

"I was quite emotional on my last day at work, especially after spending 41 years working at the same place. All of the team gave me a fantastic send off."

Richard gave up a career in the bus industry to start driving Metros when the system was brand new and brought a transport revolution to Tyneside in the early 1980s.

He said: "I started as a Metro driver at the time that the network was new and I have been there over four decades. It was an amazing time when it was all brand new and brought this new, rapid mode of transport for people to travel around on, a bit like the London Underground. The Metro attracted lots of bus drivers and it was a brilliant career move for me.

"After all these years I still don't mind the early starts. Getting up at 3am for an early actually became my favourite shift, even in the winter.

"I must have carried millions of passengers over all those years. I'm one of a small number of drivers who have been there since the system opened. There aren't that many of us left now.

"It's a big achievement to work so long in this industry and I love the camaraderie with the other drivers. I am sad to leave but am also looking forward to my retirement and spending more time with my family.

"I've been invited back to see the new generation of Metro trains when they enter service next year and I am really looking forward to that."

Metro Operations Director, John Alexander, said: "Richard has given outstanding service to the Tyne and Wear Metro over the last 41 years.

"To be still driving Metro trains at the age of 75 demonstrates the scale of his dedication to his profession.

"He is a hugely respected and popular member of our team and he will be greatly missed. It was an emotional send off on his last day at work.

"To spend 50 years in the public transport industry is an amazing achievement. Everyone at Nexus wishes Richard all the very best for a long and happy retirement."