

Fuel Oil News

AUGUST 2021



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The role of cats in the energy transition

Freedom Day UK has arrived, and, despite the inescapable build-up and endless passionate debate, it appears to have crept in rather quietly and found itself an unintrusive seat on the sofa rather than throwing open both doors, marching in to accompanying fanfare and demanding centre stage. How much difference it makes to this industry that has delivered its essential services throughout remains to be seen but one impact it was, sadly, too late to have was on the annual expo.

Having last had the pleasure of this highly anticipated gathering in physical form in 2019, the guessing game of 'Can we? Can't we?' ended when UKIFDA took the wise decision to concede to the challenges of the times and, for the first time in its 40 years, deliver this pivotal industry event in a virtual format. With a brand-new format on a new platform we are sure there must have been some frantic paddling going on beneath the surface, but huge congratulations must go to the UKIFDA team for not just delivering an excellent couple of days but managing to remain completely unruffled while doing so.

The key aim of bringing the

industry together to discuss the important topics was more than achieved through a structured conference programme, firmly focussed on future fuels. Whilst this also offered the opportunity for Q&As the surprise of the event must surely have been the level of activity in the community area. Prior to the event many expressed concern that the social aspect, a highly valued part of the annual Expo, would be missing this year but, once the app was mastered, there was no stopping the lively threads which covered an incredible array of topics from Advanced fuels to Zero (the net kind) and everything in between.

And the cats, a whole thread dedicated to #CatsOfUKIFDA, which proved to be the most popular thread in the community. I'm not sure if that suggests that 18 months of minimal social interaction has left us desperate to fill those gaps or that, as a distraction from the intense industry challenges, cats may have a vital role to play.



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Fuel Oil News

The independent voice for the fuel distribution, storage and marketing industry in the UK and Ireland.

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On the cover

An iconic image of the Humber refinery – the first in the UK to make renewable fuel from waste oil. The impact of the precedent set is evaluated in Industry Insight on pages 24 & 25, where we consider the future of the industry.



In this issue

On pages 16 & 17 we are In Conversation with independent distributor Rawlings Fuel. A year on from their move to new premises we hear how the loyal and hardworking team is enjoying operating from the purpose-built depot.

New product offers financial certainty to fuel suppliers

Specialist trade insurance broker, Attis Credit Solutions, has partnered with BondAval to bring MicroBonds to the UK fuel market. This cutting-edge product will provide S&P A-rated certainty to fuel suppliers into forecourts. It is instantly accessible to buyers and suppliers who can purchase the security via the BondAval platform to meet their contractual security obligations without requiring any cross collateralisation.

The MicroBond provides 100% cover, on demand, with no excess. Claims for non-payment are payable, typically, within days rather than weeks.

Suppliers receive investment-grade certainty that their retail clients will pay for their fuel per the terms of their contracts, while drastically reducing the friction and time involved in the security onboarding and renewal process.

The BondAval platform takes only a matter of minutes to produce a MicroBond, a process that would otherwise take weeks or even months.

Paul Martin, co-founder and co-MD of Attis Credit Solutions said: "Providing certainty to a CFO/FD is a powerful tool. Doing it with no time cost whilst also freeing up tied capital for the buyers is a real game-changer. The BondAval platform is cutting-edge, and we look forward to working with the team to see it deployed across the UK fuel market".

Tom Powell co-founder and CEO of BondAval said: "Working with Paul and his team is a real pleasure. Their insight, experience and expertise mean they truly understand the challenges in the fuel market, and opportunities which we can bring to market together. We're excited to start building a long-term partnership".



Plans approved for IOW depot

Despite objections, Certas Energy's plans for a new £1.5 million fuel depot on the Isle of Wight have been given the go ahead, with Certas promising to be on the Island "for the long-haul".

Councillors on the Isle of Wight granted the fuel firm permission to install three tanks, fencing, parking, flood lights and an office building at the Island Technology Park in Whippingham. Following the closure of Isle of Wight Fuels last year, the Island was left without a main fuel supplier or hub.

Concerns have been raised over the environmental impact and safety of the site however, with concerns over the safety of the students at Priory School being one such issue, with trucks expected to be frequenting the new depot. Paul Williams, a managing director at the firm has assured that traffic movement will be kept at a minimum: "What you'll tend to find is that we'll have the larger trucks to fill the depot itself, that will be done out of hours. Then the drivers would come in the following morning and would all load one after the other and then go out.

"It would be blocks of movement so it's not all of the time, all throughout the day. At this moment in time, we're looking at no more than 30 movements (a day) and that is very manageable for us in terms of the location."

Explaining further why the location on the Island is necessary, as opposed to ferrying fuel from the mainland to the Isle of Wight, Paul Williams continued: "Going forward, what we're trying to do is put proper infrastructure

in place because, with the logistical challenges when you're having to travel across on ferries and the different mix of fuels we provide, we need to make sure we have fuel available at all times.

"It would only take one or two days of not being able to get across on a ferry before, quite quickly, you have run-out situations. So we see the benefit for the Island, that we put the infrastructure in place and we ensure then that the contingency stock is always available."

Further issues raised refer to the flood lights, which the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) said would threaten the Island's Dark Skies status and called the plans 'short-sighted' and 'aesthetically abhorrent', given its historical location.

Addressing the concerns, Paul Williams insisted the company is planning for the future: "As we think about the energy transition and where we go, we want to make sure the depot is fit for purpose. So it's not just for the next five years but it's 10, 15, 20 years that we can grow and transition with the Island.

"There will be things as part of the energy transition that we don't know today, but we'll make sure we work closely with all of the parties including the customers."

Paul Williams also welcomed competition from a new firm, Solent Fuels, as 'healthy'. David Grannum, former managing director at Isle of Wight Fuels is said to be behind the new fuel supplier.

We look forward to following the development of the new depot.

Crown Oil leads the way with clean fleet

Northwest fuel supplier Crown Oil is now running its entire fleet on renewable diesel fuel as it commits to reducing its direct CO2 greenhouse gas emissions by 90%.

The Greater Manchester business, part of the £420m-turnover Crown Oil family of companies, believes it is the first supplier in the UK to run all its oil delivery vehicles on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO).

Crown Oil, based in Bury, has now called on the UK government to introduce tax relief on fuels such as HVO to encourage greater uptake.

The family-owned business predicts a saving of around 3,080 tonnes of CO2 in 12 months from running its 85 delivery vehicles on HVO compared to standard diesel. To put this into context, one tonne of carbon dioxide is the average emission of one passenger on a return flight between Paris and New York.

