

# South East Bus-iness Bulletin

February 2026 / Kent issue

## Welcome

**Welcome to the year's first edition of the Stagecoach South East newsletter. Our priority is keeping the people of Kent and East Sussex moving, so let's begin by looking at a few highlights on our recent journey.**

Over the last seven months – between 4 May and 13 December 2025 – our buses covered 6,733,000 miles across Kent. That's the equivalent of travelling more than 270 times around the world at the equator.

Most importantly for us, this added up to almost 21 million passenger journeys. That's an incredible number of people to keep moving and we're pleased to be a part of so many daily connections.

This was all made possible thanks to our fleet of 261 buses, kept moving by an 836-strong team of drivers, engineers, maintenance, management and support staff at our depots in Ashford, Dover, Herne Bay and Ramsgate. You may not see each and every one of us, but we're all playing our part to keep our passengers moving.

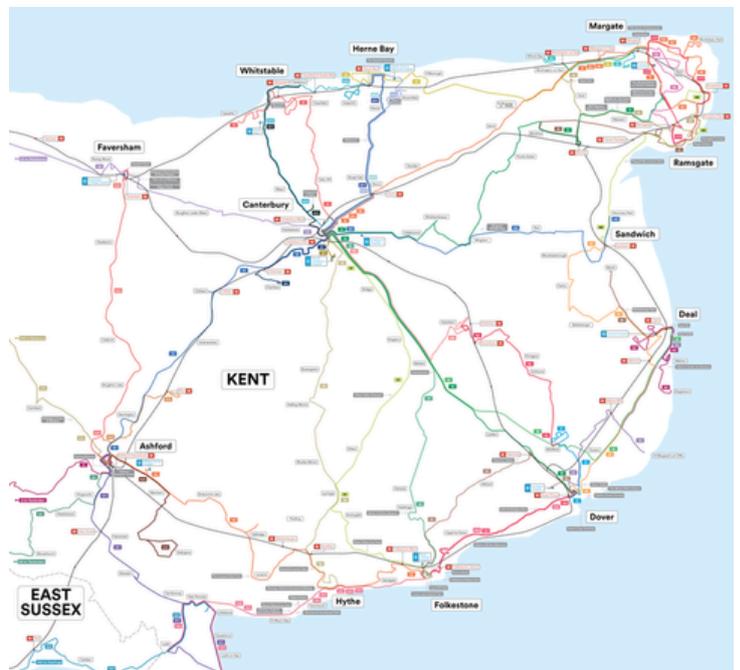


**Joel Mitchell**  
Managing Director  
Stagecoach South East



## In this issue

- Tackling illegal parking
- Funding update
- New improved app
- Raising money for Age UK
- Success at UK Bus Awards
- Improving Dover's bus network



**Stagecoach South East network map**

# Tackling illegal parking to free up congestion

**Illegal parking can have a significant impact on congestion and our ability to get our passengers to their destination on time.**

In December we joined an innovative initiative to tackle illegal parking that causes difficulties for our buses, commercial vehicles and emergency services accessing certain roads.

A new Civil Enforcement Officer role has been created in partnership with Thanet District Council and Kent County Council, focused on 26 parking blackspots that regularly delay buses and affect passenger journeys. These are found on the Thanet Loop Improvement Project route.

The role is managed collaboratively between us and Thanet and in the first two weeks 66 Penalty Charge Notices were issued and 88 vehicles moved out of the way of bus routes.

The partnership is a great example of how, when we work together, we can make a real difference for local communities. Illegal parking causes significant delays for our customers and frustration for our drivers. By creating this role, we're already seeing positive results and improved bus reliability.



## Santa swaps his sleigh for a Stagecoach bus

**It feels a long time ago now, but December means Christmas, and a couple of months ago – as we do every year – we launched the annual Santa Bus in Thanet and Ashford.**

The big man himself made an appearance on occasion, often supported by a festive else spreading good cheer and raising money and awareness for impactful local charities including Age UK.

In total, Stagecoach South East raised more than £3,000, so here's a big THANK YOU to everyone who donated to such an important cause.



# H-Appy days on board with Stagecoach

**Improving the experience of travelling with Stagecoach South East is the key to our efforts to strengthen customer loyalty and increase passenger numbers.**

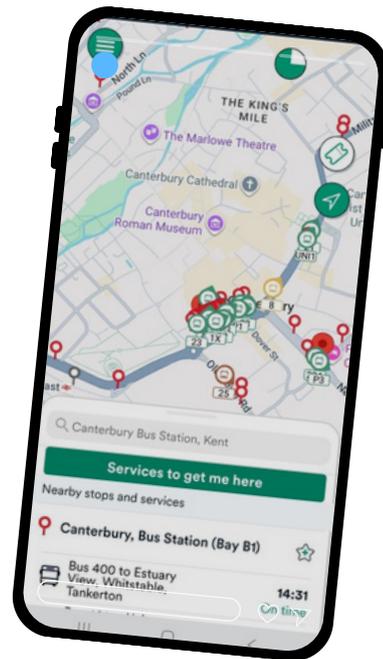
We recently carried out a big update on our app with a 'Track This Bus' option.

