



West of England Gazette

Eco-friendly firm powers up Mercedes with methane

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A FIRM in the heart of the Blackmore Vale is enjoying sweet success after developing eco-friendly transport that can run on gas made from a by-product of chocolate.

Waste chocolate and cow manure are just two of the sources of energy used by Organic Power Ltd, based in Horsington to produce fuel.

The firm has worked with German car giant Mercedes Benz to produce the 2.3-litre people carrier called EcoVitos, which can run on the fuel. The EcoVitos can travel 350 miles on a full tank of gas and although only two prototypes have been made so far, the company hopes the vehicle will secure them commercial success.

The gas is high octane methane produced in a specially-designed system of tanks. It is made by adding bacteria to different types of organic waste and, according to the company, is environmentally friendly.

Organic Power founder Christopher Maltin said it is only a matter of time before Somerset's household waste can be turned into a resource for the community.

"We can take 60 per cent of what people put in their rubbish bins and turn it into fuel to power their cars," said Mr Maltin.

The secret, he said, is in using heart-shaped tanks to combine bacteria and waste to produce gas. "It's a very simple process; man has just had a problem trying to harness it. Bacteria have known how to make methane for 3,500 million years, they are not going to forget about it now.



NEW POWER: Christopher Maltin, founder of Horsington-based Organic Power, has developed an eco-friendly gas to fuel a new Mercedes Benz vehicle, the 2.3-litre people carrier called EcoVitos.

"We think our process is the best in the world but we don't really consider that we have any competitors, only collaborators, because the market is so big that many companies will be required to handle it anyway."

But despite the company's recent achievements, it has had very little support from the Government, something that Mr Maltin said he finds extremely frustrating.

"When it comes to alternative energy, the Government is all talk but very little real action. It cannot even commit to more than three years ahead on fuel duty which is not long enough to encourage people to change their vehicles," he said. "The Government has no concept of the difference between fossil fuel gas and renewable gas which causes no climate change."

Mr Maltin said the company wants to see more vehicles being converted to take the gas.