



Volvo Bus exhibited its Euro 6 city bus range

Big boost for buses

Improving hybrids, more funding and better technologies for ATFs and workshops alike made Coach & Bus Live a buzzing show for the PSV sector. John Challen reports

Coach & Bus Live 2013 got off to the best start a show can hope for, with (now ex) transport minister Norman Baker confirming money for 55 low-carbon buses, courtesy of the Green Bus and Clean Bus funds. £3.4m will be invested, he asserted, allowing bus operators and local authorities across Manchester, York and Sunderland to buy electric, hybrid and biomethane-powered buses, as well as to modify existing vehicles against emissions.

The result: plenty of action around emission-busting technologies. Alexander Dennis (ADL), for example, gave an update of its alternative-powered vehicles renewal programme, while also announcing a new 'virtual electric' bus. The latter follows a £3.2m collaboration with Scottish and Southern Electricity, Strathclyde University and others.

ADL chief executive Colin Robertson claimed the new vehicle, due out by 2015, will be "the first clean-air bus truly capable of meeting the 18-hour shifts expected by bus operators". And he added: "It will do so while running 70% of the time emission-free – the other 30% being on hybrid power." No details were released for this power plant, with Robertson stating that it's still in the planning stage.

Weight watchers

Elsewhere, Volvo Bus displayed its Euro 6 city bus range, which includes a Euro 6 B5TL double-decker, as well as coaches. Developed with Wrightbus, the B5TL shaves 1,000kg off the outgoing model, so increasing capacity to 95 passengers. Also, although this bus is powered by a smaller engine – a D5K 5.1-litre four-cylinder Euro 6 unit – drivers still get 240bhp, as well as 918Nm of torque.

As for its coach portfolio, not only has it been upgraded to Euro 6, but Volvo has also taken the opportunity to revisit the vehicle, going for a dual-

chassis approach – using its B11R and B8R platforms – and claiming improved performance as well as better parts commonality. Its range-topping 9700, for example, is now powered by Volvo's D11K engine, available as 430 or 460bhp, and offers lower fuel consumption over the outgoing flagship.

MAN also gave visitors an opportunity to see its Euro 6 vehicles – one from its Starliner coach range and a new-look CitySmart platform. Ian McLean, head of MAN's bus and coach business, conceded that this is a transitional period, with the switch to Euro 6 heavy-duty diesel engines, but also confirmed that all its new models will be available early in 2014.

Away from the new vehicles, numerous stands showed systems aimed at improving fleet efficiency and reliability. Actia, for instance, promoted its Eco-fleet telematics, with integrated remote vehicle monitoring service. This is designed to diagnose fault codes and advise drivers of the correct course of action. It also assists with maintenance planning, prior to vehicles arriving in the workshop.

Meanwhile, the news from Tecalemit was the arrival of its DE9700 brake tester. Designed to meet the needs of ATFs (Authorised Testing Facility), the unit has 15kW slow-start motors, aimed at reducing electrodynamic stress on vehicles under test. This set-up enables impact on drivetrains to be minimised, helping to prevent damage to motors and gearboxes.

Moving on, until recently Kleenfuel has been known for its engine oil cleansing equipment, but the firm is now offering systems to improve fuel economy. It claims 5% by preventing carbon deposit build-up in the engine and protecting fuel systems from corrosion. Kleenfuel is offering fleets of more than 25 vehicles a six-week trial, and promises to remove its units without charge if 5% is not realised.

Finally, the Gas Bus Alliance says it now plans to open 45 gas filling stations for buses in the UK. **TE**