

Actros saves fuel for PW Gates Distribution



PW Gates Distribution has reported fuel returns comfortably ahead of the 7% improvement it had hoped for, since introducing New Actros tractor units to its fleet.

The Hertfordshire-based operator, a member of the Pallet-Track network, added two New Actros 2545LS models, with BigSpace sleeper cabs and 450bhp Euro 5 engines, to its 32-truck fleet – a mix of 44-tonne tractors and rigids, including a pair of 18-tonne Mercedes-Benz Axors.

PW Gates runs 11 trunks a night from its HQ in Welwyn Garden City – with its vehicles, most at the Pallet-Truck hub in Wolverhampton, pulling high-volume, double-deck trailers.

“Fleet average on this work is around 9mpg and sometimes a little bit less,” says development director Chris Lynch. “By contrast, our two New Actros are in the high nines.” And he adds: “Whereas previously you’d have to put at least 50,000km on a truck before you started to see an improvement in fuel economy, these Mercedes are still only a couple of weeks’ old.”

Supplied by Hatfield dealer S&B Commercials, each Actros is the subject of a two-year Mercedes-Benz Financial Services contract hire agreement. “It’s a very good deal, competitively priced, and with repair and maintenance tied up as well,” comments Lynch. “This means we can budget with confidence, knowing there are no nasty surprises around the corner.”

Coastways combines curtainsider and box body

Belfast-based Coastways Storage & Removals has specified two 7.5-tonne Mercedes-Benz Atego trucks that, it hopes, will offer the advantages of both box and curtainside bodies.

Each vehicle has a curtain on one side, which allows for quick and easy loading and unloading of 8ft high wooden containers by fork lift. Meanwhile, the other side has been equipped with a rigid panel for stacking other types of load.

“It may be unusual, but we’ve found this configuration gives us a perfect combination of secure load-carrying capability and speedy turnarounds,” explains Coastways director Dominic Murray.

Both Atego 816s arrived via Mercedes-Benz Truck & Van (Northern Ireland) of Newtownabbey, with their bodies by Mulligan Coachworks of Dromore. The same combination of dealer and bodybuilder also recently supplied a third Atego 816, equipped with a standard box body.

Its first vehicles to meet Euro 5 emissions limits, each of Coastways’ new Ategos also came fitted with the Mercedes-Benz standard MSS (motor stop start) system, which cuts fuel and emissions by switching off the 160bhp engine whenever the vehicle is in neutral and stationary for more than three seconds.

“We used to run various makes of vehicle,” recalls Murray. “But experience proved that the Mercedes trucks last better and are more dependable, while the support we’ve received from our local dealer, particularly in terms of parts availability, has always been excellent.”

And he adds: “This is crucial, because around 70% of our work is done with containers. So, if one of our vehicles is off the road, we can’t simply go out and spot hire a box van to replace it.”



New step frame boosts Hamilton Tarmac fleet



Hamilton Tarmac has added a second Andover Trailers step frame semi-trailer to its fleet, after recently purchasing its first from the Hampshire-based manufacturer.

The bespoke SFCL53 tri-axle step frame trailer features a beavertail and an adjustable conveyor support, mounted on its low profile neck.

The new addition will be used to transport road planers weighing up to 30 tonnes, as well as rollers and paving machines nationwide, according to the Kilmarnock-based company.

“In our line of business, the pace of the work means trailers can take a real hammering, so you need to have full confidence that you are buying a quality product that will last the distance,” explains Willie Hamilton, managing director of Hamilton Tarmac.

The 13.6m-long step frame has been built with Granning axles and adjustable air-suspension. It includes a lifting rear-axle with an automatic lowering function. Hydraulic steady legs also ensure a stable platform during loading and unloading, with access to the deck via a pair of sturdy power toe ramps with access toes.

The trailer has also been constructed with a special length neck, allowing it to be used to carry road rollers.

“We were aware of Andover Trailers’ reputation and, following an exploratory meeting, we decided to put their products to the test,” explains Hamilton.

“We expect this latest step frame will be on the fleet for at least the next five years,” he adds.

The step frame replaces a 2004 King and will operate with a 6x2 tag axle Volvo FM tractor unit, at a total gross train weight of up to 65 tonnes.

BP McKeefry tyres initiative cuts fuel costs

Haulage firm BP McKeefry is hoping to save money on fuel and tyres, having taken tyre pressure advice from Michelin for its Volvo, Scania, Mercedes and DAF 6x2 tractors and rigids, as well as Crossland tankers.

The tyre supplier's technical specialists conducted an axle-weighing exercise on key vehicles in BP McKeefry's fleet and recommended fine-tuning tyre inflation pressures.

All front steer pressures have risen from 120psi to 130psi, and drive pressures from 90psi to 95psi. Trailer pressures were also raised slightly, from 125psi to 130psi.

BP McKeefry director Andy Hare states that the new inflation pressure settings were tailored specifically to his vehicle configurations, payloads and type of work.

"I'm convinced the pressure adjustments



recommended by Michelin will contribute to longer tyre life and improved fuel economy," states Hare – making the point that fuel economy and tyres are critical to cost savings for the company across its 100 trucks and 200 trailers.

"Much of our work includes moving

sludge amongst sewage recycling plants and then to agricultural land," explains Hare. "Beyond saving money, it is critical for us to get the tyre pressures right, because we are operating on mixed terrain and need to be sure of the best grip and overall tyre performance."

BP McKeefry's main vehicle type is a 6x2 tractor unit, running Michelin's 295/80 R 22.5 XZE2+ tyres on the steer axles and a 295/80 R 22.5 XDE2 Remix fitment on the drive axles.

The tractors are most often coupled with tri-axle tanker-bodied trailers, fitted with 385/65 R 22.5 XTE3 tyres predominantly for road work, or 385/65 R 22.5 XZY3 tyres, which offer enhanced grip and damage resistance when accessing country tracks and farms.

P&C Hamilton chooses Vector and Gray & Adams

Temperature-controlled transport operator P&C Hamilton says the promise of reducing unladen weight and improving fuel efficiency led it to specify its first Vector1550 unit from Carrier Transcold UK.

The Girvan-based firm currently operates 80% of its truck fleet with earlier Vector refrigeration technology. "We see the Vector 1550 as a natural step forward as we look to further reduce fuel consumption," comments partner Phillip Hamilton.

And he says that, since the unit is one of the lightest trailer refrigeration systems on the market, it is allowing the firm, which runs mono-temperature operations throughout the UK and Europe, to reduce the unladen weight of its trailers and so maximise payload.

P&C Hamilton's new refrigeration unit has been mounted on a bespoke Gray & Adams tri-axle semi-trailer, with Euro rails, to transport raw meat and carcasses, a feature favoured in Germany.



"Being able to operate across EU borders is a necessity for this trailer, so we specified it to meet Class C ATP standard to operate with a setpoint between +12 and 20°C," says Hamilton.

The Vector 1550 uses a smaller, 1.5-litre diesel engine than its bigger brothers, as well as Carrier's patented hermetic compressor with an economiser. Lower fuel consumption is claimed to reduce its carbon impact by up to 35%, compared to conventional systems.

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ALLISON TRANSMISSION EUROPE, MILLBROOK PROVING GROUND, MILLBROOK, MK45 2JQ. T. +44 (0) 1525 408 600 F. +44 (0) 1525 408 610