Crown's fleet is made up of HGVs, pickups, trailers and vans which are all approved to run on HVO fuel without technical adjustments or any reduction in vehicle performance. The fuel offers a fast and simple step towards net zero without the need for electrification or vehicle modifications, reducing net CO2 emissions by 90 per cent and nitrogen oxide emissions by up to 27 per cent.



Managing director Matthew Greensmith said it was important for Crown Oil to set the standard as it aims to become the UK's leading alternative fuels supplier. The move showcases the fuel's ability to perform faultlessly as a diesel alternative, he said, and will enable the business to significantly reduce its direct greenhouse gas emissions.

Matthew said: "We can't expect others to make a change without leading by example, and we're proud to run our entire fleet on HVO.

"We believe we're currently the first and only UK supplier to power our vehicles with the renewable diesel and we hope it encourages

businesses to go green with their fleets too."

Since heavily investing in HVO in 2018, Crown's customers have saved 18,945 tonnes of CO2 by switching over to the renewable diesel. Crown HVO can be used in vehicles, commercial boilers (running on gas oil), tractors, generators, machinery and inland waterway vessels.

The oil supplier is pioneering change within the industry and has called on the UK government to follow the example of Sweden by introducing duty relief on fuels such as HVO to encourage uptake.

Matthew added: "When it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we hope the government will adopt a multi-point strategy to include the use of high-content renewable fuels in addition to the development of the electric vehicle market.

"In 2017, the Swedish government passed a bill that enabled biofuels to be subject to tax exemption, which led to a 124% increase in HVO sales in October 2017 compared with the previous year.

"The UK government is planning to scrap red diesel duty relief for many sectors from 1 April 2022 to encourage the use of cleaner alternatives and we are calling for duty relief on fuels such as HVO to help encourage uptake."

In another HVO first, Crown Oil partners with Kao Data

In another pioneering move, Crown Oil has partnered with Kao Data, specialist developer and operator of advanced, carrier neutral data centres for high performance colocation, as the company takes further steps towards its net zero ambitions. It will become the UK's first data centre to transition all backup generators at its Harlow campus to HVO fuel. This move, made possible by the partnership, means Kao Data will eliminate up to 90% of net CO2 from their backup generators and significantly reduce nitrogen oxide, particulate matter and carbon monoxide emissions.

"HVO fuel is dramatically better for the environment compared to traditional, mineral diesels. It is 100% renewable, biodegradable, sustainable and non-toxic," said Simon Lawford, technical sales manager, Crown Oil. "We're proud to have worked with Kao Data to initiate a first-of-its-kind project, which will be transformative for the data centre industry, and help point the way forward for significant reductions in

industrial greenhouse gas emissions."

Today, Kao Data delivers one of the UK's most sustainable colocation data centre campuses. Its existing initiatives include using 100% renewable energy, utilising 100% refrigerant-free indirect evaporative cooling technologies, and incorporating hyperscale inspired design to deliver a market-leading PUE of <1.2, even at partial loads. In line with its commitments as a signatory of the Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact (CNDP), the use of Crown Oil HVO fuel marks another significant step in the company's plans to become a fully carbon neutral data centre operator by 2030. The company will replace an initial 45,000 litres of diesel and switch to an HVO provision of more than 750,000 litres when the campus is fully developed.

Using HVO also offers a number of additional benefits in respect of infrastructure reliability. It eliminates microbial growth, which generates sludge that can contaminate fuel lines and potentially lead to engine shut down. HVO

requires no modification to existing infrastructure and can be used as a direct replacement for diesel. It has a storage life that is ten times that of standard diesel and offers resilient year-round performance in both low and high temperatures. It is also easier to maintain, free from aromatics, sulphur and metals, odourless and completely biodegradable.

"This pioneering approach to replace our generator's diesel provision with HVO fuel, is a key step in the company's efforts to become net zero, and a further demonstration of our leadership in the international data centre sustainability field," said Gérard Thibault, chief technology officer at Kao Data. "This move effectively eliminates fossil fuels from our data centre operations and helps us reduce Scope 3 emissions in our customers' supply chain, while delivering no degradation to the service they receive. Most importantly, it shows how our industry can take a simple and highly beneficial step forward for the good of the environment, ahead of COP26."

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Seeing HVO in action

Redruth-based Mitchell and Webber, the first company in the UK to put HVO fuel to the test during the successful trials started last November, has supplied the renewable hydrotreated vegetable oil to heat a primary school in Gwinear.

Mitchell and Webber director John Weedon commented: "We all appreciate the need to help the environment as a priority and these trials are to ensure the fuel will work well when converting existing set-ups.

"We are pleased that only a low-cost conversion is needed in many cases and so far tests are extremely promising with all boilers performing well."

Gwinear Community Primary School is the first in the country to use the renewable liquid fuel. Head teacher, Lee Gardiner, said: "Since our school is such a historic building it is extremely difficult to insulate using more modern techniques. Installing a completely new system would likely be disruptive to daily school life and could possibly damage such an important structure.

"So when I saw the success of Mitchell and Webber's HVO conversions in other settings across Cornwall, I knew I had found the perfect option for Gwinear."

Local MP and Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice, said on visiting the school: "It could be a very important stepping stone on the way to net zero in rural areas like this.

"There are a lot of people still reliant on old oil-fired boilers and this is a more environmentally-friendly fuel.

"They're getting good results on boilers large and small."

We will hear more from Mitchell and Webber, regarding developments in HVO trials, in our September issue.

Remarkable debut for transport industry pioneering platform

The inaugural Innovation and Technology in Transport (ITT Hub) event – the largest show of its kind in 40 years – debuted successfully on 30 June and 1 July 2021 to spearhead the future of transport and revolutionise the commercial vehicle market as the industry transitions to net zero emissions and strives to reach maximum efficiency.

Held at Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre, which has led the way in the UK's safe return of face-to-face events of this size, the exhibition was attended by 4,000 industry professionals working within the transport industry, including engineers, managing directors, government and major influencers.

Over 150 exhibitors attended, showcasing a range of high-tech products and services, while a Government Hub was attended by several government departments and agencies. The outside Ride & Drive experiences on offer proved a popular attraction with visitors.

British Astronaut Major Tim Peake CMG, one of 30 speakers at Logistics UK's Future Logistics Conference which ran alongside the exhibition, stressed the importance of prioritising the decarbonisation of transport to protect the future health of our planet.

