

Perfectly matched to open top environment

Operators in Russia, Tatarstan, Austria and Switzerland are the latest to install v6e's multilingual commentary system.

Open-top tour customers rightly expect a reliable service with a friendly welcome, good access to all the main sights, and a first class commentary in the language of their choice which helps reveal the hidden delights of the city they are visiting.

Sightseeing bus operation is a specialist business that requires specialist kit and one company leading the way in the supply of multilingual commentary systems is Bristol-based v6e which now has its equipment fitted in more than 600 buses in 28 cities.

The latest expansion is into Russia with five buses and two boats operated by City Sightseeing Moscow offering multilingual commentary in eight languages

on v6e equipment. The company has also launched a sightseeing tour in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan.

Sergei Lavrentyev, president of City Sightseeing Russia, was delighted with the service he received, having given v6e just four days to ship out the complete systems to Kazan. He describes v6e as "... the best you will find with amazing support, maintenance and after-sales care".

The Kazan tour was started for the 27th Summer Student Games which opened in Kazan in July and is operated by four Higer double-deck buses. The tour covers the historic part of the city including the old Tatar settlement, the Kazan Kremlin, the literary and museum quarter, the Kazanka waterfront, and Ploschad Svobody

(Freedom Square). Kazan mayor Ilсур Metshin took one of the first trips on the tour buses and enjoyed the vantage point offered from the top deck: "Today, Kazan has a lot to show and to see. More than 300 building facades have been restored in the historic centre.

"From the upper deck, I can see what else I have to do as mayor."

The commentary system is provided in eight languages: Russian, Tatar, English, Spanish, German, French, Chinese and Turkish.

Kazan is the second city to have an open top tour following Moscow where a new tour started in August 2012. The route includes some of the Russian capital's famous landmarks including the Kremlin,





Red Square, Lenin's Mausoleum and the Tsar Bell. The commentary is available on the Moscow tour buses in Russian, English and German.

As well as success in Russia, v6e now also has systems operating in Vienna, Chamonix and Geneva. This comes on top of major contracts in North America including 160 sightseeing buses in New York operated by City Sights and Grayline, and on Big Bus tours in Washington and Miami.

The reason for the success of the Bristol-based company is clear. Founded by Nathan Scott and Caroline Bain, both of whom have an aircraft industry background, v6e prides itself on designing systems that are entirely fit for the purpose. "Open top tours are an unusual application and a demanding environment," says Scott. "Most commercial components are only guaranteed for around 1,000 cycles which is no use in this market. And that is why we have developed our own."

The open top environment means that the equipment is subject to everything that the climate throws at it, whether it is cool, damp weather or a dry, dusty atmosphere, and electrical equipment needs to be robust enough to work consistently in these environments. Operators need the reassurance that the commentary system



Focus on v6e



will deliver high quality audio, consistently, without the problem of failing seat units, cables or jack sockets.

A holistic approach to product design and manufacture enables v6e to ensure that the equipment it delivers to operators is fit for purpose. A demanding regime of testing and quality procedures underpins the product range.

And the support for customers doesn't end when they install the kit. Scott and Bain are leading a programme of continuous improvement in product design which enables them to enhance

the current range of solutions with the latest components and manufacturing methods. Some changes are forced on them as individual items become obsolete, but rather than see this as a problem and an excuse to move customers on to new equipment, Scott sees it as a challenge to reconfigure the systems using the latest techniques and improve the products further.

The company's top-selling L-Verbum range, which offers the capacity for up to 24 languages, has recently been through a complete design and engineering

