



is asking the bus industry to donate buses and help rebuild after the tsunami

Brian King, Managing Director of trent barton is fronting an industry wide appeal to provide practical help to the survivors of the tsunami that struck Asia on Boxing Day. Well over 150,000 people perished in the disaster and many of those that survived have lost everything they possessed, with whole areas reduced to wastelands. The countries that bore the brunt of the tsunami's devastation will need vast amounts of help to rebuild.

Transport is at the heart of economic and social activity and its provision will be essential to support the reconstruction of communities and livelihoods. Through Asia Bus Response, the UK bus industry can help

the redevelopment process by pledging buses and equipment to the areas of Sri Lanka and Indonesia worst effected by the disaster. Brian King commented, "Like everyone else I was shocked when I heard of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. When I



Brian King

realised the devastating effect on the region in terms of sustaining life in the immediate and medium term future, I wondered how best trent barton could help in practical tangible terms.

"Asia Bus Response provides the answer to that question. This is a collective bus industry response to the transport needs of a region where mobility is desperately needed to help people re-establish their lives and rebuild their economies. I commend this initiative and I am very pleased to pledge trent barton vehicles to it."

Asia Bus Response is a voluntary, co-ordinating group of UK bus professionals that aims to help the UK bus industry respond appropriately and meaningfully to the tsunami disaster. It has undertaken to ensure that buses dispatched fit the needs of the destination countries. It will arrange

for buses to convene at a UK location for assembly and shipping; have all vehicles mechanically checked pre dispatch to ensure worthiness; liaise with operators, local authorities & industry suppliers concerning parts, training and other opportunities; and encourage the filling of buses with supplies required by destination countries at the time of dispatch.

Asia Bus Response has already garnered widespread support. Go-Ahead Group, Blazefield Holdings, Thamesdown Transport, Nottingham City Transport, Lancashire County Council, Essex County Council and Best Impressions are among the organisations already pledged to lend their support, and others have indicated their intention to join them. What they will provide is assistance in a very practical and focused manner. As we went to press, it was understood that 10 buses had already promised to the organisers, including two 1994 MAN 11.190 Optare Vectas, formerly used by trent barton on Skyline services from Buxton.

Buses and spare parts will be shipped and distributed by the development agency, Islamic Relief. As well as providing vital transportation for people and supplies, Islamic Relief will arrange skills training for drivers and engineers in the countries of destination and pay those people a living wage.

The organisers stress that Asia Bus Response is not about palming off elderly vehicles. Shipping is expensive and the buses will be used from the moment they arrive and for years to come. So vehicles must be in good condition and fit for a few years' hard work. Robust, high-floor, low-tech vehicles are required, from double-deckers to mini-buses. In recent years many UK fleets have re-equipped with low floor vehicles and so have decent mid-life buses that are now difficult to find homes for in the UK. These buses could provide a lifeline for shattered communities in Asia.

Donor companies will be responsible for getting buses to a UK departure point. Islamic Relief has undertaken to co-ordinate shipping, insurances, export & import tax, registrations & licences and

arrange payments for same via the governments of the destination countries and other organisations. It will distribute buses as appropriate and do all possible to ensure that donated vehicles are fully utilised by those affected by the tsunami disaster, not left unused or co-opted by others or used in other areas. It intends to use the buses as a means to re-skill the local workforce, to rebuild confidence, pride & independence among the people and communities stricken by the disaster and will also provide occasional updates on how the buses are being used and how they have helped local communities.

Visit www.asiabusresponse.co.uk for full details.

For information on the co-ordination of donated buses email Mitch de Faria at asiabusresponse@theeventmakers.com Tel 01664 561711. For ideas about how local authorities can help, email Andrew Varley at andrew.varley@env.lancsccl.gov.uk or Tel 01772 263336.

As the organisers point out, 'The humanitarian need is obvious and undeniable. On an industry-wide basis, the UK bus industry can make a real difference and help rebuild shattered lives and livelihoods.'

Tsunami Donations

In separate moves, a number of organisations have announced large donations to assist the victims of the Asian Tsunami disaster.

Stagecoach Group has donated £100,000 to the appeal and also said that it will match £1 for £1 donations its employees raise through their fund raising efforts in the UK, North America and New Zealand.

FirstGroup has contributed £65,000 to the Disasters Emergency Committee.

Transport for London has assisted its staff who have volunteered to collect on behalf of the disaster throughout the network. The company also made available in conjunction with Viacom 2,000 posters sites for use by the DEC.