

SUMMARY

Our council like many other local authorities generates large quantities of waste cooking oil. This cooking oil is used in the production of school meals and in other council catering operations e.g. staff restaurants, visitor centre cafes, older peoples housing complexes and so on. To dispose of this waste we were paying a specialist company to collect the oil - which then ended up in landfill. Determined to look at alternative uses for the oil, we set up a small working group to identify potential alternative uses that would have benefits for both the service and local communities

BACKGROUND

Facilities and Cultural Services Working Group

South Lanarkshire Council's Facilities and Cultural Services had previously looked at various options for dealing with the collection and disposal of the waste oil from school kitchens. As part of the research the team got in contact with a local organisation with an interest in environmental issues - the South Lanarkshire Rural Development Trust.

Rural Trust

The Rural Trust themselves had been looking at ways of reducing the fuel costs of operating their fleet of community buses and were interested in using bio-fuels to help offset costs. A Service Level Agreement was developed between both parties and the project got underway in April 2008. The Trust now collects waste oil from each school canteen on a monthly basis (depending on the size of the catering outlet). To minimise the travel miles involved in collecting the containers, the buses visit the schools whilst undertaking their usual community duties.

Converting the Cooking Oil

The Trust have purchased a bio-diesel conversion system which filters out food particles in the oil. The electricity used in this process is generated by the Trust's own onsite wind turbine. Specialist additives are then added to the filtered oil to ensure it is suitable for diesel engines before being stored in a collection tank. The resultant bio-fuel oil is then used in measured quantities in the fleet of 12 community buses operated by the Trust in rural areas of South Lanarkshire and within the Social Inclusion Partnership areas of Cambuslang and Rutherglen.

Vital Community Role

These community buses play a vital networking role, helping local residents and groups to access reliable and low cost transport which would not otherwise be available. The buses provide a lifeline for many local groups including older people who use the buses to get out for shopping, visiting medical practitioners and for social and leisure purposes. Youngsters in remoter rural villages and hamlets also use the buses to access social and leisure activities not available within their immediate vicinity.

KEY CONTACT

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LOOKING AHEAD

The waste oil collection scheme has now been extended to include other council facilities including sports and cultural centres, older peoples housing complexes and from one of our community planning partners – Fire and Rescue Service. Other public sector organisations are also being targeted.

We are now investigating the potential to involve the Trust in collecting waste food from the schools at the same time as the collection of the cooking oil. This food would be taken to a suitable bio digester facility and turned in to fertilisers and fuel alternatives.

SAFEGUARDING JOBS

This project has helped to create and safeguard rural jobs and has improved the quality of life for local people in isolated communities and areas of economic deprivation. It has also helped to remove large amounts of waste oil from being disposed through landfill.

Since the start of the project over 40,000 litres of cooking oil have been converted with the resultant reduction in CO2 emissions. In all over 100,000 passenger journeys are now undertaken each year by the fleet of vehicles using the bio diesel supplement.

