

# LONDON BUS REVIEW 2023

## Greater London & Beyond



# London Bus Review 2023

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SAMPLE

FRONT COVER: Arguably the most significant development of the year on the London bus scene was the launch by TfL of its Superloop network of limited-stop express services connecting outer London. Announced in March, Superloop would form a key part of the mayor's commitment to improve the bus network in the outer boroughs following the decision to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone across the entire capital from the end of August. The network would consist of an eventual ten routes, numbered with the 'SL' prefix, most of which would connect to form an orbital loop. A new Superloop brand would also be introduced involving dedicated vehicles in a new livery along with bespoke colour-coded route branding for each individual service. In addition, a multi-coloured roundel would form part of the branding and this would be extended to timetables and stop infrastructure. Route SL1 between North Finchley and Walthamstow Central was one of two completely new Superloop routes introduced during 2023. Arriva's HA 13 is seen at Arnos Grove Station on 11th December. Colin Stannard

REAR COVER: Route 11 had long been considered an unofficial sightseeing tour bus, taking in such landmarks as the Houses of Parliament, Trafalgar Square, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Bank of England as it plied for trade between Fulham Broadway and Liverpool Street. Previous rounds of Central London route reviews had seen a change of stand at Liverpool Street in 2019 and a frequency reduction two years later, but the core structure of the 11 had remained broadly intact. However, this was all set to change in 2023 when April's central area scheme took effect. This saw the route withdrawn east of Parliament Square and re-routed over Westminster Bridge to terminate at Waterloo instead. The intention had been for the 11 in its restructured form to replace route 211 between Westminster and Waterloo. In turn the 211 was due to have been removed from the central area entirely and diverted instead from Sloane Square to the redeveloped Battersea Power Station site. However, this could not be implemented at the same time and so the 211 remained unchanged as an interim measure. Ironically, the restructure of route 11 was still pursued regardless which not only retained the alleged over-capacity between Victoria and Westminster which the scheme was intended to resolve but would double the previous level of service thanks to both routes running to Waterloo in unison. This situation would remain by the end of the year and beyond. Representing the situation perfectly, here we see LT 57 at the northern end of Westminster Bridge heading towards its revised easterly terminus, with LT 673 in hot pursuit on the 211 heading the very same way. The scene was captured on 3rd May. upper Haydn Davies In May Centrebus acquired 597-99, three brand-new Enviro200 (MMC)s in dedicated dark blue livery for new route 907 Stevenage (Corey's Mill Sainsbury's) – Cheshunt (Brookfield Centre) via Ware, Hertford & Hoddesdon. The 907 was part of Hertfordshire County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, which was funded with £29.7m from the Department for Transport. Here 598 passes through Hoddesdon carrying a single passenger; but only time will tell whether this will be the shape of things to come. lower Richard Godfrey



Arriva's first ES-class StreetDeck Electroliners for its operations south of the river entered service from 9th October when route 417 commenced conversion to the type. This tied in with the contract renewal back in August. Since its introduction back in 1999 as an effective replacement for route 137A, the 417 has consistently been under Arriva's control at Norwood (N). However, electrification at that garage remains in the distant future and so the latest contract for the 417 transferred to Brixton (BN) where the new fleet has already been in place for some time. Although this batch of further ESs had been ordered by Arriva in August as it turned out the delivery to Brixton was topped up by a further half-dozen or so of an earlier batch which had already been ordered for the contract renewal on route 64. These had been due to take to the road on the date from the end of August but ongoing electrification infrastructure delays at Thornton Heath would see most of the batch laid up for the remainder of the year. ES 43 was among the intended thirteen for the 417 and was among those to have taken to the road on their first day in service as pictured here *upper* in Clapham Park Road. Note the rogue '0' added to the front of the fleet number which was fitted to a number of the new order in error and is normally confined to paperwork alone! Meanwhile, the temporary over-supply of Electroliners at Brixton quickly saw rogue wanderings to many of the garage's other double deck routes, with the 50, 133, 319 and 333 all seeing rogue ES appearances within a matter of days. Such regular wanderings would remain the case for the rest of the year. ES 41 had escaped to route 333 when seen at Kennington Park on 13th November *lower*, a scenario which would no longer be possible just weeks later when the new contract would be lost to Go-Ahead in January. Kris Lake *upper*, Colin Stannard *lower*



