

Helping the tsunami victims

THE TSUNAMI has prompted a generous response from countries around the world, and it's good to be able to record that the British bus industry is doing its bit.

The most visible action has been the setting up of Asia Bus Response, a voluntary co-ordinating group of UK bus professionals to help the industry respond appropriately and meaningfully to the disaster.

In partnership with Islamic Relief, Asia Bus Response intends to send buses from UK fleets to help rebuild the infrastructure of Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the areas worst affected by the tsunami.

Asia Bus Response has undertaken to ensure that the buses which it sends fit the needs of the destination countries, and will see that vehicles are checked over before being shipped and, where possible, filled with appropriate supplies.

Its aim is to have around 50 buses ready for shipment in March.

Trent Barton managing director Brian King sums it up: "Like everyone else I was shocked when I heard of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean. When I 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."

So far operators who have committed to providing vehicles include not only Trent Barton, but also Blazefield, Ipswich Buses, Go-Ahead, Thamesdown Transport, Nottingham City Transport and National Express.

To learn more visit the website

at www.asiabusresponse.co.uk

Individual operators are also taking action. FirstGroup immediately pledged £65,000 to the Disasters Emergency Committee - £1 for every employee in the UK and North America.

And Stagecoach Group has donated £100,000 to the relief effort and has in addition pledged to match pound for pound the funds being raised by its 30,000 employees in the UK, North America and New Zealand.