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Buses to switch to bio-diesel

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Buses are to switch to bio-diesel in a bid to cut emissions of carbon by 25pc in the next decade.

Peter Iddon, the managing director of First Eastern Counties, yesterday confirmed the environmental improvements as part of a nationwide target.

City buses will switch from running on ultra low sulphur diesel to the cleaner 5pc bio-diesel mix, as soon as arrangements with their fuel supplier can be finalised.

The plans for the Norfolk and Suffolk operations are part of a national scheme from First Group which also covers its train activities.

Its target is to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions it generates by up to 25pc throughout its UK bus and rail operations by 2020, a reduction of around a quarter of a million tonnes.

"Our plans are to grow our services, increase our passenger levels and create a major increase in passenger miles; we will do this through improving the quality of the services that we offer to the community. Yet, at the same time, we want to directly reduce our impact on the environment. Of course, add to that the reductions in emissions that we will create through reducing car journeys and I feel we are behaving both responsibly and boldly," said Mr Iddon.

"In Eastern Counties Buses we are exploring ways in which we can make a real difference, as an example of this we are just about to fit a number of our vehicles with equipment that will further reduce their emission levels.

"This is being done under an initiative led by Norwich city and Norfolk county councils that has the overall aim of improving the quality of air in the city centre.

"As with every responsible company, we are also constantly looking into ways in which we can recycle more and more of the waste products that our business inevitably generates"

Initiatives within the First Group plan include the all-new buses being fitted with engines that meet Euro IV standards, and ultimately Euro V to further reduce exhaust emissions, free travel on all First Group bus and rail routes for their employees, recycling of more than 90pc of hazardous waste and planting of 1,500 trees per year.

First Group's target for its buses and coaches operating in the UK is a reduction in CO2 emissions of 5pc by 2008, 8pc by 2012, and 25pc by 2020, compared to 2005/2006 levels.

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