December, using HA 1-14, which had become available when route 78 transferred to Go-Ahead one week earlier. To make space for the SL1 at Palmers Green, route 329 transferred to Wood Green on 2nd December, along with T 260-276. As a direct result, route 102 lost its partial allocation of Ts and became all HV-operated.

**Routes and Premises**

Arriva London routes which passed on retendering to other operators during 2023

were the B13 (to Go-Ahead from 21st January), the 368 (to Go-Ahead from 29th April), the 340 (to RATP from 2nd September), the 450 (to Go-Ahead from 30th September) and the 78 and 157 (both to Go-Ahead from 2nd December).

**Arriva Southern Counties (ASC) group**

**Vehicles**

StreetLites 4302-4307 were given a revised Fastrack livery early in the year, comprising light grey front and two-tone rear.

Two VDL SB200s, T 484 and T498, were transferred from Arriva Midlands in January for use as trainers, while E200Dart 4036 was transferred to Arriva Midlands in the same month.

In February Dart SLF 1612, Solo 2462, Enviro300s 3563 and 3569, SB200 3759, E20Ds 3996 and 4067, Versa 4181, B7TL 6155 and SB120 trainer T 536 were all sold, while T 65 was transferred to Arriva Yorkshire.

Arriva announced in early March that it was withdrawing from a proposed deal to



The first Wrightbus GBKite Hydroliners to appear in the UK came in batch of twenty ordered by Metrobus for their Crawley Fastway network and began to enter service in April. Although the message remains the same, the format of the blue ISO-compliant sticker near the entrance differs from that of the type applied to Metroline's WDE-class vehicles in London. In this shot 6064 proceeds along Breezehurst Drive, Bewbush towards the terminus. Richard Godfrey

T1, while new route T15 was introduced. This ran daily between Piccadilly and Tower Gateway via Aldwych, St. Paul's and Cannon Street, with early and late journeys projected from Piccadilly to and from Waterloo. A Christmas Lights tour ran from 17th November to 30th December as route T2.

Additions to the fleet in 2023 were RM 1650 (as SRM 3), RMC 1485 and RML 2344, all on loan.

**METROBUS, Crawley (within the Go-Ahead Group)**

Metrobus's operations expanded significantly from 2nd September, when recent Go-Ahead Group acquisition Southdown PSV was integrated into Metrobus.

A batch of Wrightbus GB-Kite Hydroliner hydrogen fuel-cell single-decks, 6051-6070, were delivered between March and July. Ordered for the Crawley Fastway service

had a livery of dark blue with light green and light blue diagonals. The first to enter service was 6052, on 24th April. Although the entire batch entered service, only seven Hydroliner operated on most days. This was due to limited supplies of hydrogen, compounded by the lack of liquid hydrogen refuelling infrastructure being approved by the Health and Safety Executive.

Volvo 550 was introduced in March and Scania 6557 and 6558 were seen in the middle of the year. Volvo 550 was sold in August. Former Go-Ahead Group Volvo 6950-6953 were acquired and the 6950-6951 were repainted into the original Metrobus red and yellow livery to mark the company's 40th anniversary. However, the 6952 and 6953 passed to Brighton & Hove in the year. Volvo 6001 and 6002 were converted to trolleybuses and renumbered 7004 and 7005.

A change in bus restrictions at the railway

bridge at South Hill Lane, Oxted resulted in routes 609 and 611 being re-routed from 20th November via East Hill and Snatts Hill. From 27th November routes 231, 233 and 280 were re-routed to serve Dormansland via Dormans Road and Plough Road, while as a result of the closure of Edenbridge Hospital journeys to and from the hospital grounds were revised to operate in a loop via Edenbridge By-Pass and Edenbridge High Street.

