

Wrightbus scoops £81 million electric bus order with First Group

Ballymena's Wrightbus has secured an £81 million order from one of England's biggest transport companies for its electric buses.

The deal for 193 buses with First Group is the largest electric vehicle (EV) bus order outside London and has been partly funded by a Department for Transport grant to the tune of £38 million, split between five council areas. The funding covers the premium for electric buses over those running on more conventional fossil fuels.

The vehicles will be made at the Wrightbus's County Antrim base and rollout is expected to begin from March 2023.

Ben Werth, Chief Commercial Officer at Wrightbus, said the deal is significant for the company, and for Northern Ireland.

"All of the buses – the GB Kite Electroliner BEV and the StreetDeck Electroliner BEV, which is the world's most efficient double decker battery-electric bus – will be manufactured and assembled at our Ballymena factory, which means support for jobs in Northern Ireland, and wider across the UK through our domestic supply chain.

He said the latest deal sees Wrightbus bolster its reputation in zero emissions public transport.

"2022 has been a remarkable year for Wrightbus so far, as this deal comes after our recent, historic deals with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Australia and Germany. This latest deal with First Bus strengthens the reputation we have forged in the zero-emission transport sector and will help play an

important part in the UK's ambitions for decarbonisation."

First Group's order is destined for Leicester, which will account for 68 buses; York 44 buses; Leeds 32 buses; Norwich 15 buses, and Portsmouth with 34 buses. The relevant council in each city worked with the bus operator to secure the DfT funding.

Each regional project will be completed over the course of the next two years. It means that First Bus will have over 500 EV buses in operation in what is a huge leap forward towards their pledge of an entirely zero emission fleet by 2035.