

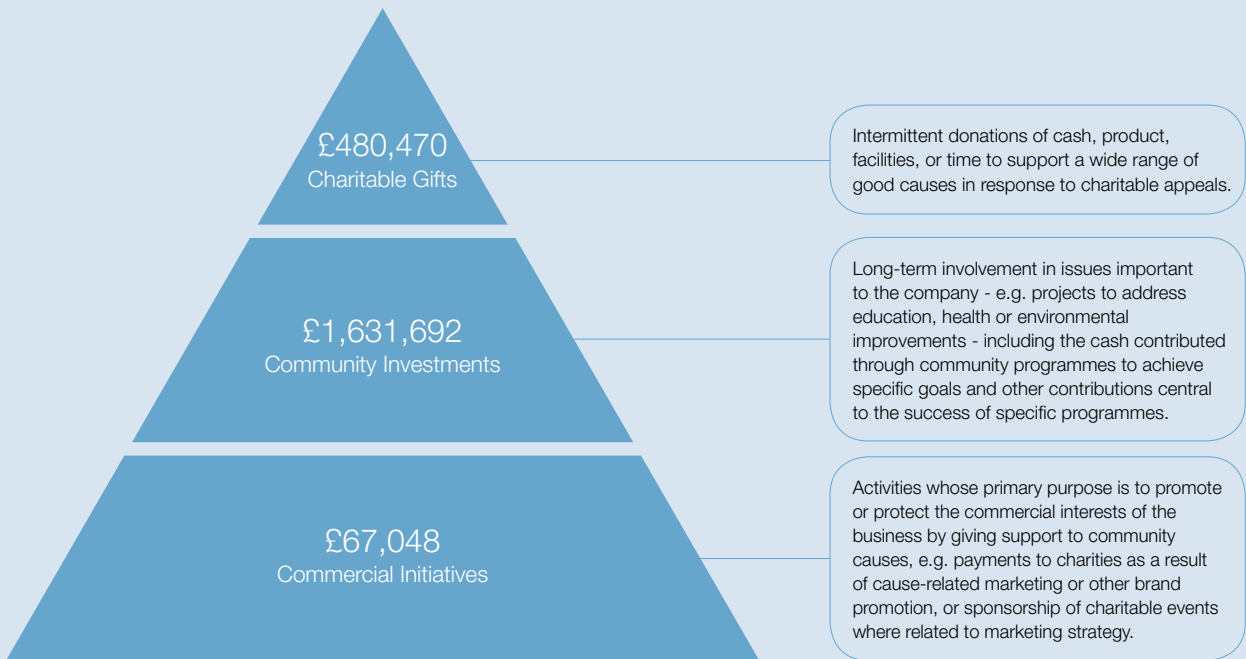


Community engagement

Our services are often vital to the communities in which we operate. They provide socially inclusive means of travel, connecting people and communities. They are critical to economic competitiveness, transporting many people to work, school and other destinations each day.

Through our membership of the London Benchmarking Group we have, for the first time, sought to quantify our contribution to the communities we serve. As this is the first time we have collated this data our data capture processes are developing and we may not have captured the full extent of our contribution. The data below only covers our UK operations. We will refine our processes in the coming year and extend the methodology to our North American operations.

London Benchmarking Group breakdown of community investments*



The London Benchmarking Group represents over 120 leading businesses that have come together to manage, measure and report their contribution to the wider community using a standard methodology.

First's total value of contributions including management costs = £2,235,830



* These figures exclude management costs



Community engagement

Our role in the community

Our operations touch members of the community daily, whether as customers, neighbours, employees, businesses or residents. Good relationships with the local communities in which we operate are essential to supporting business growth.

The investment we make in our services is central to our contribution to the local community. We work with local authorities to improve punctuality and ease congestion. We consult continually with community members with regard to route development and changes. We work to facilitate access to our services for those with special needs and those that rely most on our services.

In North America we work with city and state authorities and school boards to ensure our services meet the needs of the communities we serve. In particular we have worked with schools to help address broader community issues such as truancy and bullying.

Promoting social inclusion

As a major employer we are also eager to ensure that we offer employment to all sectors of the community. We operate non-discriminatory policies and promote opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. In June 2008 our UK Bus division was the first to sign a national agreement with Remploy, a specialist service for people with complex barriers to employment. The agreement requires us to provide details of all vacancies to Remploy and to facilitate site visits and work trials for Remploy recruits joining the business. To date we have recruited 13 new employees through Remploy.