Mark Griffin, CEO at ITT Hub, said: "What a brilliant inauguration for ITT Hub. We were thrilled to welcome thousands of visitors, exhibitors and speakers to the event to explore the future of transport and tackle the challenges we face together as an industry. We have been overwhelmed with the positive response from the show and, after just one event, ITT Hub has already been established as a vital platform for anyone working in transport. As part of our growth strategy, we are curating a portfolio of recycling and waste management, cold chain storage and distribution, plus even more of the energy and charging technology infrastructure experts



Major Tim Peake CMG and Mark Griffin CEO Binswood Media open the inaugural ITT Hub 2021



David Wells, chief executive at Logistics UK, presenting at the Future Logistics Conference

for next year's event. These additions to our exhibition and programme are the next logical step in the development of the all year round ITT Hub activity and I can't wait to show the industry what we are going to do next."

Gareth Rogers, CEO of Farnborough International, added: "This was a remarkable debut for ITT Hub and we are thrilled we could partner with the team at Binswood Media to deliver an event of such resounding success. ITT Hub is a pioneering platform for the transport industry, which will see the launch of revolutionary innovations, landmark government announcements and invaluable relationship building amongst industry leaders. The future of the event is bright and, as the new owners of ITT Hub, we are looking forward to continuing our collaboration with Mark Griffin and utilising our exceptional expertise and resources to grow ITT Hub into the leading event and news channel in the sector."

Taking place alongside the exhibition was the Future Logistics Conference and Kevin Green, marketing & communications director at Logistics UK, comments: "The Future Logistics Conference was an incredible success, with an unrivalled line up of speakers – including senior representatives from National Grid, Highways England, Zemo Partnership, Renault Trucks UK & Ireland, and, of course, Major Tim Peake – who all shared their unique insights and expertise to help industry and government on the road to net zero emissions, and to tackle challenges such as the growing skills shortage. I cannot wait to come back in May 2022 to see the vast progress industry and government will have made towards decarbonisation in that time, and once again, gather to examine and challenge the forces shaping this vital sector."

ITT Hub and the Future Logistics Conference will be returning to Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre next year, with the date confirmed as 11 – 12 May 2022.

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Eurotank's futuristic tank cleaning

Eurotank Environmental is taking tank cleaning to the next level with the launch of an unmanned service using remote-operated robots.

Investment in two Zone 0 robots enables Eurotank to offer an unmanned tank cleaning service for underground and above-ground storage tanks that is every bit as effective as manned entry.

Eurotank claims to be the first company in the UK to offer robotic tank cleaning along with the ability to do all associated works such as tank lid removals and any required tank repairs or lining that involve manned tank entry.

The smaller of the two robots has been designed to enter tanks typically found on petrol stations and is controlled from a skid-mounted control unit, which is the size of a compressor.

The larger machine, which gives the industrial services team an additional method for de-gassing and cleaning bulk above-ground storage tanks, is controlled from a secure container, which will be transported to sites by a lorry-mounted crane.

Alex Lis, Eurotank Environmental's operations director, said: "We're really excited to be able to offer robotic tank cleaning. Some customers do not allow confined space entry and traditional methods of remote tank cleaning are not always as effective as manned entry – until now.

"Safety is our priority and while our engineers follow stringent safety protocols during confined space entry, robotic cleaning systems remove that requirement."



'Future Energy' the theme for the Fuellers Energy Conference

The Fuellers are very excited to be currently planning the second Earl of Wessex Conference, to be held on 15th November 2021, at the prestigious Royal College of Physicians, Regent's Park.

Carrie Marsh, Master Elect of the Worshipful Company of Fuellers commented: "Our first conference, held in November 2019, provided an entertaining and informative day, and was very well received. It was one of the highlights of the year for the Fuellers and a great way for Fuellers to interact with both the wider industry and our charity partners. We are hoping to do even better this time around."

The conference immediately follows the conclusion of COP26 and once again focuses on the theme of 'Future Energy'. There will be an excellent group of very senior, knowledgeable speakers addressing the most

important issues influencing the journey to a sustainable future; including the achievements and failures of the last two years, personal feedback from COP26, a look at what incentives are required in order to achieve net zero, in depth reviews of energy storage, some new energy technologies on the horizon, and finally, a senior economist's view of the energy future.

Carrie continued: "In the middle of all of this, and reflecting our commitment to education, we are planning on holding the final of our competition offering prizes to young energy professionals and academics for the best new energy ideas."

Keep an eye out for details of the 2021 conference or register your interest by contacting the Fuellers via the website at: www.fuellers.co.uk

The Prax Group appoints interim CFO

The Prax Group has appointed Rob Marrow as interim group chief financial officer (CFO) with immediate effect. The group is continuing its search for a permanent CFO and will update the market on its progress as appropriate.

Rob brings with him a wealth of experience in roles that have included responsibility for strategy, corporate finance, M&A transactions, and investor relations. He was more recently, the commercial and financial lead for the group in the acquisition of Prax Lindsey Oil Refinery.

With over two decades of experience across

oil and gas, manufacturing, technology, retail, supply chain and trading, he is an experienced finance leader with a proven track record of delivering growth, championing change and building teams.

Sanjeev Kumar, chief executive officer, said: "Rob's broad financial experience and comprehensive knowledge of our business make him a strong appointment as our interim group CFO, providing continuity while we continue our search for a permanent CFO."

Rob will succeed Robin Edwards, who sadly passed away on 30 June 2021.

A worthy winner

Carrie Marsh, managing director of Marsh Fuels and Master Elect of the Worshipful Company of Fuellers, has won a Lord Mayor of London Covid-19 award for services within the Livery.

Carrie met with the Lord Mayor of London on 19th July, where she was presented with the award, as well as a wonderfully aromatic mint tea, grown in the UK, and Mansion House bone china mug.

The Lord Mayor holds annual awards in the City for business and this was an additional special one to recognise the unsung community heroes helping others through the pandemic. From hundreds of nominations, from across the City, 13 winners were chosen in three categories: crisis response, delivering differently and community champions, plus the Mayor of London Young Londoners Awards.

A worthy winner, during the last 15 months Senior Warden Carrie Marsh, has been writing a weekly blog to lift members' spirits, especially for those not online, designed for the initial 12 weeks of lockdown and then extended until all members could meet again in person.

Telling us more about the upcoming meeting, Carrie said: "The date for that has finally been set for 26th August this year and I have now sent out 70 weekly blogs, never missing one!"

As well as boosting morale, Carrie also made face masks for the membership and donated the proceeds of these to the Fuellers



Charitable Trust Fund. Not stopping at making masks, Carrie said: "The Trust Fund kindly sponsored the cost of materials, and I then organised a sewing team to make many sets of scrubs for our local doctors' surgery staff, doctors and nurses in the Newbury area.

