Cosy, intimate, informative and unique are some of the best words to describe Busworld, a bi-ennial bus show held in Kortrijk, a small Belgian city between Brussels and Oostende. Busworld has become the most important if not the biggest bus show in the world, certainly for supplier and buyers of product. In numbers, the event speaks for itself. This, the 23rd, hosted over 35,000 visitors from 118 countries, and with 411 trade stands from suppliers in 36 countries, the event still has its foundations deep in the coach operators association.

Like the Coach & Bus Show in Dublin, most of the organising committee are coach operators. Although there is no official theme for the show it does always reflect the direction the industry is going. On the vehicle side, two trends are strong - electric buses and the growth in demand for intercity double deck coaches. *Fleet Bus & Coach* was there to capture the mood and report all what's happening.

**Brian Noone Ltd**

Irish manufacturer Brian Noone Ltd displayed three vehicles at the show including a Turas 500 in left hand drive. Having appointed a dealer in Sweden, Managing Director, Mark Noone is confident that the company will appoint more dealers in Europe in the coming 12 months. One of the big selling points for the Turas 900 is the partnership it has developed with Daimler (Mercedes-Benz) on the integration of the Atego chassis. Featured on the stand was a Turas 900, one of the five to be delivered to Kavanagh’s, two of which are fitted with toilets.

**BYD**

Isbrand Ho is the Managing Director for the European Sales Division of the Chinese bus manufacturer Build Your Dreams (BYD). Four years ago, BYD attended Kortrijk with a concept electric bus and promised to have them in active service in Western Europe in a few years at an appropriate price. Now they are in many European cities and currently operate twelve in London (Double Deckers). Asked if he could put electric double deckers in Dublin a confident Ho said he could have them on the street of our capital in two months, and that without subsidies they would pay for themselves in 7 years.

**Iveco Bus**

Busworld Kortrijk 2015 was staged during the Rugby World Cup, and unsurprisingly the Iveco Bus stand had a strong All-Blacks theme. The star on show was the International Coach of the Year 2016, the Iveco Magelys. The winning coach at 12.7m long featured 44 seats and 8 in a lounge format. Iveco has put significant resources into CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) bus development and this year will put 400 units into service. The company also has supplied 500 BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) units to date.

**Mercedes-Benz**

Launched for the first time in Kortrijk, the Mercedes-Benz Natural Gas Technology (NGT) Citaro. It can be operated in Natural Gas or renewable Natural Gas, which is almost CO₂ neutral. Concentrating on the cost of operating the bus, the service intervals have been stretched and with the light weight construction, extra passengers can be carried. In trials, the bus has given 20% cost savings in fuel in comparison to diesel. At the show a standard bus was on display but it is available in articulated version also.
MAN
The German brand focused on environmentally-friendly and efficient drives through its Sustainable Solutions for Urban Traffic programme. Advancing urbanisation, increasing pressure on transport systems, air and noise pollution in cities, and climate change all require sustainable solutions for urban mobility. With its broad range of hybrid and natural gas vehicles, which are continually subject to ongoing development, MAN already has well-engineered, sustainable, CO2, efficient and economical future technologies on the road today.

Scania
Selling very well and gaining market share for Scania is the Touring model. With the bodywork by Chinese bodybuilder Higer the coach has full Scania warranty cover and is fully maintained by the dealer network. While there are no plans to introduce a right hand drive version, it has not been ruled out. Displayed was a 3 axle 450 hp coach with 57 seats. Also for the first time a Scania ‘Interlink’ suburban, intercity bus was displayed with 42 seats and two wheelchair spaces.

UNVI
Portuguese body builder UNVI, represented in Ireland by Central Bus & Coach launched a 4.2m Double Decker at the Show which is particularly aimed at the Scandinavian market. Liam and Alan Farrelly spent some time at the stand to meet the Irish customers that travelled to the show. On the stand was a Voyager 33 seater on the Mercedes-Benz chassis similar to the coaches available in Ireland.

VDL
Another company that had to make a short trip to the Show was VDL which is based close to Kortrijk. Earlier this year VDL introduced the Citea Electric Citybus, and at the show the Futura FDD2 Double Decker was launched. With the expansion of Intercity coach travel in Central Europe the Future FDD2 is a total new design including a new aerodynamic front. Two distinctive features on the new coach are a forward slope on the upper deck to give the driver a better view and headlights built into the upper deck. Earlier this year VDL delivered eight Synergy Double Deckers to Bus Eireann.

Thermo King
Thermo King provide air conditioning units for all modern coaches and work closely with manufacturers to maximise passenger comfort. At the show it presented some of its new ventilation and air conditioning units that are designed with a special focus on hybrid and electric buses. One development Thermo King is keen to explore with manufacturers is customisation for individual coaches.

VanHool
The local bus and coach manufacturer had a range of coaches displayed, including a three axle EX17H which won an award as part of the show for Ecology. EX series is the successor to the TX range and these coaches are manufactured in the new VanHool plant in Macedonia. With production up to 600 per year and extra capacity available, coaches for the American market are also manufactured here. Outside the show a VanHool ‘Tram Bus’ ran a regular shuttle to and from the railway station.

Volvo Bus
Volvo Bus themed its stand with the slogan ‘Listen to your City’. With almost 2/3 of the world’s population living in urban areas, in the next five years, Volvo sees the development of the electric bus as essential. It has delivered 22,000 hybrid buses worldwide to date and is currently trialling an all-electric bus on Route S5 in Gothenburg. It’s expected to be in serial production by 2017. Also on display was a 9700 coach and for the first time ever ‘Dynamic Steering’ which at low speed gives the driver more assistance in steering, while at higher speed it compensates for any change of surface through the steering box.

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