

# LOCAL, KNOWLEDGEABLE AND RELIABLE

OPENED IN JANUARY 2017, QUAD FUELS IS A BRAND NEW FUEL DISTRIBUTION COMPANY SERVING CUSTOMERS IN NORTH WALES, CHESHIRE AND SHROPSHIRE

Directors Anthony Saunders, Steve Forkin, Andrea Pitts and Graham Roberts all have previous experience in the fuel oil distribution industry. Fuel Oil News spoke with Anthony Saunders to find out more.

"We've all been round the block a few times," said Anthony, Quad Fuels managing director who started out at family business Town & Country in Wrexham in the late 1980s.

When the business was sold to GB Oils (now Certas Energy) in January 2007, Anthony joined GB Oils spending the last few years as general manager for Wales and the Borders with responsibility for 17 locations.

In was in this role that he met Andrea Pitts. Having successfully managed the Bayford's Cambria depot at Kinmel Bay whilst still in her 20s, Andrea became GB Oils regional manager in North Wales after the company acquired Bayfords in 2009.

In 1991 Town & Country recruited Graham Roberts and Steve Forkin with both continuing to work with Anthony over many years. Graham is experienced in commercial and agricultural sales whilst Steve – a driver, router and depot manager has covered most depot roles.

"As a group of four, we believe we cover all bases," said Anthony.

## What were the main reasons for the quartet's desire to create a new independent fuel distribution company in a mature market?

"After almost 10 years with Certas Energy it was time for a change," explained Anthony.

"Looking forward to another 10 years of work at least, I needed to be back in a job that takes me to the coal face everyday and, importantly, one that allowed me to be an entrepreneur.

"Since I was last self-employed, the market has certainly changed. With the emergence of online being the biggest change, we've all had to get up to speed with the digital environment quickly."

"That said, at a local level there still remains a place for distributors with traditional values based around high standards of customer service and flexibility. That's what we're bringing to the market."

## What was involved in getting Quad Fuels up and running?

Anthony still had the Wrexham depot and obtained a rental on a second location at Colwyn Bay. Having worked with major fuel suppliers in the past, he was able to set up accounts.

With a queue of people at his door, staffing was not an issue. The team has an average of 20 years industry experience. Whilst all six tankers presently operating are second hand, there is hope of new ones by the end of the year.

"Tankers proved to be the greatest issue," said Anthony.

## I NEEDED TO BE BACK IN A JOB THAT TAKES ME BACK TO THE COAL FACE EVERYDAY

"It was early March before we were able to get all 6 out on the same day but I'm pleased to say that we're using and filling all 6 everyday.

"We looked long and hard at software, choosing Fuelsoft which we felt was the best package for a new operation.

"When you've been used to something else, understanding the new package was a challenge in the early days but we're now seeing the benefits.

"We sourced depot equipment from wherever we could find it. Wrexham, which started as a fuel depot in the 1960s, will soon have a new IFC skid whilst a second hand skid and 6 x 75,000 litre tanks, transported from Estuary Oils in south Wales, are just a few weeks away from being operational."

Equipped with a modular office building, the Wrexham site at Rhosymedre will be an operational wet depot by mid 2017. A little further behind, Colwyn Bay will be a wet depot at the end of year. In the meantime, product is ex-racked from Stanlow and Ellesmere Port.

Not being players in the derv market, the company intends to make its living from selling kerosene and gas oil to the domestic and agricultural markets along with serving niches within the commercial market.

With considerable experience of lubricants and fuel additives, the company aims to actively up/cross sell both products to help add value and engender customer loyalty.



(l-r) Andrea Pitts, Anthony Saunders, Sue Yates, Nesta Williams, Paul Lewis and John Parry at Quad Fuels' Colwyn Bay depot

# LOCAL, KNOWLEDGEABLE AND RELIABLE

Cont/d from page 9

## What methods of marketing are being used to raise the company's profile and what has been the reception?

"Years ago marketing meant the Yellow Pages – build up a good rapport with the rep and make sure your well-placed advert looked the part – how times have changed!

"You not only need an online presence yourself, you also have to consider the presence of the online sellers that have entered the market.

"Social media has been embraced by Andrea who manages our Twitter and Facebook. Our website will soon be fully transactional with customer log-ons allowing us to take online orders for the domestic market in particular, with commercial customers also able to access their accounts."

The team has put in a considerable amount of face to face contact time which has proved particularly fruitful.

"We've distributed literally thousands of leaflets by hand giving us the chance to talk to hundreds of domestic, agricultural and commercial customers. These conversations always come back to the need for a fuel supplier to be 'local, knowledgeable and reliable' – exactly what we believe we are.

"These actions have prompted calls on a daily basis – it's remarkable how effective word of mouth remains in rural areas."

## 'Ordered oil from Quad Fuels on Tuesday at 10.00am, it was delivered at 12.30pm. How's that for service! Well done guys.'

"Where we can we will deliver this standard of service," said Anthony.

"Having local offices to answer every aspect of a customer's query our aim is to always be extremely responsive. If we can shuffle deliveries around or fill a gap on a truck we always will.

"Other companies may have far greater resources and purchase fuels at better rates but we'll always turn things around faster.

"You only have to look at the pricing structures of online companies to realise that they regard this level of service counts as premium and, one that attracts a higher price."

## What have been the most challenging and the most rewarding aspects in setting up this new business?

"Initially, having no wet depots and running an over the hill fleet of tankers! What is rewarding after only a short trading period is filling those 6 vehicles everyday – a testament to the knowledge and expertise of our staff.

"Opening the gates on that very first morning was equally challenging as the realisation of the investment hits you – tankers, depots, staff, IT, knowledge, expertise and passion – but no customers other than some promises. Translating that into orders

and cash in the bank over the weeks that followed has been rewarding.

## What do you value most about working for yourselves?

"As a group of directors, the buck stops with us; there's no prospect of being over-ruled by a higher authority or having to implement decisions you don't believe in. We all get on well and we share the same objectives."

## Is there any aspect about the wider fuel oil distribution industry that you would wish to change?

"There are aspects I don't care for but we have little control over this industry. We trade in a market which sells a global commodity that's highly taxed by our national government. Room for manoeuvre is limited but it's the small things that make a difference.

"The recent anti-diesel sentiment worries me but it's up to us as a body to resist it."

## Never say no

Our mantra is 'never say no' when you can say 'yes but....

"Not being new kids on the block helps – many customers already knew the four of us or another staff member.

"We're a local supplier building a new brand that is synonymous with reliability and service – it won't happen overnight but we've come a long way already."



At the Wrexham depot (l-r) Graham Roberts, Steve Forkin, Wayne Edwards, Charlie Hughes-Lloyd and Lynda McKenzie