We also work with Jobcentre Plus to help the long-term unemployed find work. This year we have considered the potential role of pre-employment training to support applicants in the recruitment process. This led to the establishment of an award-winning scheme in Manchester.



Where possible we also work to make our employees' lifelong learning opportunities available to their families and the broader community. Our ability to do this depends on the location of the training facility and safety factors.



Case Study

Justin Williams, our first employee recruited through the agreement with Remploy, was left with chronic leg problems following a serious accident. "I am very happy to be a bus driver and have learned the job from some of the best people whilst being at First. The opportunity presented to me has made me more confident and has helped transform my life for the better."

Case Study

Opening opportunities for the unemployed

Through our relationship with JobCentre Plus we partner with pre-employment trainers TNG to deliver a support programme for potential bus drivers in Manchester. The programme aims to support local unemployed people who are interested in a career with First but who lack the confidence to enter the recruitment process. The success of this partnership was recognised at the 2008 Avanta Awards, where we received the Partner of the Year Award. Avanta Awards celebrate outstanding achievements of individuals who have overcome adversity to achieve success.

Community partnerships

We use our community partnerships to deliver positive change in the communities we serve. We work with many groups trying to reduce the vandalism and anti-social behaviour which affect our communities and our business. We are keen to make a positive contribution, in particular by helping young people to understand the consequences of their actions.

In Aberdeen our anti-vandalism bus provides an educational resource for schools. In several parts of the country our drivers visit schools or work with community groups to describe first-hand how it feels to be at the receiving end of antisocial behaviour. We also sponsor sports and educational programmes in socially deprived areas to tackle the problem.

- In Manchester, working with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, we supported a special football tournament designed to teach children about being good citizens.
- In Aberdeen and Glasgow First Football tournaments take place in the winter months. These are targeted specifically at Social Inclusion Partnership areas where vandalism and crime tend to be high.
- In the South West we have supported ten Football League clubs through our First Football initiative.



In our UK Rail division our Adopt a Station programmes help communities to improve the station environment and make productive use of unused station buildings. We are also involved in a number of community partnerships designed to promote the local economy by encouraging rail travel. Working with Severnside Community Rail Partnership we have transformed vandalised and run-down stations on a little used route run by First Great Western. This has resulted in a 32% increase in line use during the last 12 months.



In North America our school buses often provide transportation for charity events. Our Fill a Bus programmes operate in many parts of the country to collect and donate items such as toys, food or supplies to local causes.



Working with Portsmouth Football Club we have established two education buses containing 18 computers which will deliver healthy eating and family education across the Portsmouth area.



Charitable giving

In 2007 we established a national partnership with Save the Children in the UK to help focus our charitable activity and offer employees the chance to become involved in fund-raising activity. We have now established a similar relationship with the Children's Miracle Network in North America.

Our target for the Save the Children partnership was to raise £1 million through corporate donations, in kind support and fund-raising initiatives over two years. This target was reached ahead of schedule after 18 months.

These relationships enable us to develop fund-raising programmes in which our employees and the general public can participate. We have charity champions across the business who provide a focal point for charitable activity and help engage staff. In the UK our largest event is Our First Monster Challenge, a highly successful duathlon around the shores of Loch Ness. This is supported by a series of smaller Mini Monster events.

Through Save the Children we fund three Poverty Programme Managers located in Scotland, England and Wales. They work directly with children in some of the poorest parts of the country. We also fund a Save the Children project, which tackles severe and persistent poverty in the east end of Glasgow. Through working with the young people in this project Save the Children gain a direct insight into the key issues they face and use this information to seek to deliver positive change at policy level.

All our charitable donations are managed through our Charity and Sponsorship Committees in the UK and North America. These committees are made up of employees and help ensure available funds are distributed fairly and consistently.

We support numerous projects through our charity programme. Further examples can be found on our website at www.firstgroup.com/corporate/csr/community.php.

Case Study



In California we provide transportation from the airport to Disneyland for terminally ill children from Canada as part of Operation Dreamlift.

Case Study



In Hull we have launched a three year sponsorship fund facilitated by SportsAid to help five East Yorkshire Athletes get on track for the 2012 London Olympics.

Case Study



The YES project with Save the Children aims to build self-confidence and self-esteem in young people aged 12-18 by helping them become more engaged in school and community activities.

Case Study



We have supported Kidscape's anti-bullying campaign by funding leaflets providing safety information and advice on how to deal with the issue of bullying.