Telling us more about the ceremony, Carrie said: "The Lord Mayor, Alderman William Russell, presided and the room was full of members who have done amazing things during the pandemic either individually or as part of the NHS Livery initiative which saw many Livery companies join together to produce, pack and deliver thousands of meals to NHS workers within the City."

Carrie concluded: "With the blog, masks and scrubs as well as lots of little things in between, and although nowhere as much work as NHS has done over the past 15 months, it was a lovely surprise to be acknowledged."

Driver shortage impacts supplies

Industry trade bodies have raised concerns over Government failure to find solutions to driver shortages (see Industry Focus on page 13) but the issue has already contributed to the temporary closure of some forecourts after running out of fuel due to lack of deliveries.

Last week a busy BP service station on the A140 in North Norfolk was temporarily closed and there are also reports of sites in Reading and Berkshire having to close for a period.

BP has confirmed that some petrol stations have been affected by driver shortages but stressed that the issue is not one of fuel shortage. With shortage of drivers already a chronic problem in the industry it is further exacerbated by drivers being forced to self-isolate after being pinged by Test and Trace.



The isolation issue also necessitated a temporary closure of the BP terminal at Hemel Hempstead last month with the spokesperson confirming: "We are experiencing fuel availability issues at some of our retail sites in the UK. Our supply chain has been impacted by the industry-wide driver shortages across the UK, exacerbated by a temporary closure of our Hemel Hempstead fuel distribution terminal last week because of necessary Covid-19 isolations among staff impacting our supply chain. Our Hemel terminal is now operating as normal.

"We are working hard with our haulier supplier to deliver fuel into sites and minimise any disruption to our customers. We apologise for any inconvenience caused."

Industry responds to Decarbonisation Plan

Launched last month by the Government the plan covers the decarbonisation all modes of domestic transport and sets out a pathway for the whole transport sector to reach net zero by 2050 through:

- Consulting on ending the sale of all new polluting heavy goods vehicles by 2040, with a commitment from the Government to electrify its own fleet by 2027
- Creating a net zero rail network by 2050
- Leading the transition to green shipping
- Targeting net zero domestic aviation emissions by 2050

Support from the industry

UKPIA responded to the release of the TDP saying that the downstream oil sector – the supplier of 96% of the UK's transport fuels – confirms its commitment to working with the UK Government to decarbonise the transport system, recognising that the carbon footprint of transport emissions extends far beyond what is emitted from a vehicle's tailpipe.

The announced changes to the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (RTFO), will see a steady increase in renewable fuel content blended in fuels throughout the 2020s, which UKPIA supports, with the association welcoming the announcement by DfT to develop a strategy for low carbon fuels. UKPIA sees the opportunity for low carbon fuels to reduce emissions with today's vehicle fleet, making efficient use of the strong existing infrastructure in the supply chain, while infrastructure for EVs and hydrogen vehicles is developed.

In March, UKPIA released its "*Future of Mobility in the UK*" report, which outlined the significance of the downstream sector as a major contributor to decarbonising transport. Pivotal to reducing emissions in the transport sector will be a systems-based approach to decarbonisation as well as a fundamental paradigm shift in how we use transport.

UKPIA director-general, Stephen Marcos Jones, commented: "Today's recognition by the DfT of the significant role that low carbon fuels will and must play in the decarbonisation of transport is welcomed. With the announcement of a much-needed strategy for low carbon fuels, this feels like a watershed moment for the future of low carbon fuels in this country and we look forward to working with DfT on the strategy's development."



UKIFDA launches new Young Person Award

Launched to recognise the achievements of rising stars in the industry, UKIFDA's inaugural Young Person of the Year Award has been awarded to worthy winner, 24 year old Emily Yates of Craggs Energy.

"We are so impressed by all Emily has achieved at such a young age, that we felt she deserved recognition for her success and to be awarded with the Young Person of the Year Award," explains Ken Cronin, UKIFDA CEO.

This award will now be presented annually to a young person in the industry who UKIFDA believes has gone above and beyond the call of duty and is becoming a rising star.

Ken Cronin adds: "After reading about Emily's background and achievements, we felt she deserves recognition – especially because the industry promotes diversity and welcome individuals from every walk of life, and Emily is currently championing diversity in the industry."

"We wanted Emily to win an award, she has done so much and helped so many customers as a young, female driver in the industry," says Matthew Crockett, director at Craggs Energy.

"Emily's energy and enthusiasm is boundless and has been since day one when she joined us as a sales apprentice. Since then, she has taken on various roles, including customer services and agricultural sales, and is now absolutely thriving in her operations role.

"Her approach is always flexible and she will happily drive a range of vehicles to make the deliveries, including Land Rovers, Ford Rangers, and Transit Vans. She is keen to get her HGV and ADR licence – and we are keen to support her with this as she becomes a fully-fledged tanker driver.

"We are so proud of Emily; of all she has achieved and all she does on a daily basis to make a difference to people's lives."

Emily comments: "I'm over the moon to have won the Young Person of the Year Award! I love my job and it's great to know that what I do is appreciated and is helping people.

You can read more about Emily in a special feature that appeared in our May issue and is also online at fueloilnews.co.uk

UKIFDA Innovation Award winner announced

Cornwall-based distributor, Mitchell & Webber, has won the Fuel Oil News sponsored UKIFDA Innovation Award for being at the forefront of the sector's Future Fuels campaign and for making a real difference in the industry's drive to make renewable liquid fuel a viable alternative to heating oil for off-gas grid properties.

The award was launched this year to find and commend the one thing that makes the industry stand out – with the industry association always proud to support the most innovative products, services, or initiatives.

"Our Innovation Award is for the person or company that has made the most significant, innovative, and positive contribution to our industry over the past year – and we were delighted to present, Mitchell & Webber with the Innovation Award on the first day of this year's virtual EXPO & Future Fuels Conference," says Ken Cronin, UKIFDA chief executive.

"It really is incredible, and so impressive, to witness all that Mitchell & Webber has achieved during the past year – they have been at the forefront of driving our Future Fuels campaign and not only converted a number of homes to renewable liquid fuel, HVO, in Cornwall but also a church and a school, highlighting the promising potential of this renewable liquid fuel to replace oil heating."

Involved since the start with UKIFDA and fellow trade association OFTEC with the drive to a renewable fuel alternative, Mitchell & Webber understands that this is one of the most important matters for the future of the liquid fuel distribution industry.

Directors Robert and John Weedon have been in discussions with their local MP, Secretary of State for the Environment George Eustace, over the future directions for homes, since 2018.

