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Save time, buy tickets in advance at PayPoint with the weekly top-up shop

Welwyn Garden City, 16 November 2011: It's about to get easier to buy your bus tickets as First Bristol, Somerset and Avon, the region's biggest operator, has joined forces with PayPoint, the local network of high street retailers, to enable customers to buy bus tickets over the counter at around 600 outlets in the region. From today, people will be able to get First Week and FirstMonth tickets, along with FirstTen tickets, from their local shop at the same time as picking up a loaf of bread or pint of milk, or topping up their gas or electricity.

The move means that people will be able to buy their bus travel in advance at their own convenience. It will encourage more people to buy their tickets off the bus, which in turn may speed up boarding times, and it will mean even more people will be able to take advantage of the cheaper deals on bus travel that are available to those who buy multi-journey tickets in advance.

First Month tickets offer a very economical way to pay for regular bus travel and start from just £57 for 31 days unlimited travel in Bristol zones one or two (equivalent to just £1.84 a day) . For £80 customers can buy a ticket covering unlimited travel for 31 days in Bristol zones one, two and three – which would cover travel out to Chipping Sodbury, Yate, Bitton, Nailsea and Backwell. Tickets covering travel throughout the entire South West are also available.

Talking about the new payment method, Marc Reddy, Regional Business and Commercial Growth Director for First in the South West and Wales, says: "We're always on the lookout for ways to improve our services for our customers so when they told us they wanted an easier and more convenient way to buy their tickets in advance of travel, we identified PayPoint as the perfect solution. Under this new arrangement, customers will be able to buy their monthly bus tickets, or FirstTen tickets, while at the local newsagent, garage, supermarket or convenience store – many of which are open long hours and often seven days a week.

"Many customers already enjoy the convenience of paying utility bills, telephone charges, rents and council tax using PayPoint, so the facility to buy their bus ticket fits perfectly.

"Obtaining tickets in advance helps speed up boarding time at the bus stop, enabling us to improve reliability and punctuality, and it also removes the need for customers to carry lots of change with them."

Seamus Smith, Managing Director of PayPoint UK, adds: "We are delighted to be partnering with First Bristol, Somerset and Avon so that bus users in the region are now able to ease their journeys by purchasing their bus tickets in advance of travel, within more convenient locations, even while they do their shopping."

FirstMonth and FirstWeek tickets will still be available to buy on the bus from the driver, and they can also be bought online from www.firstgroup.com/etickets.

PayPoint is the UK's leading branded retail network for the convenient local payment of household bills, mobile top-ups and now, bus tickets. First Bristol, Somerset and Avon customers will be able to buy or renew their four-weekly bus tickets at any of around 600 PayPoint outlets in the area. Their locations can be found at <http://www.paypoint.com>.

For more information about First Bristol, Somerset and Avon, or to view timetable information, log onto: www.firstgroup.com/bristol.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information contact: Karen Baxter, PR Manager, First UK Bus (Midlands, South West & Wales) on 07894 785155 or email: Karen.Baxter@firstgroup.com.
- **First Bristol, Somerset & Avon** carries around 55 million passengers each year on a network of more than 100 routes. It has depots in Bristol, Bath, Taunton, Bridgwater and Wells. As a company, First is committed to delivering a safe, reliable and punctual service for its customers. The company operates 750 vehicles and employs 2000 people.
- **FirstGroup plc** is the leading transport operator in the UK and North America with revenues of over £6.4 billion a year. It employs approximately 125,000 staff and transports some 2.5 billion passengers a year. Website: www.firstgroup.com
- **The Group is Britain's largest bus operator** running more than one in five of all local bus services. A fleet of nearly 8,000 buses carries approximately 2.5 million passengers a day in more than 40 major towns and cities (website: www.firstgroup.com/ukbus) It also operates Greyhound UK providing regular services each way between London and Portsmouth, London and Southampton and London and Bournemouth, as well as Swansea and Cardiff, and Glasgow and London (website: www.greyhounduk.com)