

## Current condition and proposed restoration work

The appeal sum covers the costs of acquiring and restoring 556 to a standard to celebrate the Thames Valley heritage and safeguard its long-term use. Since 556 has been on loan, we initially carried out significant work to bring it to the condition required for use in service at public events. This enabled us to use 556 for the ensuing five years safely and successfully. Bearing in mind that its original restoration was undertaken almost 40 years ago, a new restoration programme is now needed to bring 556 up to the high standard that TV&GWOT is recognised for and give it many decades of further operational potential to help the Trust meet its charitable, educational objectives and give many thousands of passengers the experience of bus travel in the Thames Valley in the post-war Britain of the 1950s and '60s.

From a detailed examination of both chassis and body, the work required is defined below. As in all projects of this type there is significant uncertainty concerning the condition of covered structural elements and other timber and steel parts. Therefore the work of higher immediate priority is covered in Phase 1 and the current appeal covers this scope. Work to be carried out as soon as further funding allows is listed under Phase 2. Work to be primarily carried out by volunteers is annotated (V) and that by specialist contractors (C).

### Phase 1

- Chassis and running units generally sound, but require external stripping and repainting for long term corrosion protection (V).
- Reconditioning/repair of road springs (C).
- Investigation of governor and throttle linkage to cure occasional racing (C).
- Rewiring of internal bell and lighting circuits (V).
- Replacement of rotten timber inserts in aluminium body pillars along offside - a major task involving removal of all side panels and probably windows and window pans to gain access at least to the waist rail. (C/V).
- Replacement of offside lower aluminium body panels (C).
- Re-shaping or replacement of lower rear corners, re-shaping of rear corner domes (C).
- External repaint, application of transfers (V).

### Phase 2

- Removal of dented nearside lower body panels and inspection/replacement of timber framing as necessary (C).
- Replacement of nearside lower aluminium body panels (C).
- Replacement of front steel dash panel (C).
- Renewal of lower section of cab door pillar (C).
- Sourcing of original pattern seats, re-trimming, painting of seat frames and fitting (C/V).
- Replacement of rubber window gaskets(C).
- External repaint (nearside and front), application of transfers (V).
- New rubber mudguards to rear wheel arches & lifeguards below side panels (V/C).

Work to date and other standing and running costs have been funded from the Trust's general income from events, but the work now envisaged and ongoing future costs require the new funding which we aim to raise through this appeal.

**Please support TV&GWOT's appeal to fund 556 using the enclosed form**

Thank you.

Colin Billington, TV&GWOT Chairman and 556 Appeal Co-ordinator

THE THAMES VALLEY & GREAT WESTERN OMNIBUS TRUST, LEDGER FARM, FOREST GREEN RD, FIFIELD, MAIDENHEAD SL6 2NR  
REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1125980

**The 556 APPEAL**

Help safeguard Thames Valley's public transport heritage for future celebration

**THAMES VALLEY & GREAT WESTERN**  
Omnibus Trust

Photo © Chris Drew

**PLEASE DONATE NOW**  
Form Enclosed

## The Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust (TV&GWOT) has launched an urgent appeal to raise £28,000 to complete the purchase of and restore preserved Thames Valley 1950 Bristol LL6B No. 556, registered FM0938.

556 has been on long term loan to TV&GWOT since 2015 when it took part in our event at Reading Station to celebrate the Centenary of the first Thames Valley motorbus service, British Automobile Traction Service No. 1 from Maidenhead to Streatley via Reading. During the intervening period 556 has attended TV&GWOT's Thames Valley events at Didcot and Reading and has also been used for local tours in connection with organised group visits to the vehicle collection and archive. 556 has proved to be a very popular vehicle at these events and, being a 7'6" wide single deck, it is very useful in any context.

Having originally been restored in the early 1980s, 556 is now looking shabby and serious body weaknesses are developing so a major re-restoration is now required to safeguard its future.

*Left: Offside panel edge cover mouldings separating due to hidden deterioration of timber in body pillar.*

Pledges in response to the preliminary announcement of this appeal in *To & fro* have enabled us to secure 556. This year is the Centenary of The Thames Valley Traction Company Ltd – the event scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> July this year has had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic until the equivalent weekend in 2021.

**This gives a window of opportunity to carry out restoration work so that 556 can be a centrepiece of the event in 2021 in a condition worthy of Thames Valley Traction and the Trust.**

### Significance of 556

On completion of the purchase, TV&GWOT will have three former Thames Valley Traction Company vehicles in its permanent collection, the others being 152 (M09324) our 1927 Tilling-Stevens B9 Express and 1946 Bristol K6A 446 (DBL154). The special significance of 556 is that:

- It was Thames Valley's first 30ft long vehicle.
- It is the oldest surviving former Thames Valley Bristol single deck bus.
- It is the oldest preserved Bristol LL with its original body.
- 556 is contemporary with and complementary to 446.

