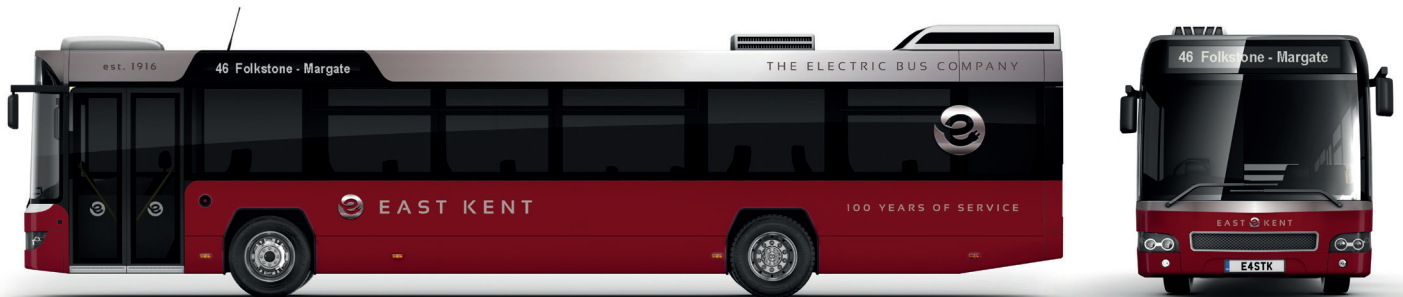


IDENTITY PARADE

As this fondly remembered operator celebrates its centenary, creative agency The MHD Partnership has imagined a 2016 makeover that pays homage to the past but uses a different second colour to promote the adoption of zero-emission technology



EAST KENT



The East Kent Road Car Company celebrates its centenary this year, an occasion to recall the heritage of one of the leading operators of south-east England.

It has been a Stagecoach subsidiary since July 1993, trading as Stagecoach South East, serving substantial parts of adjoining East Sussex as well as Kent and applying several route brands to the group's standard colours. For six years before then, it was owned by a management team who bought it out of the state-owned National Bus Company and gave it a contemporary dark red and cream livery that offered a nod to its past.

NBC's corporate identity had seen East Kent paint its buses in poppy red and white from 1972, but it is best remembered for the maroon and cream colours it wore before then, a legacy of over 50 years in BET and Tilling & BAT ownership. It also was unusual for a large operator in not displaying fleet numbers until well into the NBC era.

For its latest 'what if?' design, The MHD Partnership has offered its suggestion of how East Kent buses might have been updated had

it remained an independent business.

'East Kent operated many classic models of vehicle within its fleet,' says account director Mike Fletcher. 'All benefited from a time when bus design seemed to be an art, well before it became more functional and less about aesthetics. And since the company is held in such esteem, the livery and rebranding had to be treated sensitively. We felt something classically stylish would be a suitable starting point for bringing it into the 21st century.'

'We kept the original deep red to maintain that link to the previous liveries, working in tandem with a colour commonly associated with classic vehicles – buses, steam locomotives and cars alike. We felt the cream/deep red combination looked dated, so dropped the cream in favour of a more versatile silver, which can be perceived as classic, current and stylish.'

MHD has extended its flight of fancy to the buses themselves. 'In the spirit of moving East Kent forward and keeping up with current developments in the industry, the fleet has become fully electric – and the updated

cable in keeping with our new direction for the company. This graphic icon acts as the focal point of a clean stylish livery and has been given that classic feel through a chrome effect.'

'It has the mark of a quality transport brand. The actual company name forms part of the overall identity and has been updated in a classic looking, yet very much modern influenced, upper case font. Note the subtle line breaks in both the A and the K.'

'With East Kent being fondly remembered by the bus models from that period and its clean body lines, we felt that to add superfluous graphic elements would detract from this style. Reference to the company's long history and impending anniversary has been paid through the wording "est. 1916" and "100 years of service" throughout all communication channels.'

He says the timetable has been kept just as minimal, again using the logo as the focal point to the design, alongside a subtle curved masthead. 'This up-to-date livery would sit nicely alongside the many that came before it, showing a comprehensive development of bus design from the last century. A redesign that leaves the company's history and reputation speaking for itself.' ■

■ To see all of the other rebranding projects by The MHD Partnership, visit www.mhdpartnership.co.uk.



The traditional East Kent look on WJG 470J, a preserved 1971 AEC Reliance with Plaxton Panorama Elite body.