John comments: "We are so happy to have won the Innovation Award this year – it means a great deal to us and it's fantastic to have our determination and hard work recognised.

"We're delighted to be the first fuel distributor in the UK to have started the HVO trials in homes – when the idea was first raised, we moved heaven and earth to ensure we could not only be involved but were able to lead the way and really prove the potential of hydrotreated vegetable oil or HVO as an eco-friendly alternative to heating oil.

"Our aim was to show the extent of how useful HVO could be in the bid to achieve net zero and so we tested a wide range of appliances, including AGAs, old boilers, low NOx

boilers and Rayburns, to check the renewable fuel works with all of them – and it does.

"One of our proudest moments was after we had converted Gwinear Primary School in Cornwall, George Eustace MP visited the school to see for himself how HVO works in practice – and he acknowledged the importance of this step in achieving a low-carbon alternative heating fuel for older, rural properties."

The HVO trials have been a success since their launch in November 2020 and have highlighted not only the green credentials of this renewable fuel, as it offers net greenhouse gas CO2 reductions of up to 90%, but also its convenience. In most conversions, only the



nozzle needs to be changed and the pressure adjusted on the boiler to enable the system to run on HVO.

Robert adds: "Winning the Innovation Award has topped off an already brilliant year for us and our industry – and we're so pleased that Cornwall is leading the way with HVO and leading the way with the greener fuel that is a potential alternative for every oil-reliant home.

"We will continue to update the Government on the success of the HVO trials, together with UKIFDA and OFTEC, and hope HVO will soon be welcomed as a replacement to fossil fuel in rural buildings."

Margaret Major, managing editor, Fuel Oil News also congratulated the inaugural winners on all the activities that led to the award:

"Obviously we have followed these very closely at Fuel Oil News and will continue to do so, and we have been so impressed with the huge input from Mitchell & Webber to helping the industry to find its future. The innovation is not just about the fuels and the trials it's also the ways they have found to drive the narrative and change the thinking around future fuels.

Ken Cronin concludes: "Mitchell & Webber are really worthy winners of our new Innovation Award and our congratulations also go to the runners-up – Eliminox and Crown Oil – who have made significant contributions to our sector over the last year.



Commercial Fuel Solutions launches unique system

July's virtual UKIFDA EXPO saw Commercial Fuel Solutions launch a brand new software platform.

The platform, owned and operated by Commercial Fuels Solutions Ltd, allows users to compare local fuel prices within their specific region, with the aim of connecting Commercial Fuel Solutions' ever-increasing customer base with reputable fuel suppliers.

Users will be able to compare local suppliers of diesel, gas oil, kerosene, petrol, HVO, biodiesel, aviation and marine-grade fuel.

Telling us more about this service, Robin Fitcher, managing director, Commercial Fuel Solutions Ltd, said: "Typically, fuel and oil price sites look to obtain customers when they are ready to buy fuel and often target domestic users. Not only does our system target commercial users, who require significantly larger volumes of fuel, but our system also introduces products to prospective customers continually during their visit to our website. This ensures that both users' brand and price is kept at the top of their minds.

"For example, when a potential customer visits our website, they could be looking for anything, ranging from a replacement fuel filter to perhaps a consignment of AdBlue. In either instance, they may not even be looking to order fuel. But during their visit, they would be able to access all fuel prices available in their area, with the most competitive rates prominently displayed at the top of every page on our website."

In addition to the lead capture function

of the site, once reliable relationships have been established with fuel vendors, personal introductions can be made to some of Commercial Fuel Solutions' larger, legacy customers, who often have annual fuel requirements exceeding millions of litres.

The perks of using this software platform do not stop with the vendors however. Robin shares some perks that customers can expect too: "There will be instances where the customer may not need the fuel yet but finds the price attractive, in this instance, they are able to request a quotation where our platform captures not only their contact details but also obtains the expected requirement date and storage tank capacity.

"Ultimately this means that the customer can either place an order for fuel at the price indicated, or if they prefer, they can request a quote to refer to when they are ready to receive a delivery."

Concluding the system launch, Robin says: "Over 92% of our web traffic is from either natural search or returning visitors. We are so confident in our systems ability to vend fuel at minimal cost that we are offering free trials for a 3-month period to UKIFDA members who include renewable fuels within their product offering.

"There is no other system like this available anywhere. Sign up today, before your competitors do."

Find out more about how to sell on this platform at www.commercialfuels.co.uk/sell-on-our-platform

New remote control enhances fuel metering system

Following a design collaboration with ALMA, MechTronic was delighted to announce OptiControl, a new wireless remote control which supports and enables the complete management of the OptiMate delivery process. Launched as part of the recent industry Expo, run by UKIFDA, the remote control offers enhanced operational capability for the OptiMate metering system which was originally launched, 5 years ago, at the same event.

OptiControl enables drivers to completely manage the delivery process, as well as remaining at the point of delivery, without needing to return to the vehicle. This, the latest remote from Mechtronic, shows in real time the delivery flow, compartment, current quantity and preset volumes. Drivers are also able to perform product/compartment line changes and adjust preset deliveries as required.

It is a lightweight, handheld remote that can be fastened on the arm of the driver if required and is ATEX approved. The OptiControl remote is also fully

rechargeable in the truck cab, with a dedicated socket.

It features a large LCD screen and provides a range of additional benefits;

- Preset input and adjustment
- Product and compartment



selection

- Litre counter repeater that displays the product, the compartment, and the preset entered whilst displaying the current volume being delivered
- Meter stop/start
- Slow-fill
- Engine stop

OptiMate, has been successfully delivering for fuel oil operatives for 5 years and, with 340 on the road and 350 in build over the next 18 months, is clearly a popular choice with the addition of OptiControl, further enhancing its appeal.

Industry angered by plans to address driver shortages

BUSINESS GROUP LOGISTICS UK HAS REACTED WITH DISMAY AT THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE DRIVERS' HOURS LEGISLATION, WHICH GOVERNS THE LENGTH OF TIME HGV DRIVERS ARE LEGALLY EXPECTED TO WORK, WILL CONTINUE TO BE RELAXED UNTIL 8 AUGUST 2021 IN A BID TO REDUCE DRIVER SHORTAGES.

As James Firth, the organisation's head of road freight regulation policy, explains, the announcement will heap more pressure on drivers who are already stretched to the limit: "Government has ignored the industry in deciding to relax these road safety laws," he explains, "and it will be the hard-pressed HGV drivers on our roads who have to carry the burden. Throughout the pandemic, the UK's professional drivers have kept our shops, homes and businesses supplied with everything needed to keep the economy going, but the current workforce cannot be expected to fill the gaps created by the current skills shortage. The road freight industry vehemently opposed the extension of these vital road safety laws, yet the government has ignored the will of those who will be most affected by the changes.

