

Petter opposes 'green' action

The directive on the implementation of Stage I petrol vapour recovery currently under consultation, could seriously threaten the livelihoods of rural petrol retailers, as well as compromise public safety, if it was allowed to proceed, according to Bruce Petter, director of the Petrol Retailers' Association.

In response to the consultation document Mr Petter has written to Anne Hemming of the Air Quality Division at the Department of the Environment strongly opposing the proposals in the directive.

He is particularly opposed at the granting of powers to local authority environmental health officers to police the implementation of vapour recovery legislation at service stations, as he considers it counter-productive as well as dangerous to have two regulatory authorities involved in service station operation: "We should have only one, and that should be the Petroleum Licensing Authorities," he said.

"There are significant safety issues associated with both the installation and operation of vapour recovery systems and we consider it imperative that these activities be monitored by authorities which are both competent and experienced in the engineering and safety aspects



Smaller service stations can't afford additional burdens says Petter

of petrol service stations.

"We consider the general expertise and rapid staff turnover of environmental health officers to be entirely inappropriate to the specialist knowledge and training requirements for PLA-related activities where seasoned professionals are required.

"We find it hard to believe that such a proposal could have been made by anyone with the slightest understanding of service station operation and would like to know how such a proposal arose."

Mr Petter also criticised the recommendations of the Environment Protection Air Quality division on the issue of benzene which it considered to be outdated: "The latest epi-

demiological, toxicological and risk assessment data is supportive of the view that environmental levels of benzene do not present any risk to human health and that an air quality standard for benzene is an irrelevance."

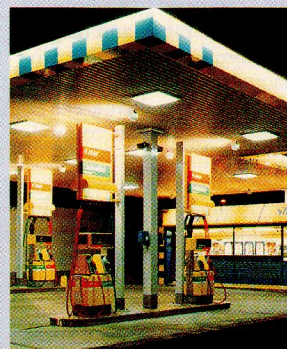
Mr Petter summed up by saying that the proposals appeared to be a "prescription for disaster". He said the smaller businesses which comprised the bulk of petrol retailers could not afford the imposition of additional bureaucracy and costs: "We are also firmly set against proposals which have the potential to compromise public safety for tenuous environmental objectives which have a questionable scientific basis. We strongly urge you to reconsider your proposals."

Closures continue

The number of UK petrol stations has fallen by 998 according to the Institute of Petroleum's annual Retail Marketing Survey, while supermarket sites continue to rise, with an increase of 118 on last year. The total now stands at 685 sites. Esso is Britain's biggest petrol retailer with 2,109 sites, closely followed by Shell with 2,068 and BP with 1,408. Hot on the heels of the big three are Texaco, Burmah and Jet. On the increase are UK Petroleum with an extra 32 sites and Murco/EP which increased by 49. Industry bosses canvassed in the survey remain gloomy about the future, citing the continuing recession, additives and the hypermarkets as prime difficulties.

Jet to the rescue

Jet has launched a 'run out of petrol' service in association with Green Flag National Breakdown. Jet's Roy Roley explained that the scheme will run from 800 of Jet's 1,000 retail outlets and was the result of



extensive market research. The scheme will run at least to the end of 1996, and is available to anyone who collects five Jet points (one point is given for every £6 of petrol purchased). "National Breakdown will send out an agent within 60 minutes with five litres of petrol at pump prices, and with no charge for delivery," said Tom Souls, Jet's general manager.

Prime mover

Mobil's subsidiary company, Prime Garages Ltd, is to relocate its head office from the current site in Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, to Milton Keynes. The move brings together PGL and its parent company Mobil under one roof. "The move is a reinforcement of our confidence in Milton Keynes as a place to grow our business for the future," said Mobil chairman John Banfield.

Forecourt nuptials

Forecourts: registry offices of the future? When the Marriage Act becomes law on April 1, any premises will be able to apply to the local council for a licence to conduct marriage ceremonies. The law will allow civil marriages to take place regularly "in premises that observe the dignity of the occasion." Although no specific reference is made to forecourts, their inclusion in this category is implicit, and weddings could prove a profitable sideline in the future.

Wilcomatic bid

Car wash supplier Wilcomatic is attempting to acquire the business of Technorizon Services Ltd. If successful, the transaction will involve the transfer of the company's wash equipment maintenance contracts to Wilcomatic, together with certain key staff including Technorizon md, Tony Cockerill.

Shell speaks out over Don

Shell has broken its vow of silence and issued a strongly-worded statement to defend itself against what it sees as "the growing number of untrue and often offensive allegations being made by Don Marketing".

Shell is defending legal actions which allege that it wrongfully used two forecourt promotions devised by Don Marketing. Previously, the oil company has remained silent, preferring to "resolve the dispute in the courts which Shell believes is the proper forum for a commercial dispute".

The statement claims that "the allegation is untrue. Don Marketing has no case and the legal actions are being strenuously defended". Mr Donovan has written to the directors of Shell UK and its parent companies, and plans to write to the company's shareholders, the President of the Board of Trade and users of the Internet.



Don Marketing also alleges that it plans to produce a book, and has sent a questionnaire to Shell sites in the UK attempting to assemble negative views of Shell. Shell believes these actions are an attempt to sully its reputation with sensationalist allegations in the hope the company will be forced into settling false claims. "Don Marketing has faxed Shell md David Varney giving him 'seven days to retract certain defamatory claims within the statement after which,'" said John Donovan, "we will issue libel proceedings." Shell's response is steadfast: "What we said is true and accurate."

Meanwhile Mr Donovan claims that 75 per cent of those who responded to the questionnaire thought Shell 'unethical, incompetent, greedy bathbuns' against four per cent who chose to describe the company as 'ethical, reasonable and efficient'.