

the future

The Oxford Bus Company (OBC)'s policy has already been hugely successful in dealing with the effects of potentially harmful emissions in central Oxford.

Alternative fuels and the development of low-/no-emission engines and exhaust after-treatments are areas where great advances have already been made and will continue to be made in the future. We will monitor progress in this area very closely, carry out trials where appropriate and will seek to make use of proven technology to further reduce our emissions profile as soon as financially and technically feasible. However, our conclusion is that there will be no practical and affordable alternative to diesel power for the next 5-10 years.

This conclusion inevitably determines the direction of our future plans to reduce emissions. In effect, until alternative fuels and technologies are able to provide solutions that match the reliability and cost-effectiveness of diesel engines, we plan to continue with our present successful policy, consisting of:

- Sustained investment in new buses and coaches of the latest emissions standard in force at the time of the purchase. Therefore, from 2006, all new vehicles purchased will be to Euro IV standard. OBC can demonstrate longstanding re-investment to upgrade the fleet. All such past investment has been financially sustainable and must continue to be made on this basis. It is worth noting that 95% of our activity is run on a commercial basis – that is, without subsidy. Therefore, any measures that result in a rate of investment being required that is beyond what is sustainable, such as an increase in vehicle purchasing or operating costs or a requirement to upgrade the fleet faster than can be afforded would have to be borne by customers. Market research shows any such price increase is likely to be self-defeating in terms of reducing emissions as it will only encourage the greater use of private cars at the expense of public transport.
- Specifying that all new vehicles are fitted with appropriate exhaust treatment technology to control emissions and to retro-fit such equipment to vehicles already in service. It should be noted that this policy has already resulted in many of the Company's Euro II and III vehicles achieving and in some cases bettering, the Euro IV standards for PM, CO and HC.
- To continue to adhere to the highest standards of maintenance, including formal performance targets for internal and external emissions tests as discussed above.