

BRITISH DONATE OVER 80 BUSES FOR TSUNAMI RELIEF

Several major British operators have donated redundant step-entrance buses, parts and equipment to Asia Bus Response, a bus industry appeal to help restore public transport in Indian Ocean communities devastated by the Boxing Day tsunami disaster.

As we went to press, the total number of buses pledged exceeded 80, with 11 of them coming from the Southern Vectis group, four from Go-Ahead's Oxford Bus Company and two (Alexander-bodied Volvo B6s) from Blazefield's Keighley & District fleet. Nottingham City Transport is providing a Scania L113 single-decker and other prominent businesses pledging support include East Yorkshire, Trent Barton, Emsworth & District and National Express.

Asia Bus Response (www.asiabusresponse.co.uk) is working with the charity Islamic

Relief and is to assemble the buses for shipping — probably from Southampton — to Sri Lanka and Indonesia in March.

The charity says it will ensure that full use is made of the buses when they reach the countries affected, and that they are not left unused nor are they co-opted for use elsewhere.

The deal is that vehicles donated — ranging from minibuses to double-deckers — must be robust, high-floor and low-tech, in good condition and fit for a few years' hard work. Appeal organiser Mitch de Faria says: 'The buses that are needed in tropical conditions are very different to the ones over here. We have smooth roads and an established infrastructure and have pretty high expectations of our public service vehicles.

'Out there, anything with computerisation tends to go wrong in the humidity,' she says.