For passengers there's no more chasing a bus around on the map, instead you can choose to track a particular bus as it moves along the route on its way to your stop. Simply use the toggle button on the live map panel in the app and your chosen bus will stay in the centre of the map until you turn it off.

We've also introduced a live bus locations status. This new feature on the live map screen gives you a quick, at a glance view of how up to date the live location is for your chosen bus. This means you can compare it to Track This Bus information and feel more informed and confident about your journey.

We've also updated the journey planner on the app, making it a lot more customer-focused to help you plan your travels.

Looking ahead, we have another update planned for early this year to enable you to get personalised disruption notifications. This should empower you to make the best decisions about where and when you travel.



**Child singles are now available to buy on the app**

**Track your bus in real time  
with our new improved app.**

**Precise planners,  
we've got you.**

# Leading by example

**There are many ways to lead, and here at Stagecoach South East we as a company are working on leading by example to support the community.**



A team of colleagues from across our catchment area recently got together to help Age UK, building new tables for their centres in Ashford, Hythe and Lyminge.

The team included our Managing Director Joel Mitchell and Commercial Director Katherine Jones, as they worked together to help create comfortable, reliable seating spaces for the older people who visit the centres.

The tables will be used for a range of activities, from arts and crafts to social catch-ups, helping to make the centres welcoming places where people can relax, connect, and feel part of a community.

Joel said: "I think of this as 'servant leadership', where local business leadership teams get together to support their communities, serving them in practical ways. It won't be for everyone but we'll certainly be doing more of it, alongside doing all we can to make sure our own organisation keeps trying to make things better for the community by keeping travellers connected."

Our team of volunteers said it was a pleasure speaking with the elderly people who use the centres and seeing how much the spaces mean to them. It was also a reminder of the importance of community initiatives and how partnerships with organisations such as Age UK can make a meaningful difference.



# Local delivery gets national recognition

**Stagecoach South East's Dover depot has achieved national recognition, winning the Silver award for Depot of the Year at the UK Bus Awards.**

The award acknowledges the team's resilience and performance following the merger of the former Dover and Folkestone depots in 2023.

The merger brought together two teams of drivers and engineers, who then needed to work as one team and learn new routes. The goal was to create a single effective depot.

The award ceremony included a poignant moment for the Dover team, as the committee delivered a heartfelt tribute to long-serving colleague Richard Hughes.

We couldn't be prouder of our Dover team. They have consistently demonstrated incredible work and what it truly means to come together as a team.

The award recognises the depot's commitment to delivering safe, reliable, and high-quality bus services across Kent communities.



## Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – Funding update

**As part of the Government's £3bn commitment, Kent is to receive £14m per year for revenue funding, and a further £12m per year for capital funding between 2026 and 2030.**

This is part of the next phase of Bus Grant funding to Kent County Council (KCC), with revenue funding earmarked for supporting actual bus services and ticket offers and capital funding for bus priority measures and items like shelters and real time information.

Although KCC's revenue allocation has increased by 25%, 70% of the funding is already committed to keep certain routes where they are and also keep the price of the Kent Travel Scheme lower.



