

# Valtra keep costs in check



**Efficient operation means keeping machinery serviced and operational.**

Founded in 1990, Trade Effluent Services Ltd (TES) is today a successful company with waste disposal contracts from utilities and private companies throughout the North West. The company operates a fleet of 12 trucks, 6 tractors and trailers, spreaders, and treatment plants for hazardous and non-hazardous material. To have grown successfully from scratch into a respected business in this highly regulated arena has required considerable business acumen. Today TES's core business remains sewage sludge disposal with material collected from treatment works and spread on farmland, an operation requiring considerable planning. Operations Director, Richard Piggott explains, "On most arable farms there is small window between harvest and planting when land is available – provided the ground is suitable for machinery. Spreading onto dairy farms' maize ground is a little easier. Cake that has undergone an enhanced treatment is spread onto grassland and vegetable ground but supply is limited to certain works." Seasonal and weather restraints mean land needs to be found, for spreading and storage and TES field staff liaise with farmers over suitable sites. To meet Environment Agency regulations staff also sample soil, "Our responsibility is to find ground and take samples, it is the utility that undertakes testing and gives the OK to spread." Richard explains. They also advise farmers of delivery and inform spreading teams of land availability. With artificial fertiliser easier to spread sewage cake was once considered something of a nuisance. Today spiralling oil costs from which fertilisers are manufactured means cake is more acceptable and when spread at around 10 tonne/acre it typically provides 250 kg of nitrogen – and at the moment it's free. TES is paid under contract by the tonne removed



**TES workshops use Valtra oils and parts.**

from treatment works, so haulage distances are important – up to 8 miles is acceptable although this can get extended to 12 if required, and as a non agricultural operation haulage tractors have to run on white (non-rebated) diesel. Initially TES trialled several tractor makes before trying a used 8150 Valtra in 1994. They liked this machine and today the tractor fleet remains totally Valtra. "Not that Valtra have it all their own way," explains Richard Piggott. "When other manufacturers introduce models that may be suitable we try them out." TES give every machine a fair trial over a week and performance figures studied. "We use around 10,000 litres of white diesel weekly in our vehicles, every driver has a fuel card and tractors refuel at filling stations. "The fuel company then provides consumption and cost data – tractors in litres/hr and trucks miles/gallon. With these figures we can accurately calculate running costs," explains Richard. Currently fleet consists mostly of Valtra T151s with one T160 and a 14,000 hr 8450 kept for special operations. The T151s

operate in both power and eco-modes depending on the job and records show they are returning 11.87 litres/hr while the more powerful T161 consumes an average of 12.69 litres/hr, results considered by TES management to be acceptable. "Certainly better than competition otherwise we would change." All the tractors and trailers operate under O Licence regulations, and once out of warranty servicing is carried out in TES workshops by a qualified mechanic assisted by the driver using Valtra filters, parts and oils. New tractors are written down over three years but usually kept for four by which time they clock up between 8,500 and 9,000 hours. The balance between trade-in valuation and replacement purchase price is covered by AGCO finance which TES find competitive. Records show overall depreciation at around £3.00 per tractor hour excluding tyres. However, a technically acceptable machine is only part of the story; if a driver is not happy his machine may prove 'troublesome', with frequent visits to the workshop. A situation that can lead to avoidable management problems. TES drivers are all happy with their machines, finding the cabs comfortable and easily cleaned and with a ventilation system capable of excluding nasty odours. On the road they are quick and, with air brakes, safe. The Aires front suspension also comes in for praise amongst drivers. On both the financial and operational front Valtra tractors are delivering the goods, consistently fifty two weeks of the year.

■ Roger Thomas



**Richard Piggott discusses the day's work with a driver; All TES tractors operate with O licences, have front suspension and air brakes to the trailer or spreader.**