

# Dual fuel and gas blend trucks: here we come

There are very few occasions when the imperative 'hold the front page' is justified, but this is one of them. As we go to press, HM Government has announced that it is to provide £11 million of support for a £23 million demonstration programme, aimed at encouraging operators to get serious about low-carbon heavy trucks.

Its revelation follows the competition launched by the DfT (Department for Transport) and TSB (Technology Strategy Board) on 24 April, as this year's CV Show opened its doors.

Freight minister Mike Penning says that the response from fleet operators, vehicle converters, gas hub providers and universities was so compelling that more than 300 low-carbon trucks will now be involved in the programme, which will be managed by the TSB, DfT and the Office for Low Emission Vehicles.

Demonstrator projects will be led by: Ascott Transport (Derbyshire), Brit European Transport (Crewe), CNG Services (Solihull, with two trials), G-Volution (Newport, Gwent), Howard Tenens (Gloucestershire and Wiltshire), JB Wheaton & Sons (Somerset), John Lewis Partnership (London), Hardstaff (Nottingham), Robert Wiseman Dairies (Glasgow), Tesco (Northants), BOC Group (Guildford) and United Biscuits (Leicestershire).

Interestingly, Penning also says that £2.4 million of funding will go towards publicly accessible gas stations, with a goal of countering the oft-expressed criticism over the lack of a biomethane or even a CNG/LNG infrastructure in the UK. And, just as important, he insists that government support will help operators establish and run fleets of alternative and dual-fuel HGVs by meeting part of the difference in capital cost between traditional vehicles and their low carbon equivalents.

"These trials will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from freight and provide important information from a range of real-life situations that will increase industry's confidence in low carbon trucks in the long term," states Penning. And Iain Gray, chief executive of the TSB, adds: "This trial will ... help to accelerate a wider understanding and acceptance of low carbon vehicle technologies, while enabling the development of alternative fuel infrastructures."

All very worthy stuff and decidedly impressive projects. G-Volution, for example, is to trial no fewer than ten 44-tonne dual-fuel (biomethane and diesel) HGVs, using its own dual-fuel Optimiser technology. Meanwhile, JB Wheaton will be working with other fleet operators to trial 28 dual-fuel trucks, in this case running diesel blended with CNG or LNG.

Then Robert Wiseman Dairies – collaborating with Chive Fuels, Cenex and MIRA – will trial 40 new warranted dual-fuel, 40-tonne articulated trucks, substituting diesel with natural gas from two upgraded LNG stations, one in the West Midlands, the other in Scotland. And the John Lewis team is aiming for a 70% cut in carbon emissions across a range of HGV combinations, using biomethane-diesel engine technology, but also the latest aerodynamics and other interventions.

This has to be about as good as it gets. Yes, there is doubt about how much funding is likely to be available for other truck operators wanting to try these cost- and environment-saving technologies. But, in these straitened times, it could yet kick-start a sea change in adoption.



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