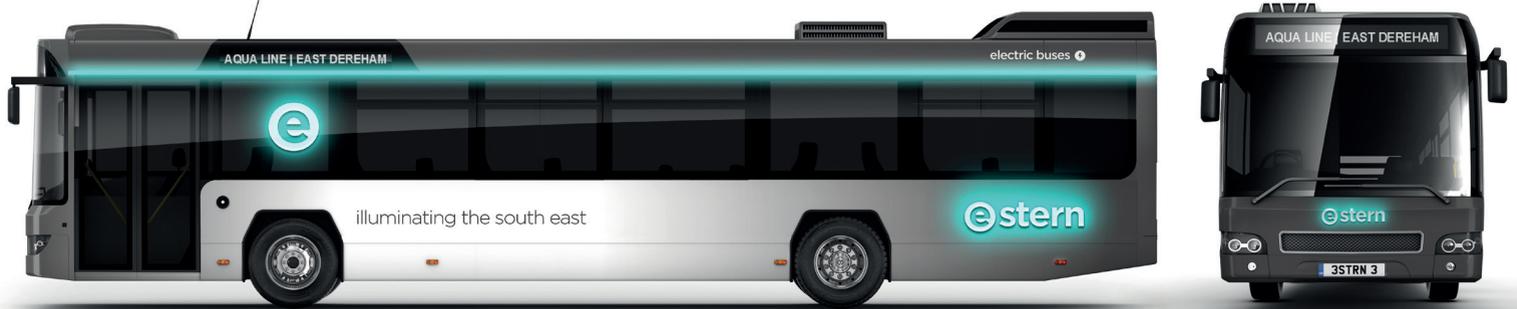


Eastern National gets a radical relaunch in this month's exercise of imagination by The MHD Partnership, which also offers its futuristic solution to the problem of route branded buses turning up on the wrong routes — provided that someone clever can crack the technology to turn its idea into a practical reality

# NIGHT VISION



**T**he Eastern National Omnibus Company came into being in 1930 when the LMS and LNER main line railways bought a shareholding in the Chelmsford-based National Omnibus & Transport Company.

It became a Tilling company in 1931 and at its peak operated across Essex and also had a Midland area with routes mainly in Bedfordshire. The Midland operations transferred to United Counties in 1952.

In Tilling ownership, its buses were painted in the group's standard green and cream and, as a National Bus Company subsidiary, this gave way to NBC's leaf green and white from 1972. It was one of the first NBC subsidiaries to be sold 30 years ago, the management team taking ownership from December 1986 and adopting a new livery of green and yellow. It grew by winning some London Transport tendered routes.

The Badgerline group bought the business in April 1990 and three months later split it in two, with Eastern National serving Chelmsford, Basildon, Colchester and Harwich while the south Essex and London operations went to a new Thamesway

company. The Eastern National livery remained green and yellow but with different shades and colour distribution.

Badgerline was then merged into First, which introduced its corporate 'Barbie' liveries from 1997, and that was the end of Eastern National as we knew it.

We asked The MHD Partnership to imagine how it might be revived today. The makeover is pretty radical and seems to have placed one route in Eastern Counties country, but it is the effect that matters.

'Eastern National is a great example of traditional bus branding, and this base gave us the ideal opportunity to bring it up to date,' says account director Mike Fletcher. 'Starting with a clean slate, the branding was stripped back to its bare bones leaving just the name "Eastern" as our sole reference to those bygone times.'

'With diesel buses having a reputation as polluters, replacing them with their electric counterparts was the natural progression for a 21st century transport operator. Separating the E and the 'stern' doesn't change your pronunciation of the company name, but lets us suggest the

double meaning of the E — for both east and electric. All enforced by making the E into a standalone icon device that would become the crest of the brand,' he adds.

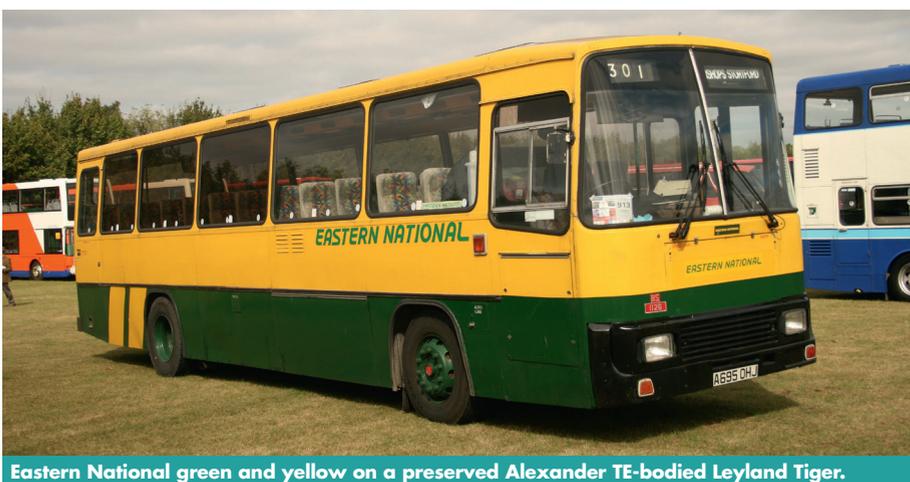
'For this concept, we wanted to try something that we have never seen before — using external LED lighting to colour-code routes, in this case, the Aqua line. This simple (and hopefully one day practical) approach to route branding has a dynamic effect while at the same time enhancing the modern, electric and environmental promise of the brand.'

'The icon and logo on the livery are back-lit and paired with a light bar that runs the length of the bus — a strip that could have a pulse travelling from front to back when stopped, adding extra presence to the livery.'

'To get over any logistic problems of route branding vehicles, all buses in the fleet would be in standard grey and white livery, but at the flick of a switch, the route branding could be changed accordingly using the LED lighting (see the examples of other routes on our website). No worries with spares on this fleet.'

'Our strapline, 'illuminating the south east' perfectly sums up what this rebranding project has delivered for the 21st century bus user,' he suggests. ■

■ To see all of the other rebranding projects by The MHD Partnership, and the other brands for E Stern, visit [www.mhdpartnership.co.uk](http://www.mhdpartnership.co.uk).



Eastern National green and yellow on a preserved Alexander TE-bodied Leyland Tiger.