# Improving Dover's connectivity to London and the continent

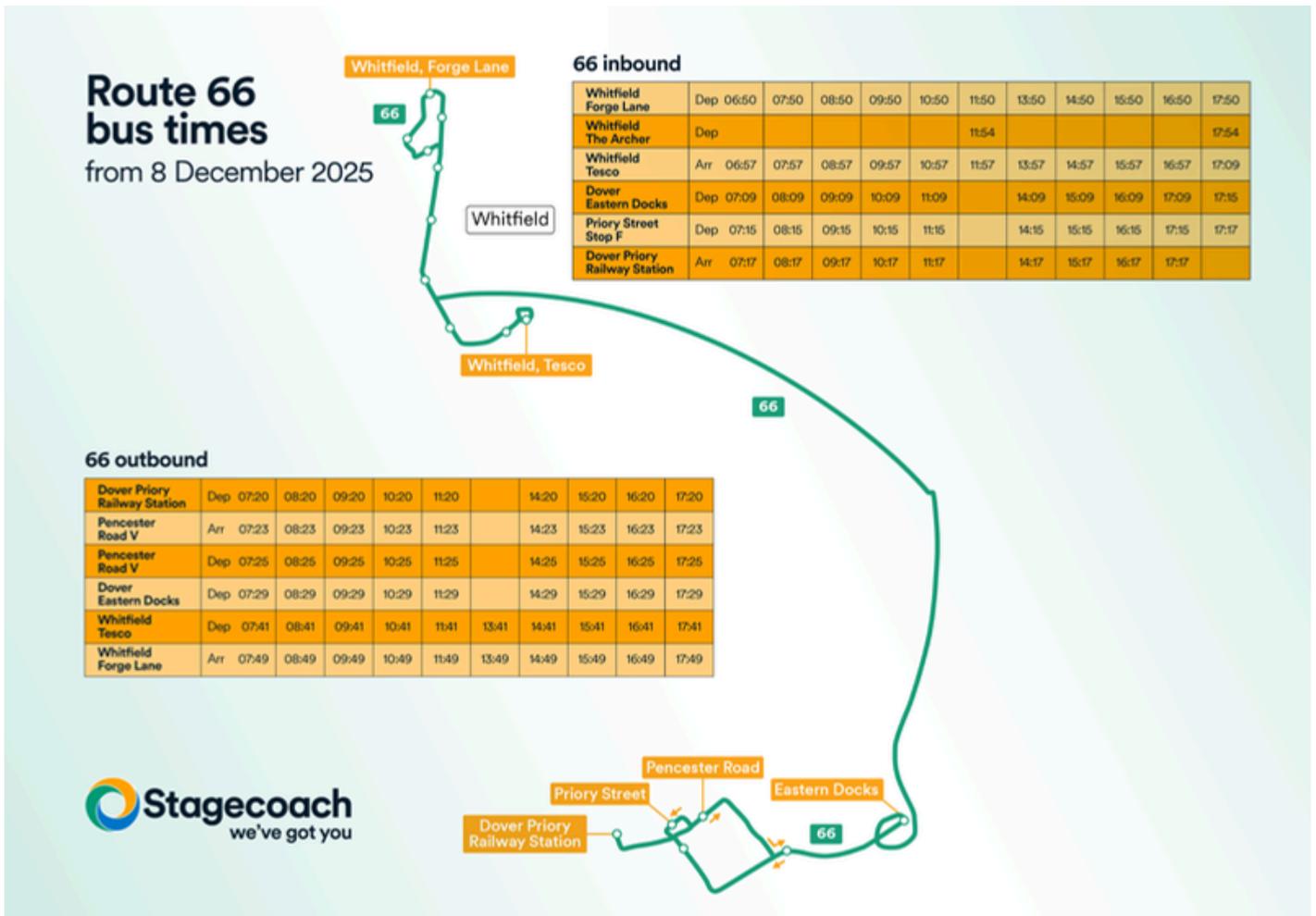
**High speed connections to the capital and a direct link to the port are the latest improvements to Dover's bus network.**

Upgraded at the end of last year, the Fastrack timetable has been extended to better connect high speed rail travellers with the Dover bus network. This means our Monday to Saturday services are now timed to meet the first and last High Speed Rail services between Dover Priory and London.

Our Fastrack timetable is now also extended to seven days a week. The improvements were made possible thanks to partnership working with Kent County Council and mark a significant milestone in enabling this service to reach its full intended timetable.

We've also launched a new trial bus service, Route 66, which will provide a direct route to the Port of Dover, including Whitfield. This service comes after a 12-month trial of a shuttle bus to the port, Route 67, which has now been cancelled. Bus services to Buckland Hospital and the River area continue to be served by Route 64.

We're encouraging people to make the most of these changes to ensure they become permanent features of the Dover transport map.



# Coming soon to Dover

**We will shortly be taking delivery of five brand-new electric buses which will run on the Fastrack route between Dover Priory station and Whitfield, marking the final stage in delivering south Kent's first fully electric, zero-emission rapid bus transit system.**

Our 100% electric, zero emission buses mean everyone can breathe in cleaner, better quality air. Just one electric bus saves 66 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year compared to a standard bus. That's the same as driving a petrol car 169,000 miles!



## Reliability

Over the last three months, between 97.33% and 98.92% of our scheduled bus services ran as planned.

This is very much a team effort with drivers, supervisors, cleaners and engineers working together every day to deliver the best possible service for our customers.

There are numerous issues that can affect whether a bus can run, many of which we can't control such as poor weather, roadworks and road closures. However, we're always striving to improve our reliability and provide the best possible service for our customers across Kent.

Depot	21 Sept - 18 Oct 2025	19 Oct - 15 Nov 2025	16 Nov - 13 Dec 2025	Average over three months
Ashford	97.9%	97.25%	96.85%	<b>97.33%</b>
Canterbury	99.39%	98.49%	98.88%	<b>98.92%</b>
Dover	98.42%	99.15%	99.10%	<b>98.89%</b>
Thanet	98.08%	98.53%	98.05%	<b>98.22%</b>