

MAN EcoCity gas bus passes Reading tests

Four weeks into a five-week trial, Reading Transport has said its CNG-powered MAN EcoCity bus demonstrator makes a “perfectly feasible” proposition on its urban-intensive Reading Buses operation.

“Does it work? So far, yes it does,” comments Reading Transport CEO James Freeman, praising MAN’s new compressed natural gas bus.

“The gas bus goes out every morning and we don’t see or hear of it until it returns 12 hours later – and that’s exactly how it should be. MAN really does seem to have cracked it with MAN EcoCity.”

The 40-seater 17,900kg gvw MAN EcoCity bus is powered by a E2876 LUH 04 EEV (enhanced environmentally friendly vehicle) engine, with a three-way catalytic converter, delivering 272bhp and 1,050 Nm of torque

That power plant is matched to a ZF automatic gearbox 6 AP 1200 Ecolife, with integrated retarder. Fuel is stored in four aluminium composite canisters.

Freeman points to Reading Transport’s 25-year history of trialling new engine technology, not all of it successfully, and states that indications suggest MAN EcoCity is a viable system for fleet acquisition.

“Emissions are very low indeed,” he continues, “and that’s in tune with the philosophy of our local authority owners, Reading Borough Council. We are due to replace our single-deck fleet in 2013, and the MAN EcoCity proposition appears to be perfectly feasible.”

Freeman says his organisation has tried everything – from ethanol to LPG, electric-hybrid, even cooking oil. “The difference with MAN EcoCity is that gas bus technology has come of age. It’s a proven power system.”



MAN’s EcoCity was designed and constructed specifically for the UK market. MAN claims operating cost savings of some 30% and the ability to run on the UK’s fast-building supplies of biogas – thus reducing emissions to zero.

A key part of the success of the gas bus programme’s development to date has been MAN’s partnership with the Gas Bus Alliance, aimed at assisting with the gas infrastructure required for successful operation of CNG vehicles.

MAN EcoCity is also due to be trialled with other UK bus operators over the coming months.

ASH gets lowdown with first Merc Econic

A purpose-designed, low-entry cab and highly rated dealer back-up has tempted ASH Waste Services to invest in its first Mercedes-Benz truck.

The 6x4 Econic 2629LL was supplied to the Wrexham-based recycling specialist by Deeside dealer Road Range Commercials.

It is powered by a 290bhp, 7.2-litre Euro 5 engine which, as with all Mercedes-Benz Econics, drives through an Allison six-speed automatic gearbox with cruise control.

The chassis rides on air suspension all round, while the Mercedes-Benz Axle Load Indicator system, connected to each individual airbag, monitors the vehicle’s load and helps the operator stay safe and legal.

Together, ASH Waste Services and sister operation Alan’s Skip Hire run a fleet of 65 trucks. “Historically, we’ve sourced our vehicles from another manufacturer, so this represents a bold step for us,” states Neil Hassall, a director of both firms. “But we’re confident it’s the right move.”

Key to the Econic’s appeal, he says, was its comfortable and user-friendly low-entry cab. “We’ve held discussions with our staff and feel the easily accessed cab will prove safer, more efficient and easier to use,” comments Hassall.

“It’s a very ergonomic layout, with deep windscreen, low floor and high ceiling, and a bus-style bi-fold door on the passenger side,” he explains.

McBurney cuts fuel costs using Portland Analytics

McBurney Transport says it has been making major savings by working with Portland Analytics to manage its fuel costs.

The haulage company has not only slashed its fuel bill, but also cut its carbon footprint.

McBurney Transport director Carolyn Carmichael explains that Portland reviewed the company’s previous diesel purchasing arrangements and highlighted opportunities for savings.

“We buy [large] volumes of diesel annually in both the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and the information Portland was able to come up with on margins and handling fees meant that a far more attractive deal could be negotiated with suppliers,” she says.

“Before we spoke to Portland, we used to buy fuel on an ad hoc basis and we had no real idea of the sort of margins suppliers worked on,” continues Carmichael.

“Having a fuller understanding of the margin they enjoy means you’ve got a valuable negotiating tool in your armoury,” she adds.