"The logistics sector has been experiencing a significant shortage of drivers for a number of years, but this situation has been exacerbated by factors including the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit. The industry needs a longer-term solution to the recruitment of drivers – including temporary visas for EU workers to cover the gaps while new recruits can be trained, and interest-free loans for those wishing to enter the market – not a stop-gap measure that will heap more pressure on existing workers. The relaxation of drivers hours should only be used in an emergency situation, when a foreseeable end date can be identified – or is the government suggesting that the current shortage of drivers will be resolved by 8 August?"

Extension of working hours is not the solution

Mr Firth continues: "Existing drivers have been working flat out since the start of the pandemic, and this could be the final straw for many of them. Instead of trying to paper over the gaps, government should be working with industry to produce a plan to support moving drivers through the current bottleneck of HGV driving tests and support potential new entrants to the



industry with the expensive process of acquiring a professional driving licence. Industry met with Transport and Work & Pensions ministers to discuss the situation on 16 June, but no plan has been forthcoming to date – extending working hours is untenable and not the solution to the wider issue. Logistics businesses need and deserve answers, not wallpapering over the problem!"

IT WILL BE THE HARD-PRESSED HGV DRIVERS ON OUR ROADS WHO HAVE TO CARRY THE BURDEN

Equally convinced this is not the solution is Tim Doggett, chief executive, Chemical Business Association (CBA): "Relaxing driver hours is an inadequate reaction to the chronic shortage of HGV drivers. It is also likely to be counter-productive and may even make the problem worse. Many drivers are already away from their families for considerable periods of time and already work up to 15-hour days. Expecting them to work more hours against this background is completely unrealistic."

Permanent solutions needed

Tim added: "Relaxing driver hours does not address the central problem. There is a shortage of 60,000 HGV drivers and simply extending driver's hours is not appropriate or effective solution. This is a chronic issue that now needs urgent action. We recently called a joint Government-Industry partnership to lay the foundations for a more permanent solution to the issue, including the immediate and urgent need to establish a task force to which CBA would be willing to contribute."

The CBA also recently wrote a letter to the Prime Minister emphasising the critical impact of driver shortages on the UK economy, as well as thousands of manufacturing and process industries which are all dependent on road transport.

The letter also stated: "We recognise and endorse the causes outlined by the RHA that have exacerbated the chronic shortage of drivers. Vocational training and the acquisition of qualifications, including sector specific areas such as the Carriage of Dangerous Goods, have been significantly hampered by Covid-19 restrictions. This can only exacerbate the current situation."

An industry acquiring

Since the first impacts of Covid-19 back in early 2020, we, at Fuel Oil News, have closely followed the sector as it has adapted in the face of increasing challenges. From some of the busiest months, made all the more challenging with a number of furloughed staff members, through digital communications, to virtual events taking the place of the social gatherings previously so enjoyed.

Whilst many businesses in the UK have focused on staying afloat over the past 18 months, some have been riding the acquisition wave, moving from strength to strength and growing with new businesses under their belts. Here we take a closer look at some of the most recent mergers and acquisitions within the sector from the perspectives of both the buyers and the sellers.

Recent acquisitions

In one of the most widely covered acquisitions in the industry, the Prax Group announced the successful completion of the strategic acquisition of Lindsey Oil Refinery, and its associated logistics assets in the UK, in March this year. This followed an agreement, signed in July 2020, to purchase the refinery from energy major Total.

Also in March, environmental risk reduction business, Adler and Allan, announced the acquisition of three companies into the group: electrical specialists AMGS Electrical, hazardous material specialist Flotech Performance Systems Limited (Flotech) and industrial sewage specialist Oneline Surveys.

The acquisitions followed changes to Adler and Allan's senior leadership team and were said to support the company's ambitious growth plans to solve more customer challenges in a broader range of sectors with a joined-up approach to its services.

Andrew Clarke, energy infrastructure director, Adler and Allan, said at the time: "The acquisition allows us to further execute our strategy, helping clients maintain and decarbonise their energy infrastructure and install new electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, as the world transitions to a mixed energy future. By combining this with our other energy and forecourt services, we are now able to be a much more strategic environmental partner to customers."

Early April saw the completion of Greenergy's acquisition of Republic of Ireland-based Amber Petroleum, the completion of which helped to give Greenergy a growing presence in Ireland where it currently markets through Inver Energy.

Speaking about this acquisition Christian Flach, Greenergy CEO, said: "One of our key strategic objectives is to integrate our existing supply footprint with our expanding retail presence. The acquisition of Amber follows our recent retail investment in 230 retail sites in Canada and will enhance our capabilities in Ireland by building on our existing infrastructure, supply and retail operations. We look forward to welcoming the Amber team to Greenergy."

Liam Fitzgerald, owner and managing director of Amber Petroleum also added at the time: "Having served our loyal customers for over 40 years Amber's success has been based on strong relationships with customers, suppliers and staff and we know that Greenergy shares these same values. I am confident that Amber will continue to grow its profile as part of the wider Greenergy organisation."

Growth has also been seen in the retail sector, with companies such as Motor Fuel Group (MFG) acquiring six forecourts in the Lake District last year from AUK Investments Limited.

Commenting on the purchase at the time, William Bannister, chief executive officer at MFG said:

"AUK is a well-respected family business in the Lake District and the six stations that we have purchased from them give us the opportunity to extend our network coverage into Cumbria in what is, normally, a thriving tourist area."

In January this year, MFG signed an agreement to purchase seven operational stations and nine new to industry (NTI) sites from BP. This is part of a wider agreement including fuel supply for 100 sites. Commenting on the agreement, Jeremy Clarke, chief operating officer at MFG said:

"We are particularly delighted with this transaction, given the quality of the operational assets and geographical spread of the NTI sites.

"Six of the operating stations are in Scotland and one is in Surrey. The

NTI sites are spread throughout England and Scotland."

Across Europe, DCC has had its finger on the pulse of businesses to acquire this year. Telling us more about the recent acquisitions of Jones Oil and Campus Oils Daire Keating, managing director cards, Austria & Ireland, DCC Retail & Oil, said: "We are very excited about working with our new colleagues in Campus and Jones, having successfully completed the acquisitions during the first half of 2021. Both acquisitions will significantly grow our customer base in the Irish market and, together with our Emo business and the recent launch of the Certa network, in partnership with Tesco, we are very well placed to service our customers across the entire Irish energy distribution channel."