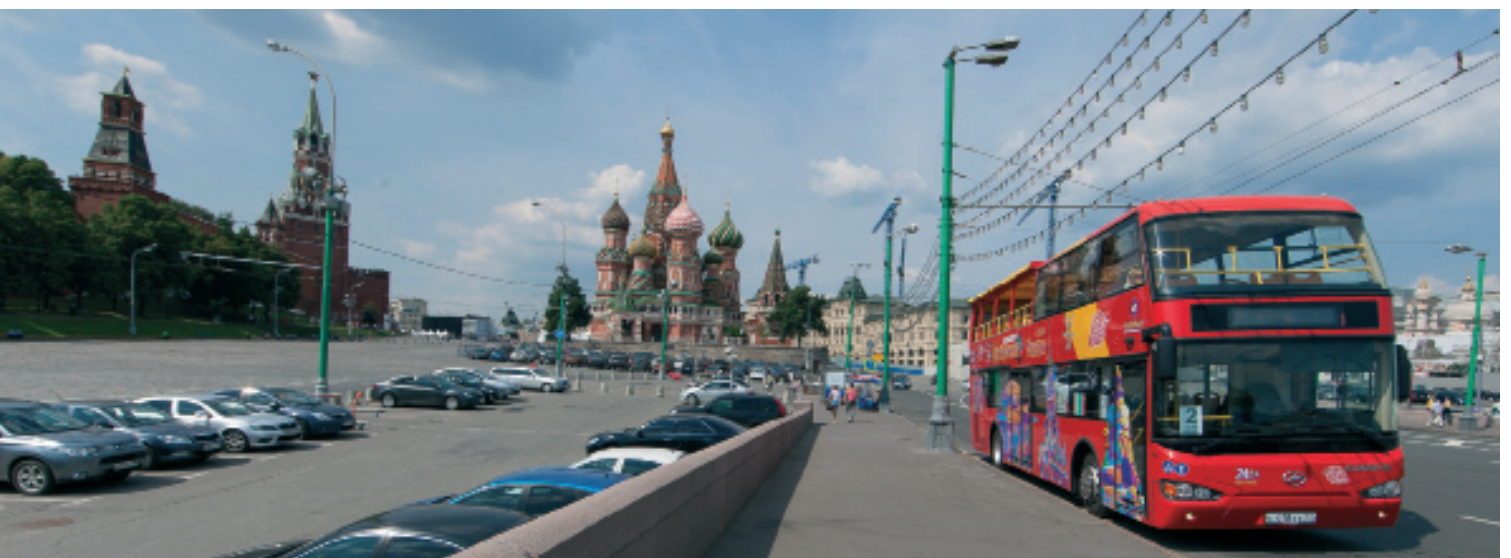
rebuild. This has included a thorough testing programme to ensure compliance with regulations governing EMC electromagnetic compatibility. Scott points out that under European rules, automotive electrical sub assemblies, such as the multilingual systems, need to carry an 'e-mark' to show that they meet the requirements. In the UK, the system is overseen by the Vehicle Certification Agency and all equipment has to be tested at approved laboratories. In addition, v6e's manufacturing partners work to a set of quality manuals to ensure Conformity of Production, and have to be ISO-certified and accredited by UKAS.

Once approved, all the equipment is identified by an 'e-mark' label, with the prefix e11 - '11' being the country code for the UK within the regulations.

Of course in the modern world of globalised production, there are often less scrupulous manufacturers who may offer to supply equipment that they claim is compliant, but does not have the necessary approval, or indeed may carry false documentation and labels. Operators should be aware that ultimately it is their responsibility if they are found to be operating a vehicle that has equipment which has not been properly tested and approved.

All of the components, the seat units, connectors, seals and sockets have been designed by v6e to ensure they provide years of reliable service. Indeed the first examples of its original Vocis system are still in regular operation in Glasgow and Edinburgh, eight years after installation.

"We are continuing to invest in the longevity of our products," says Scott, "so that we protect the investment that our



customers have made in their systems.

“We are happy to guarantee that operators will get at least five years from our L-Verbum system. It’s the quality of the components that means it lasts.”

As well as providing the equipment, v6e can offer a complete turnkey solution, including a fitting service and a scripting, translation and recording option to produce the audio commentary.

Maintaining flexibility is another of v6e’s attributes. The contract for New York required a new approach that minimised the labour involved in fitting the equipment to the existing fleet. This led Scott to develop the Rapid Fit system which enables the units to be positioned on the bus sidewall inside a protective housing with a bespoke aluminium conduit to cover all the cabling.

Spare parts are held in various locations to support customers. The Bristol site has an extensive stock of everything from cables to connectors and seat unit components, and parts are also held in China to serve Asian markets.

On the horizon, Scott promises a forthcoming ‘next generation’ commentary system which is now going through the same rigorous testing development

regime on which the company has built its reputation.

www.v6e.co.uk



Become multilingual: Increase your market share by appealing to international tourists

“For reliability there is nothing better.”

Gerry Price
Big Bus Company



v6e now on 5 buses & 2 boats in Moscow

“The best you will find with amazing support, maintenance and after sales care.”
Sergei Lavrentyev, President, Co-founder and Co-owner of City Sightseeing Russia.



600+ systems operating globally in 28 locations from New York to Shanghai

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