

Nottingham gets UK's first 100% ethanol buses

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The city of Nottingham has launched a trial of the UK's first 100 per cent ethanol-fuelled buses.

[N118 Image 1](#)

Three Scania 'Omnilink' buses began an eighteen-month trial with Nottingham City Transport (NCT) on 2nd April. The buses use the latest technology and meet the highest European standard for Enhanced Environmentally-friendly Vehicles (EEV).

Focus

The aim is to assess the technical, environmental and business case for the use of ethanol, particularly focusing on:

- whether ethanol-powered buses can be introduced under Nottingham-specific conditions; if the ethanol fuel station installed for the purposes of the project can be used by other vehicle types in the future; what the technical, environmental and financial challenges are for further expansion of the scheme.

Existing research indicates the ethanol-powered buses will reduce CO2 emissions by thirty tonnes per bus per year. It is also expected that there will be a reduction in nitrous oxide and particulate matter emissions.

Exciting

Nicola Tidy, of NCT, said Nottingham was the first city in the UK to introduce ethanol-powered buses, although Reading is due to introduce a similar scheme in the near future.

[N118 Image 2](#)

"It is really quite exciting," she said. "With fuel prices rocketing and the issues of carbon footprints, we feel it is our duty to explore alternative fuel. Whether this is the right one we don't know yet. It seems to be working well in Sweden, where they have hundreds of them running around Stockholm. We need to understand how it works and the logistics, and decide if this is the best alternative means of fuel source. It is now down to how it performs."

Remote

One slight drawback to the scheme is that the ethanol used to fuel the buses is being sourced from waste produced by Sweden's paper and pulp industry. During the trial period, the costs of sourcing from Sweden will be assessed against locally-grown sugar beet and wood, to help determine whether in future, the ethanol could be sourced closer to Nottingham.

That part of the trial should hopefully be the easy bit. British Sugar, for example, recently opened an ethanol production facility at Whissington in Norfolk, which uses locally produced excess sugar beet to produce the fuel. Although by UK standards Norfolk is regarded as being remote, this has got to be cheaper and more sustainable than importing ethanol from Sweden.