Elaborating further on how these acquisitions fit into Dublin-based DCC's company strategy, Daire continued: "The retail & oil division operates across eight European countries. We continue to scale the business and the recent activity in Ireland is fully aligned with this strategy. Our 40 years of experience in selling the energy required for our transport, commercial, and heating customers makes us the ideal owner of these businesses. We – in DCC plc – are helping our customers around the world to decarbonise by offering cleaner products such as biofuel in blended or pure forms. We will increasingly offer these cleaner solutions to our customers in the UK and Ireland – such as the new ones we gain with these acquisitions. Together with the recent Campus and Jones acquisitions we have also been developing and investing in both our UK and Irish lubricants distribution platforms. This is a really complementary area for DCC."

When asked what advice he would give to businesses looking to sell, Daire Keating says: "There is really one thing – preparedness. You can't be prepared enough, from understanding the conversations that need to happen to knowing the value of your business, really knowing the numbers. Be prepared to state what you want; do you want to stay within the business or walk away – companies, especially family businesses, can be very close to the heart, so this decision needs to be considered carefully."

Ollie Newbold, partner





Randall & Payne, experts in providing business advice and practical accounting solutions, also emphasised the need to be prepared when looking to sell. When speaking about the topic of valuing a business, Ollie said: “Recognising all the factors that have an impact on business is key to achieving the maximum valuation in a business sale process. An experienced advisor in the sector can use detailed knowledge of the industry to obtain best value by understanding buyer motivations, valuation methodology and the impact of seasonality. These points often have a significant bearing on obtaining the best final proceeds. In the oil distribution sector, it is critical that a seller does not underestimate the value of some non-financial aspects of the business – preparation is key in this respect.”

A perfect fit

Following the theme of complementary, ‘perfect’ fits, in May this year, DTN announced the acquisition of Online Fuels.

Telling us more about why Online Fuels was such a great fit for the company, Doug Bennett, chief product officer, DTN, said: “As a data, analytics and technology company, DTN delivers operational intelligence to organisations with complex supply chains around the world. We are committed to breaking through the noise and providing relevant, independent and actionable intelligence customers can depend on to drive confident decision-making to improve their bottom line and reduce risk.”

“Online Fuels is the leader in digital transformation solutions for the downstream refined fuels market. The deal enables DTN to connect the buyers and sellers of commodities worldwide through a seamless, transparent and efficient online trading platform.”

Speaking about the sale to DTN, James Stairmand, former CEO of Online Fuels, said: “The plan was always to create technology

that helped deliver digital transformation to downstream fuel businesses. DTN is a leading provider of operational intelligence solutions to global refined fuels, agriculture, and other weather-sensitive industries and they currently manage more than 85% of the North American supply chain pricing and billing, making them a perfect fit for our industry-leading technology. With their broad range of customers across industries, Online Fuels’ technology will be used to increase support for customers’ efficient and transparent transactions, ultimately improving business outcomes.”

Family ties

When it comes to family businesses, there are a number of reasons why companies may buy or sell. Acquiring businesses or divisions is a great way to grow an independent business, whereas selling could be the result of succession planning, or a lack thereof.

Reflecting on past mergers and acquisitions, Carrie Marsh, managing director, Marsh Fuels said: “We merged with another fuel business in town many years ago with my Grandfather at the helm, at one point becoming Brain & Marsh in Newbury before transforming into Marsh Fuels. As for now? We are happy as we are.”

When asked if Carrie had ever considered selling, she said: “At 120 years old next year, we’re here to stay for a while yet. I see our business staying within our family and come the day that regulation and Government environmental changes see us heading for the pastures, then perhaps that may be the time to retire and enjoy a winter without worrying about getting the tankers about on the road!”

While some businesses have succession plans in place and every intention of keeping it within the family, this is not always possible for others. Mark Nolan, Nolan Oils “I’d love to

expand but it’s a challenge to find the right person to run a third depot with the industry not as attractive to come into as it once was. I can understand why others I know have sold up. Some have no-one to hand it down to, others see buying groups constantly eroding the profit margins and many youngsters perceive it as smelly and dirty industry which reduces new talent coming into it...”

“I would love to hand over to the family but that’s not on the cards, maybe a buyout but I still enjoy helping customers who have been loyal to us for 40 years plus! We tried diversification but it can take your eye off the ball so we sold off Events and Marquees to concentrate on the core business of keeping our customers happy!”

Ollie Newbold touched upon Randall & Payne’s experience of working with family businesses: “Having sold two highly respected distributors to two distinct buyer types (one buyer being a family business, the other being a plc), we have knowledge of overcoming the challenges this evolving industry brings.”

“In addition to detailed transaction knowledge and experience, our corporate finance team worked with a distributor for a number of years to deliver seismic change within their business, including financing a depot design and build project, eventually realising their dream to exit the business. Our established knowledge of the business enabled us to find the right buyer to ensure that the family ethos of the firm continued. In addition to this, we are increasingly engaged to provide indicative valuations and advice as to how to maximise value in the sector.”

The future of the market

It is no surprise in an evolving industry that the medium- and long-term landscape may affect, whether positively or negatively, the acquisition market, as Ollie Newbold concludes: “In the medium term, consideration needs to be given to the impact of future fuels on the independent distributor. These inevitable changes in the future will require time and energy to embed into the business.” Ollie goes on to suggest that companies may be wondering whether now is the right time to consider a sale in order to avoid any potential future erosion of value.

Whether buying, selling, thriving or surviving, it is great to see so much activity in a sector that continues to grow stronger, even amidst global pandemics and daily challenges. We don’t know what the future brings and what opportunities there may be just beyond the horizon but, as ever, we look forward to always keeping you updated.

Rawlings Fuels putting the customer first

HAMPSHIRE-BASED RAWLINGS FUELS IS AN INDEPENDENT SUPPLIER OF FUEL OILS DELIVERING TO DOMESTIC AND COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS, INCLUDING FARMS AND AGRICULTURAL COMPANIES. ITS BEGINNINGS WERE IN A TRANSPORT COMPANY, FROM WHICH THE FUEL COMPANY EMERGED, GREW AND EVENTUALLY MOVED TO ITS NEW DEDICATED DEPOT JUST OVER A YEAR AGO IN MARCH 2020.

A YEAR ON FROM THE MOVE, MANAGING EDITOR, MARGARET MAJOR, VISITED **TOM DAVIES**, DIRECTOR OF RAWLINGS FUEL, AND THE TEAM AT THE HOOK DEPOT TO HEAR HOW THINGS ARE GOING NOW.