TV&GWOT is committed to holding 556 along with 152 and 446 within the charitable trust in perpetuity, ensuring that it will be kept in the Thames Valley and available for use at public running days and heritage events. The presence of 556 within our vehicle collection alongside our extensive archive and photographic collection has consolidated TV&GWOT's position as the authoritative custodian of the heritage of the Thames Valley Traction Company. This gives a major boost to the Trust in pursuing its charitable objectives in relation to educating the public in the history of road passenger transport and increasing access to the historic vehicles which provide the experience of bygone travel.

TV&GWOT Chairman, Colin Billington, in announcing the appeal, said "TV&GWOT is widely known for its organisation of heritage events both in the Thames Valley and the West Country. For the latter we have a large choice of vehicles both on long term loan to the Trust and in the ownership of the Trustees and Trust Supporters but there are relatively few Thames Valley vehicles in preservation and even fewer which are preserved to meet the roadworthiness and restoration standards we expect for our public vintage bus running days.

"Therefore, very clearly, preservation and restoration of Thames Valley vehicles should be and is a high priority for the Trust. Work on 152, our 1927 Tilling-Stevens, which has been fully funded thanks to the generosity of our Supporters in responding to our 2017 appeal, is nearing completion and it will be ready to return to the road by this autumn. Therefore the focus can now turn to 556 and the extensive restoration programme required" (below and overleaf).



*Rear offside upper corner with body filler separation – remove filler & reshape corner.*



*Rear nearside lower corner – remove filler & reshape corner.*



*Nearside lower panel damage – Phase 2.*



*556 at Newbury.  
© Paul Lacey Collection*

### 556 History

556 was delivered new to The Thames Valley Traction Company in August 1951 and entered service at Reading garage where it remained until January 1958 when it was transferred to Newbury. It remained at Newbury until September 1960 when it was sold for further service with United Welsh retaining its Thames Valley fleet number 556. After six years' service, 556 was sold to Welsh independent Precelley Motors of Clynderwen in Carmarthenshire in October 1966. They operated 556 for two years before passing it on to nearby Jones Motor Services of Login in September 1968. 556 spent a further 10 years in service with Jones Motor Services (a total service life of almost 28 years) before being withdrawn circa May 1978 and sold to a preservationist.

Prior to 1982, 556 had been acquired by a farmer in Sussex (Haywards Heath, Uckfield, Burgess Hill area) who disposed of the seats and kept chickens in it. In September 1982, 556 was acquired from this Sussex farmer by Trust Supporter Ward Jones of High Wycombe and restoration commenced. Supporter, Colin Rackstraw, acquired 556 from Ward, following which Ward continued to restore 556 on Colin's behalf. The Bristol gearbox as fitted to 556 needs plenty of driving time to become accomplished. Colin tells us that this was a barrier to full mastery and enjoyment so he reluctantly decided to return 556 to Ward. He can be proud that the restoration work carried out during his ownership then enabled 556 to be rallied by several other owners for nearly 20 years before it was laid up in the early 2000s for a period of 14 years. When TV&GWOT obtained agreement to take 556 on loan in early 2015, we were able to drive her back from Worcestershire with only minor fuel issues at the start of the journey.

**Please support TV&GWOT's appeal to fund 556 by either:**

- Making a one-off donation, or
- Putting in place a standing order to make a regular monthly donation over a period of 25 months

Those making single donations of £1,000 or more or a monthly standing order of over £40 will be enrolled as a Supporter of 556 and be:

- added to the authorised drivers' or conductors' roster (subject to assessment / licence qualification).
- invited to ride on the inaugural run of 556 restored and under TV&GWOT ownership.

Please give generously to help us to preserve this important vehicle for the future, keeping Thames Valley Traction alive in the Thames Valley.

**Thank you**

**I would like to help TV&GWOT acquire and restore 556 by:**

- Making a donation of £.....  
*(Cheques and POs should be made payable to TV&GWOT or payments may be via bank transfer see bank account details overleaf)*
- Making a monthly payment by Banker's Standing Order *(see opposite)*
- Becoming a Supporter of 556 *(minimum donation £1,000 or payment by standing order of £40 per month for 25 months)*

Please also complete a Gift Aid declaration if applicable *(see opposite)*

**GIFT AID DECLARATION**

**Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate**  
 Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the corresponding tax year.

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

- I want to Gift Aid my donation of £..... and any donations I make in the future donations to The Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust (TV&GWOT).

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/ or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Signed..... Date.....

Title..... First name or initial(s).....

Surname .....

Full home address .....

.....

..... Postcode.....

Please notify the charity if you: want to cancel this declaration; change your name or home address; or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

**BANKER'S ORDER**

To the Manager *(your bank)*.....

Bank address.....

.....

Sort code No..... Account No.....

Please pay to Lloyds Bank plc, 45 High Street, Maidenhead SL6 1JS Sort Code No 30-95-36, for the credit of the Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust (Account No. 03754934)

The sum of £.....*(amount in figures)*

..... *(amount in words)*

on .....*(date)* and thereafter at monthly intervals

until..... *(date)*

Signed..... Date.....

**Please return to: TV&GWOT, Ledger Farm, Forest Green Road, Fifield, Maidenhead SL6 2NR. Registered Charity No. 1125980**