



Ron Blackhurst, pictured left, and Andrew Simpson at the Leek factory.

Loads more interest

Tufftruk reports increasing demand for the electric versions of its mini dumpers. Alan Guthrie visited its headquarters in Leek.

Green is an important colour for Tufftruk. This is not only because the manufacturer's mini dumpers are finished in a bright lime shade. What is also proving significant is the increasing demand for eco-friendly products. Most sales of the company's Bendie articulated model are now for the battery powered variant, rather than the diesel or petrol versions.

"With London and other European cities establishing low-emission zones, contractors are looking for environmentally friendly alternatives," said MD Ron Blackhurst, who established Tufftruk in 2012. Previously he had been Chairman of the Belle Group concrete mixer business that was bought by the Altrad Group in 2009. "We can see situations arising where, for example, a contractor will choose to use two of our 300kg or 450kg-capacity battery Bendie machines for a job in a particular location instead of a conventional 1-tonne diesel model for a greener operation."



The Tuffbelt is designed for straightforward operation.

General Manager Andrew Simpson added that the battery powered machine enables work in areas where noise must be minimised, such as around schools or hospitals, and the fact it has zero emissions allows it to be operated indoors, for cellar conversions and similar tasks. "Being articulated, the machines also minimise the risk of damaging turf and soft ground. They are easy to use and to service,

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and the operator does not have to lift the dumper in order to steer it."

Power for the Bendie is provided by two 12V batteries

driving a DC brushless motor. This gives eight hours of running time and the machine can be recharged overnight. It can work on

gradients of up to 25° and a built-on motor brake system is incorporated with a failsafe dead-man's handle to prevent the unit rolling backwards. "The electric model is designed to be as simple to use as possible," said Ron Blackhurst. "You squeeze the operating lever to move it and it stops as soon as you let go."

A new option for the 450kg-capacity machine is the Power-Tip, which can also be retro-fitted. This replaces the original skip assembly and incorporates an electric ram for better tipping control. It also increases the skip discharge height to 252mm, facilitating tasks involved with shuttering work. Also available is the Power-Tip+, which extends the height of discharge to 589mm and can be used for tipping into trailers and conveyors.

Tufftruk recently became the UK distributor for the Tuffbelt range of portable belt conveyors. There are four models in the line-up, which are imported from Belgium.

The company is concentrating particularly on two models which it believes will prove the most popular, namely the 3m Mini and the 4.5m Maxi. Units can be linked together to move materials over longer distances. Tufftruk adds modifications to meet the demands of the hire market, including an automatic belt tensioning system.

The Tuffbelts are available in 110V and 230V and operate with a belt speed of 24m per minute, which is said to achieve a production rate of 50/tonnes of material per hour. "Various hopper sizes are available to suit different materials and the machines are designed for straightforward operation with no complicated electronic circuitry or switches," said Ron Blackhurst. "And being electric, they represent another green solution with no emissions and low noise."

A year ago, Tufftruk moved into a factory unit in Leek. This has increased production capacity and offers scope for further expansion. The company's original facility, based at Ron Blackhurst's home in nearby Sheen, has now become a design and innovation centre. EHN understands that there are a number of new designs on the drawing board that may reach fruition in the next year or two. ●

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