

WHITTLE COACH & BUS' FUTURE

Following the announcement in October by family owned, and Hull based, EYMS Group that its Kidderminster subsidiary, Whittle Coach & Bus Ltd, was being put up for sale or face closure, the Company is now pleased to confirm that following discussions with Johnsons Coach & Bus Travel of Henley-in-Arden agreement has been reached for them to acquire the Whittle's coaching division. The sale should hopefully be completed around 10 January 2015.

The agreement secures the employment of relevant office, maintenance and driving employees related to the Coach side of the business and Johnsons will continue to operate the coach operations from the Kidderminster site at Foley Park which is leased from Ron Whittle.

Peter Shipp, owner of EYMS Group, is delighted to have completed this purchase speedily to protect the current loyal and committed workforce, and that the long-established Whittles name is to continue.

John Johnson, Commercial Director of Johnsons Coach Travel said: "We are pleased to see the joining of two well-known, long established coach travel families and look to welcoming the Whittles team and their customers to the Johnsons brand. We look forward to continuing the Whittles brand for coach hire, holidays and day excursions".

EYMS has also today confirmed that all Whittles local bus registrations have been cancelled with the required 56 days' notice, effective on 5 January 2015, with the only purely commercial route (2A/2C) having already been withdrawn on the 15 December. Parts of this route and most of the others, which were already operated wholly or mainly under contract to Worcestershire and Shropshire County Councils, have now been put out for re-tender by the Councils for operation by other companies from 5 January. The 101 Bridgnorth Town Service supported by Shropshire Council has already been

transferred to Arriva and the 125 Bridgnorth to Stourbridge service has also been put out to tender by Shropshire Council.

David Shipp, General Manager of Whittles, said “whilst I am very disappointed that our trading position has left Whittles in a situation where we are unable to continue operating in the area I am pleased that both Worcestershire and Shropshire Councils, both of whom have been very supportive, are able to ensure that all local bus links are maintained, albeit at reduced frequencies on certain routes, enabling members of the public to have the confidence that their bus services will remain”

“As to our Coaching operations I am extremely pleased that a sale to Johnsons has been achieved within the last few days thus securing employment for as many of our staff as possible with a Company which continues to provide a strong ‘family’ ethos which both Whittles and EYMS share. Regrettably there will be some members of staff who work in other parts of the business who will be made redundant and they have been notified of redundancy dates varying over the next few weeks.”

It is understood that the Company’s National Express operations will continue and will be transferred to a subsidiary company of National Express itself on 11 January with all staff engaged in National Express work at Whittles given the opportunity to transfer and the coaches being loaned on a temporary basis.

David Shipp said “I would like to thank my colleagues here for the commitment they have shown since the announcement was made which has helped ensure that this difficult period has been made as easy for everyone as it possibly could have been.” Mr Shipp continued “we have promised, along with Johnsons, to make contact with customers and suppliers as soon as possible to reassure them that Whittles Coaching brand will be continuing, just under different ownership and I would also like to thank our valued customers for their support and loyalty during this period.”

Ends

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