**METROLINE (within the ComfortDelGro Group of Singapore)**

**Metroline Travel  
Metroline West**

**Vehicles**

The Wrightbus Streetdeck Electroliner demonstrator, WDE 2769, entered service at Potters Bar (PB) on route 134 on 9th February.



A number of school routes in the 600-series changed hands as the year progressed. Metroline had mixed fortunes in this regard, losing route 643 at the start of July but gaining route 635 early on from 13th January and then the 626 from 2nd September. Neither was new to the company though, with both routes having been lost on tender back in 2013. Existing double-decks formed the basis of both new contracts and the in the case of the 626, the route was assigned back to its former home of Potters Bar (PB). Thanks to being cross-linked with route 134 from a scheduling perspective, the garage's Optare MetroDecker electrics would quickly become regular performers on the 626 in addition to the existing hybrids so assigned. Operation of the 635 meanwhile was assigned to Lampton (SG), making it only the third route to be operated from the site which is effectively a satellite garage of Brentford (AH). A dedicated batch of three VWHs formerly used on route 295 were refurbished for their new work on the route. Of the trio, VWH 2135 was still looking fresh when pictured in Sunbury on 7th June. Jack Marian

**Monday 20th March to Friday 5th May at 18:00****Cosmetic works in Brook Street**

71, 281, 406, 418, 671, K2, K3, N65 Temporarily re-routed via southbound via Eden Street, Kingston High Street, Kingston Hall Road.

**Saturday 25th March****Closure of Plough Lane garage and opening of Mitcham,****Goat Road garage**

- 39 (London General - PL) *Putney Bridge Station - Clapham Junction, Falcon*  
Operation transferred from Plough Lane (PL) to Putney (AF).
- 169 (Stagecoach East London - BK) *Barking, London Road - Clayhall, The Glade*  
Contract extended for two years.
- 247 (Stagecoach East London - NS) *Barkingside Station - Romford Station*  
Contract extended for two years.
- 280 (London General - AL) *Belmont Station - Tooting, St. George's Hospital*  
Operation transferred from Merton (AL) to Mitcham (GM).
- 287 (Stagecoach East London - RM) *Rainham, Abbey Wood Lane - Barking Station*  
Contract extended for two years.
- 424 (London General - AF) *Putney Heath, Green Man - Fulham, Football Club Mondays to Saturday except evenings*  
Operation transferred from Putney (AF) to Stockwell (SW).
- 470 (London General - AL) *Colliers Wood Station - Epsom, Clock Tower Monday to Saturday except evenings*  
Operation transferred from Merton (AL) to Mitcham (GM).
- 485 (London General - AF) *Wandsworth, Ram Street - Hammersmith Bridge, South Side Monday to Saturday except evenings*  
Introduced on Sundays and in evenings. Re-routed in 2 directions from Putney Bridge Road in one-way loop via Pleasant, Osiers Road, Enterprise Way (clockwise), Osiers Road, Point Pleasant. Operation transferred from Putney (AF) to Merton (AL).
- 493 (London General - PL) *Tooting, St George's Hospital - Richmond, Bus Station*  
Operation transferred from Plough Lane (PL) to Mitcham (GM).
- 690 (London General - PL) *Norwood Garage - Burntwood School, SDO*  
Operation transferred from Plough Lane (PL) to Stockwell (SW).

**Monday 27th March to Friday 12th May (18:00 - 18:30)****Road works in Shaftesbury Road**

- 14 Temporarily re-routed southbound via Southampton Row, Theobald's Road, Drake Street, Procter Street, High Holborn.
- 176 Temporarily withdrawn between Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road.

