

65 buses in a week pledged to Tsunami Appeal

In one week, the Asia Bus Response initiative has received pledges of 65 buses from the bus and coach industry. The appeal for vehicles, to help rebuild communities and livelihoods in the worst hit areas of Sri Lanka and Indonesia, is a practical response to the need for reconstruction following the devastation of the Tsunami.

Among those supporting the appeal are National Express, Go-Ahead Group, trent barton, Blazefield Holdings, Southern Vectis, which has promised 10 Iveco minibuses, and Oxfordshire County Council, plus smaller concerns, like Group Travel of Cornwall and Harris Coaches of South Wales which has offered a Caetano bodied DAF coach.

The recognition that transport is at the heart of economic and social activity, and that buses can help rebuild shattered lives and livelihoods, is clear from the appeal's already widespread support. But more roadworthy buses are still needed, from bus and coach operators, councils, community organisations and bus-

owning enthusiasts.

Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP; Chair, House of Commons Transport Committee is supporting the initiative. She commented, 'A little help is worth the world to those desperately in need. Asia Bus Response is not only a highly practical appeal, but serves to bring together a whole industry in support of a single humanitarian goal. I hope everyone will take this appeal seriously and support it with the enthusiasm it deserves.'

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

Vehicles must be robust, high-floor and low-tech, in good condition and fit for a few years' hard work. Donor companies will be responsible for getting buses to a UK departure point. Islamic Relief is co-ordinating and sourcing funding for shipping, taxes, regis-

trations and licensing. Visit www.asiabusresponse.co.uk for full details.

To pledge buses, spares and equipment or to leave messages of support, email info@asiabusresponse.co.uk or call Mitch de Faria on Tel: 01664 561711; for local authority co-ordination and ideas about how local authorities can help, email Andrew Varley at Lancashire County Council, andrew.varley@env.lancscc.gov.uk Tel: 01772 263336.