

A world first as Reading introduces gas decker

Council-owned bus operator launches pioneering gas-powered double deckers in a move that aims to help reduce pollution in Reading

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

► Council-owned operator Reading Buses has become the first in the world to take delivery of a fully gas-powered double deck vehicle with a special presentation ceremony held in the Berkshire town last weekend.

Martijn Gilbert, the chief executive of Reading Buses, said he was excited and proud that the company was launching the world's first Euro VI double deck buses that runs on compressed natural gas (CNG).

He continued: "We have worked closely with the manufacturers in pioneering the introduction of the first modern era gas double deck buses anywhere in the world.

"Scania has had to think 'outside the box' to ensure the gas storage is safe without impacting on customer capacity on-board."

This sees the CNG tanks installed under the staircase and under the rear seats, instead of in the familiar roof pod used on the single decker which the company

was the first to introduce back in 2013.

"The company is confident that these new buses will help refresh and enhance the Royal Blue route and further improve the industry leading environmental credentials of Reading's bus fleet," added Gilbert.

The buses themselves will help improve the air quality around Tilehurst and Reading, operating on Reading Buses' Royal Blue-branded 33 and 33a routes up to every 10 minutes along the Tilehurst Road to the Triangle, with every second bus continuing via Little Heath Road



to Turnham's Farm.

The innovative double deck buses are the latest addition to the company's greener gas fleet with the five new buses joining the 37 single deck CNG-powered buses currently owned.

They all operate on compressed natural gas bought from a sustainable source which means they effectively run on cow dung. They produce no particulates - soot - no hydrocarbons, are virtually zero carbon and drastically reduce the amount of nitrogen oxide emitted, by as much as 55%.

Inside, the buses are equipped with high-quality added extras

FIRST BUSES GOING GREENER

Cleaner and greener forms of power increasing

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

Figures from FirstGroup demonstrate an expanded use of latest-generation bus engines and alternative fuel sources across the company's fleets in 2016.

Over the past 12 months, the transport operator has increased its use of alternatives to fossil fuels, such as

biodiesel, gas and electric engines. The company has also ramped up its investment in Euro VI bus engines in the UK. The six months between April and September 2016 saw a | four-fold increase in mileage driven | on these greener engines, when compared to the same period in 2015.

Euro VI offers significant advantages over previous generations of diesel engines as it generates only one eighth of the | harmful nitrogen oxide

emissions produced by Euro V engines.

Jim Harbidge, FirstGroup's group head of environment, said: "The volume of alternative fuels we use - in comparison to standard fuels - is growing every year; a change which is supported by increasing demand for greener alternatives from our customers and passengers.

"FirstGroup is able to meet this demand because we're at the forefront of our industry in

terms of innovative low emission technologies. Others have recognised this too, with our First Bus division recently being crowned Low Carbon Vehicle Operator of the Year 2016."

In the company's North American businesses, alternative fuel usage increased by almost 3% in the first half of the 2016/17 year. During this

to make customer journeys even better. They boast comfortable high back seating trimmed in the company's latest flat cloth design, free superfast 4G WiFi, USB charging points at-seat, a table area upstairs with a wireless 'aircharge' mobile and tablet charging pad and as well as the Reading Buses usual features such as wood effect flooring and next stop audio and visual announcements.

The buses will also feature two wheelchair bays, meaning that,

“Scania has had to ‘think outside the box’ to ensure the gas storage is safe”

Martijn Gilbert



greener buses for a greener Reading



Tony Page, deputy leader of Reading Council (left) with Martijn Gilbert at the special presentation event

period, more than 63 million miles were travelled by vehicles running on alternative forms of propulsion, such as biodiesel, gas, or electricity.

The company also saw 45% growth in liquefied natural gas mileage (LNG) and 22% increase in liquefied petroleum gas mileage (LPG), when compared to the same period in the previous year.

Harbidge said: “The B20 biodiesel we use in some of our North American fleet is cleaner and less

for the first time, two wheelchair users can travel together. This is a pioneering trial of this facility on a British local bus service and the company will be monitoring this new accessibility feature with interest to consider its roll-out on future new vehicle orders.

Meanwhile, Reading Buses has also been longlisted for a sustainable energy enterprise award against a respected and impressive number of national rivals.

The longlisting, in the Sustainable Transport in Towns and Cities category of the Ashden Awards, recognises the operator's innovative ways in targeting pollution in Reading by making transport more sustainable whilst, at the same time, providing social and economic benefits. ■

carbon-intensive, offering up to 14% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in comparison with conventional diesel.”

“Our investment in fuel and vehicle technology is setting new standards for efficiency. The alternative fuels market is an exciting, but crowded, place. Through this investment, our customers know that the best solution is being used on their journey.”*

IN BRIEF

ALL ELECTRIC CITY

Swedish city to have fully electric bus fleet this year

► Volvo Buses has received an order for four Volvo 7900 Electric Hybrid buses from the city of Varnamo in southern Sweden. This means all public transport in the city of just over 19,000 people will be electrified by the autumn. “With this move we are taking yet another step in the construction of tomorrow's attractive city” said city architect Behnam Sharo.

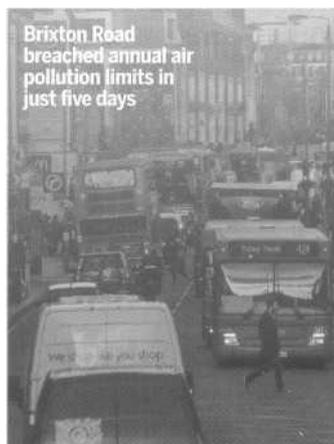
Road in Lambeth. Other areas are expected to breach limits in coming weeks.

ARRIVA'S HYBRIDS

174 Volvos enter service in London and Merseyside

INVESTMENT

► Arriva has now received the final buses from an order for 174 new Volvo hybrid double deckers. A total of 123 of the vehicles are entering service with Arriva London with the remaining 51 buses operating in Merseyside. “Following delivery 10% of our fleet in the North West consists of Volvo hybrid vehicles,” revealed Phil Cummins, area managing director for Arriva North West. The vehicles have been part financed by government grants.



AIR QUALITY LIMITS BREACHED

Annual air quality limit broken in just five days

► London has breached its annual air pollution limits just five days into 2017 according to official figures. Bylaw, hourly levels of toxic nitrogen dioxide must not be more than 200 micrograms per cubic metre more than 18 times in a whole year, but late on January 5 this limit was broken on Brixton

DUTCH NETWORK GOES GREEN

Renewable energy powers Netherlands rail network

► The Dutch rail network has become the first in the world to **ENERGY** be powered entirely from renewable

energy resources thanks to a partnership between NS, the Dutch state rail operator, and energy company Eneco, which won a tender issued by NS two years ago.

The 10-year deal set a date of January 2018 for the milestone, but the switch was actually made a year early with power now sourced from Eneco's network of wind turbines.

“Trains run exclusively on electricity from new renewable energy sources,” said Eneco. “To make that possible, Eneco has invested in new wind farms and other green energy production with NS to make climate-neutral travel a reality”