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Bakers green drive towards friendly fuel

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A BOLTON baker is cooking up massive savings by investing in environmentally- friendly fuel.

Warburtons has spent more than £1m on a project to convert its national fleet of trunking vehicles to run on compressed natural gas (CNG).

The firm has modified more than 40 per cent of its 63-strong fleet to either dual-fuel - a combination of diesel and CNG - or pure CNG tanks.

Warburtons has seen fuel costs plummet by £6,000 per week, and estimates that annual savings of £300,000.

It has also set up its own conversion plant to continue its commitment to the project.

Diesel trunckers, which are large long-haul vehicles for transporting bread, cost the company 35p a mile to run, and the 19 dual-fuel vehicles offer significant savings at only 19p per mile.

But its six pure CNG trunckers cost just 14p a mile to fill up and are 20-times cleaner than their diesel equivalent, releasing "fresh air" rather than harmful gases from the exhaust.

The conversions, which have been part-funded by the Energy Savings Trust (EST), have taken five years to complete and are due to be rolled out across the whole fleet after a second fuelling facility is established, probably in the Midlands.

Malcolm Keat, director of operations at Warburtons, said the project makes both environmental and commercial sense.

He said: "As a major hub for our operation, the Bolton bakery was an obvious location to site out first natural gas station.

"The station is now running at virtually full capacity. The company is looking to extend the utilisation of compressed gas to other locations in the UK.

"It is too early to be specific about where next but we are convinced that environmental considerations and business can be complementary."

General manager Bill Pickering said that staff are adapting well to the challenges of the new fuel. "Actual engine conversion was only part of the story - this was a complete new technology. We have had to invest in the correct equipment and train individuals in safe handling."

Speaking about the efforts made by Warburtons to address environmental concerns, Colin Matthews of the EST said: "Warburtons is an excellent example of what can be achieved.

"Not only have they fully embraced the need to switch fuels they have developed their own in-house system for doing so."

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