

Update 61

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Richard Bourne

Chair

Getting Organised

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After so many years (15 since we received GKE back into the Medway valley) you might reasonably think we were already organised. The need for a re-think has been prompted by the approaching time when the bus will actually be ready to roll. Not only is there the restoration to complete, but we need to become active in other directions.



Towards the Medway Heritage Bus

Back in November we held an *ad hoc* meeting of the committee, confining our deliberations to two main issues:

- What needs to happen to allow GKE to be on the road, and
- What actions are needed to set up future uses for the bus.

The first of these includes all matters around licensing, fitness to run, driver competence, etc. With a bit of focus we can probably handle this within our current resources as initial one-offs. However as things develop to include record-keeping and arranging and fulfilling bookings someone with operational experience may be needed.

The second issue is to begin to implement the Business Plan generated by Development Partners, an early stage of which is to foster associations with the educational world. It was 10 years ago or so that David Swan and I made approaches to the University of Kent seeking opinions on the viability of using the bus as a community asset. The encouragement we received then still holds, and renewing those contacts led to a meeting Wendy and I had in late March with Darren Weir and Aki Pasoulas who work in Public Engagement & External Relations at UoK. Aki is keen to help us, and Wendy's since provided a summary of what we see as the initial actions and how UoK might help.

AGM Download

Held on 4th March the meeting returned to the Huguenot Museum in Rochester, with an attendance of 29. The main messages were that restoration of GKE 68 continues into the detail, whilst a Trustee shortage is likely to be addressed by seeking people with experience in areas relevant to the Medway Heritage Bus. Mike Hodges' picture show of scenes around Medway in the 60s - most, but not all, including buses - generated much conversation and interest and would be worth a re-run in future.

Funding the Paint Job

Another current activity is to establish arrangements for painting the bus. This is likely to need additional funding, and in timing terms it comes after making the bus run. The cost will depend on whichever arrangement we decide upon. There are a number of commercial painters, plus the possibility of a hand-painted job from a professional. We had some success with funding the work on the seats with the "sponsor a seat" invitation. For the painting member Roger Obee suggested a similar "sponsor a panel". The exterior panelling of the bus has panels of roughly three different sizes, which offers the opportunity for three levels of donation to suit different pockets. Roger's worked out the proportions of each donation level as a basis, but we won't know the actual values until we've established the price of the job.



Reluctant Gardner

GKE's engine, long ago overhauled at some cost by a time-served Gardner employee, has been found to contain a number of niggling deficiencies, which have taken time (mainly Ian's) to identify and sort out. There is a slight air of mystery about this. Surely no-one as qualified as our restorer had us believe would have been so slip-shod? We have to admit that the engine spent a long time out of our sight, but we did see it running in August 2014 after re-assembly. It was put back in the bus in March 2015. The worry is that other things may become apparent when the engine is fired up. And meanwhile of course, time passes....

Dropping In at the Medway Archive

On the morning of our AGM the Archive held one of their Drop-In sessions which are held to feature a special exhibition of documents and artefacts on particular subjects not normally on display and which demonstrate the depth of information available. The centrepiece of this session was a 1:76 scale model of the Town Hall. Built by Peter Allen, using the Architect George Bond's original drawings held by the Archive as a reference, the result is stunning. Peter's continuing his work by extending the model to include immediately surrounding streets and other buildings. Amongst the latter will be the Traction's Passenger Shelter which stood on the corner of Barrier Road opposite the Town Hall.



A Grand Day Out



Nu-Venture have arranged re-run of their Christmas guided tour in an Open-Top double-deck bus of bus-related sites in and around Maidstone. This is arranged for **Sunday 23 April**.

All FoCT supporters are invited. Arrangements are as follows:

Departs Bus Stop O at Maidstone East Station at 1130 and 1400. Duration approx. 1 hour.
To secure a place contact nuventurecoachesltd@yahoo.co.uk (01622 882288) stating your preferred boarding time.

**There is no charge but you may wish to donate on the day to
The Friends of Chatham Traction!**

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Chrome
Leather
Moquette

The seats are coming...