**Saturday 1st April**

- 68 (Abellio - WL) *Euston - West Norwood, High Street*  
Contract extended for two years.
- N68 (Abellio - WL) *Tottenham Court Road Station - Old Coulsdon, Tudor Rose*  
Contract extended for two years.
- 468 (Arriva London South - N) *South Croydon, Swan & Sugar Loaf - Elephant & Castle, London Road*  
Contract extended for two years.
- U1 (Metroline West - UX) *Ruislip Station - West Drayton Station*  
Re-routed at Uxbridge towards West Drayton to operate direct via Belmont Road instead of via Bus Station. Introduced as temporary alteration from Saturday 27th August 2022, confirmed as permanent re-routing from this date.
- X68 (London Central - Q) *West Croydon, Bus Station - Russell Square Monday to Friday rush hours*  
Contract extended for two years.

**Monday 3rd April to Friday 28th July at 18:00 and Friday 18th August to Friday 15th December at 18:30****Gas Works in Farringdon Lane**

40 Temporarily withdrawn between Farringdon Street and Clerkenwell Green. Set down in Snow Hill, pick up in St. Bride Street.

**Monday 3rd April to Friday 19th May at 14:00****Bridge works in Creek Road**

188, 199, N1, N199 Temporarily re-routed eastbound via Deptford Church Street, Deptford Bridge, Greenwich High Road, Greenwich Church Street.

**Saturday 8th April**

- 142 (Metroline Travel - EW) *Watford Junction - Brent Cross Shopping Centre*  
Commencement of progressive conversion to Wrightbus Electroliner (WDF) electric double-decks (completed by May).
- 389 (Sullivan Buses - SM) *Barnet, The Spires - Barnet, Western Way Mondays to Saturdays*  
Contract extended for two years.
- 399 (Sullivan Buses - SM) *Met, The Spires - Hadley Wood Station Mondays to Saturdays*  
Contract extended for two years.
- 424 (London General - AF) *Putney Heath, Green Man - Fulham, Football Club Mondays to Saturdays*  
Contract extended for two years.

**Tuesday 11th April to Friday 21st April at 18:00 and****Monday 2nd April to Friday 19th May at 17:00****Road works in Alexandra Palace Way and Priory Road**

- Temporarily re-routed towards Muswell Hill via Station Road, Buckingham Road, Bedford Road, Alexandra Palace Way (from 24th April only).
- 573 Temporarily re-routed towards Northumberland Park via High Street Hornsey, Turnpike Lane, Wood Green High Road.

**Saturday 15th April**

- 314 (Stagecoach Selkent - TB) *Bexleyheath, Shopping Centre - Orpington Station*  
Withdrawn between Bexleyheath, Shopping Centre and Bexleyheath, Library. Double-deck SDO journey introduced between Bexleyheath, Library and Albany Park, Hurst Road/Foots Cray Lane.

**Sunday 23rd April****London Marathon**

- From Blackheath to The Mall via Charlton Village, Woolwich, East Greenwich, Greenwich, Evelyn Street, Surrey Quays, Rotherhithe, Tower Bridge, The Highway, Isle of Dogs, Poplar, Commercial Road, The Highway, Tower Hill, Lower Thames Street, Upper Thames Street, Victoria Embankment, Parliament Square, St. James's Park.
- Routes curtailed short of their normal destinations:  
1\*, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15\*, 29, 54, 87, 91, 100, 139, 159, 176, 180, 188\*, 199\*, 225, 277, 343, 380\*, C10, D6, D8, P12.
- Routes diverted to destinations not normally served:  
202 Diverted at Blackheath Village to terminate at Lewisham via route 54, instead of Blackheath, Royal Standard.  
286 Diverted at Rochester Way to terminate at North Greenwich Station via Blackwall Tunnel Southern Approach, instead of Greenwich, Cutty Sark.
- Route revised to operate in two sections:  
24.
- Routes diverted from their normal line of route:  
1\*, 11, 15\*, 42, 47, 51, 53, 77, 78, 88, 89, 99, 108, 115, 122, 132, 148, 161, 177, 178, 180, 188\*, 199\*, 211, 244, 291, 301, 335, 344, 380\*, 381, 422, 453, 469, 472, 486.
- Routes suspended for duration:  
129, 135, 335, 386, D3, D7.
- \* Denotes route in more than one category