



# FUEL 4 THOUGHT

PROFILE: **POINT 2 POINT**

**Truck operators like Point 2 Point that service the construction trade are now bracing themselves for the effects on clients of new legislation banning the use of rebated diesel in building equipment**

**WORDS: GEORGE BARROW / PHOTOS: TOM LEE**

**Commercial  
Motor**

At the time of writing, the price of oil had just hit a near 10-year high, but long before the dramatic surge in prices Point 2 Point was thinking about the spiralling cost of fuel and how this affects its business.

As for most hauliers, rising diesel prices are a huge worry for Point 2 Point, but it isn't just thinking about the pump prices because this Redditch-based firm is essentially an own-account operator for West Point Construction, a large building contractor involved in residential homes, retirement living and commercial premises. It's not simply the price of diesel for its eight-strong truck fleet though, as Michael Monaghan, Point 2 Point asset and service manager, explains: "The biggest concern in construction right now is the end of red diesel. That's a big disadvantage for West Point. We're buying 50,000 litres a week. If you look at the cost of running a bulldozer, it's a lot because they can burn through 2,000 litres a week."

Announced in the 2020 Budget, tax-rebated red diesel will no longer be allowed in construction equipment from 1 April, a move that is set to cost the sector millions and which has got Monaghan and transport manager Dan Moorman thinking about how they, as the transport side of the business, might play a part in helping to offset this cost.

"The new house-buyer is going to pay for this, [increased cost] and it's going to have a huge knock-on," Monaghan says.

"The next step we might be looking at is a fleet of tankers. They'd be just going around topping up the construction sites. There's a huge risk with this change; not only will it increase costs, but also the potential for theft. If thieves know there are thousands of pounds sitting in tanks on a building site, they're going to be all over them. Just looking at the cost of the fuel there's a lot to lose, and that's before the damage caused by the theft. So, if we [the industry] go white, we'd maybe be looking at two or three tankers to support the construction company."

That's quite an undertaking, but at the time







of our interview with Point 2 Point some months before the April Fools' Day, Monaghan was seriously considering the investment which would allow the company to save a small amount by bulk buying fuel without the added complication of bunkering.

Point 2 Point, however, isn't shy of investing in equipment and last year upgraded most of its fleet, replacing 17-plate Scania P-series with a new batch of new generation models in XT trim.

### BAD OLD DAYS

"When I first came here we had five Hinos," Moorman remembers. "They were awful trucks – breaking down constantly, bad to maintain, and the downtime to get parts was terrible. It took us around 12 months to replace them with the new ones arriving in September 2017 and we got the latest trucks in March 2021. Having them as XTs makes a massive difference on the tips. The bits aren't falling off because they're that little bit higher. The only thing I would say I regret about them was not getting them sooner. I think we ended up keeping the 67-plates that bit too long."

Like the previous trucks, the new units were supplied by Keltruck, which Point 2 Point has a good relationship with – going as far as to say that it has absolutely no reason to try anyone else. The trucks are on a service and maintenance contract and so too is its plant trailer.

"We've got the whole package

**Making the point:** Mike Monaghan (left) and Dan Moorman are looking to help offset the cost for their house-building client of having to do without rebated diesel in items of plant

with them at Keltruck Droitwich. Doing the truck and the trailer is a really big thing for us, but more importantly the vehicles are maintained and greased properly – which hasn't always been the case," explains Monaghan.

The firm's three DAF road sweepers are maintained in-house and give the firm no headaches, according to Moorman, but Point 2 Point has been less keen on the reliability of its vacuum extractor, which is on a Mercedes-Benz chassis and has been proving troublesome. Not only has it been out of commission, but when needed a replacement has to be hired in, adding to the inconvenience and cost. Both Monaghan and Moorman agree they now wish their vac-ex was a Scania. "I bet you it would be back on the road a lot sooner," they joke.

### BODY BEAUTIFUL

On the advice of Keltruck and partly to do with the cost, last year's tippers were also specified with Abba bodies rather than the Thompsons bodies they'd had previously. Moorman says this decision has proven wise, as not only were they a bit cheaper and available sooner, but they've yet to show any signs of rust or have any issues with the onboard weighing.

"We do a lot of hardcore so we need tough steel bodies, because with the machine drivers on site, occasionally they get a bucket landing on them. These ones have been working well, but we've also got Spillard's live camera system fitted, which is great because the recording stays live after the engine has gone off, which is really good. It's great





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for the insurance, and especially on-site when they're saying your driver has ripped a kerb up. We can see what has happened, and if something is our fault, we can see it and take the blame. It just speeds everything up," Moorman explains.

Point 2 Point has also just placed an order for a new plant wagon, a G-series that is also an XT with a Hiab crane, but Monaghan is looking at what the options are for the firm's next low-loader.

"In the 8-wheeler the 410[hp] is a cracking engine. It just works across the board. It's a bit different for the low-loader. There's a baby V8 in there now which is probably a bit small for our work as we're normally at 60 tonnes, so we'll probably go for the 730 or maybe the 770 next," Monaghan says.

While his window shopping will invariably be backed up by a purchase in the not-too-distant future, availability across the truck and plant sector has been an ongoing problem for Point 2 Point and West Point.

## SOURCING STRUGGLE

"Where we struggle is getting new equipment," Monaghan confirms. "We do invest and we like to invest in new technology. We would be one of the first companies in the sector to go for any new technology innovations, because we are looking for cost savings and the environmental benefit, but things are moving so fast and ordering now, you're looking at 12 months before you get the vehicle.

"For now, I think we would be looking at when all the new technology like electric motors gets to a usable point; that's when we would go there. The [electric] excavators are coming through slowly, but the trucks aren't, and the downfall is that they're not quite there with the green footprint, but the new



**Investing in the future:** Point 2 Point's current Scania-based low-loader combination will soon be joined by a new G-series plant wagon with XT trim and a Hiab crane

engines are a lot cleaner than they used to be. If you wiped your finger around the inside of the exhaust they'd be black once – now it's spotless. There's been such an advancement in how clean the trucks are," Monaghan comments.

Moorman agrees and says that the fuel returns seen on the new trucks are even better than they had anticipated. In general, the tippers are averaging 10.5mpg to 11mpg when on heavy work.





This has been helped along by the Scania driver training offered by Keltruck and the Scania Driver Support system, in which Point 2 Point's plant truck driver is consistently recording scores of 98% or 99%.

The majority of Point 2 Point's work is muck-shifting away from West Point sites, as well as moving machines from site to site. Moorman says it works well because it provides flexibility between the two companies. If a job comes in quickly they can turn things around to react, and if there's an



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emergency, they are easily able to keep everyone affected in the loop. He says it's more efficient for West Point to have its own fleet to move equipment, and while to many it may sound an extravagance, Monaghan says there's actually more work available, if they were to look for it. Located not too far from the HS2 route, this part of the south Midlands is buzzing with construction.

### TIPPING BOOM

“There's definitely more than enough work around and we could easily increase the fleet tenfold – that's just plant and transport. We could also have another 10 tippers easily, all day long. When West Point does well and is busy, Point 2 Point is busy,” Monaghan says.

While Point 2 Point does work elsewhere for HS2 projects, its close symbiotic relationship with West Point is clearly the reason why this modest Worcestershire haulier can invest in the best.

How it reacts to the change in taxation and the rising cost of the diesel it uses across its sites and in its trucks remains to be seen, but the firm's aspirations are not without vision. So don't be surprised if you see a fleet of Point 2 Point tankers on the road some time soon – or at the very least a low-loader laden with electric plant machinery. □