Talk us through the evolution of Rawlings from its beginnings to the present-day business.

“The company had its origins in Rawlings Transport, a long-established independent road haulage company based in Hook, Hampshire. Since it began, in 1972, it has built an enviable reputation as one of the UK’s most trusted road haulage companies with a large number of long-term customers.”

This focus on customer retention through exceptional service is a theme that continues through the Rawlings Fuels business which began as an offshoot of the transport business with the acquisition of Phoenix Fuels in 1993 with Rawlings Fuels formed to supply domestic heating oil throughout the area. The fuels business grew rapidly, as the customer base and delivery fleet expanded and, in 2019, Rawlings Fuels began the creation of a purpose-built fuel distribution depot to solve the problem of the two sides of the business competing for the space available in Hook.

How did you originally come into the industry?

Terry Rawlings was the owner of Rawlings Fuels when Tom got involved as he explains: “I was originally a planner at Cemex in the construction industry and then came into oil distribution to work for Terry.” Terry is still involved with the business but has passed it down to his son, Paul Rawlings and it is still very much a family business with Terry’s daughter

and grandson also working for the company.

Paul Rawlings recently oversaw the redevelopment of the fuel side and, after 40 years at the Hook site, he had developed a clear idea of what was going to be needed in a new depot.

What have been the main company milestones of growth and change?

“The biggest change has been the relocation of the fuel distribution business. We found the ideal location in South Warnborough,

Hampshire, not far from our original location, and set about building the depot we wanted.”

Using the insight Paul and Tom had acquired over the previous 12 years, the depot was created through extensive building work by a local building company to create ‘North Barn’, where the offices are located, with industry specialist Adler & Allan building the storage tanks. Rawlings Fuels moved in March 2020 and the new depot has met and surpassed all their expectations proving to be an excellent base.





What was the best bit of advice you were ever given in this industry?

“It’s not really advice but someone once said; ‘If you’re not in oil you don’t see how many are on oil’. It’s been a real eye-opener to me how many households in our local communities are reliant on their oil and it’s made my focus being to get their oil to them when they need it.”

Excellent service is clearly hugely important to Rawlings and is seen in everything they do.

From community involvement, with its support of local sport teams and community events, through to a telephone / PC interface recognition system that brings the customer’s account up on the screen when they ring in, it is clear that the customer is at the centre of everything. With 85% of their business placed via phone calls this system makes the ordering process a very friendly and simple one.

While I was there, I met many of the team behind Rawlings Fuels and, without exception, they are friendly and dedicated to both the company and to doing the best job possible. Their genuine care for their customers comes through in everything they do.

With the huge majority of their business being domestic (although Tom, similarly to many distributors, would like to increase the commercial customer base to maintain more even order books through the year) this customer-based approach is vital to their success.

As Tom explains: “Everyone talks to everyone. We have a large number of customers and a significant proportion of those are on a regular ‘top up’ service. We get to know what they need and with what frequency, so they are very loyal. We never let them run out and they take priority.”

How do new customers find you?

Tom explains further how important the community grapevine is and why their reputation is so important: “We have a great reputation and that is built, and shared, at the local pub or shop! We sponsor local events and football teams but that’s also to give back to the communities we work in.”

With 7 permanent drivers, most of whom have 20+ years’ service with the shortest service still being 16 years, another key part of the loyalty of the Rawlings customer is the interaction with their regular drivers. “They know the area and they know the customers. There are many small villages in the area they service and often it starts with just one or two customers but grows organically as they tell their neighbours about how happy they are with the service they receive from Rawlings.”

Appreciation for the care the drivers take over deliveries is shown not just through recommending the company to neighbours and new people moving into homes heated by oil but also in the Christmas cards and hampers that the drivers receive as well as the 5* ratings Rawlings service gets in reviews.

Looking to the future how do you see decarbonisation impacting on your customers?

With the increasing focus on net zero 2050, Rawlings is considering how they can be part of the solution and, as Tom says: “Watch this space. We are aware of the desire of our customers to start contributing to the reduction in carbon from fossil fuels and we will be putting our ideas into action to help them to achieve this.”

Is there a next generation in the business or that may get involved in some form of fuel distribution in the future?

“Terry is still involved along with his son, Paul. It is still very much a family business with Terry’s daughter and grandson also working for the company.

“Sam, Terry’s grandson, is currently the O-license holder for Rawlings Fuels and so the company is safe in the hands of three generations of the family with everyone focussed on the company vision of looking after their customers in the very close-knit communities they deliver to.”

Looking to the future what is the vision for the company?

“To keep customers happy, keep drivers happy and keep our staff happy,” Tom replies without hesitation. “It really is that simple.”



A reliable and secure supply

JOHN REGAN, SALES DIRECTOR AT THE PRAX GROUP, BRINGS US UP TO DATE WITH THE GROUP'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES THAT WILL ENSURE THAT BOTH CURRENT AND FUTURE SUPPLY NEEDS OF CUSTOMERS ARE MET.

With this issue considering the future shape of the industry and focusing on the topic of acquisition activity in the sector, we revisit the Prax Group which successfully acquired the Lindsey Oil Refinery in March of this year. Headquartered in London, this British multinational independent oil refining, trading, storage, distribution and retail conglomerate has gained a well-deserved reputation of excellence through its ability to deliver innovative customer solutions across the world and is committed to maintaining this. Forward-thinking in its approach, the group's success over the course of the past two decades has been achieved through its entrepreneurial spirit, dynamic team and lean structure. With a stated aim of being best in class in every aspect of its business we spoke with John Regan to get an update on the long-term strategy of this leading presence in the global oil market.

Ensuring supply needs are met

In order to continue to meet its stated commitment to excellence, and to ensure that the supply needs of its customers can be met both now and in the future, in March of this year the Prax Group successfully acquired Lindsey Oil Refinery, located five miles from

the Humber Estuary in North Killingholme, along with its associated logistic assets. The acquisition will bring new investment to the refinery and underlines the Prax Group's determination to support the local economy and the wider community.

The Prax Group's long-term strategy is to be fully integrated across the oil value chain from upstream to downstream. Acquiring the refinery and its associated assets was a natural progression for the Group, as it provides the opportunity to integrate the refinery and its associated product flows into the company's UK distribution and retail footprint, which operates under the Harvest Energy brand. This will create unique opportunities for synergies with existing Prax-owned assets, as well as demonstrating an ongoing commitment to building a reliable and secure supply chain to meet the needs of its customers for many years to come.

To oversee operations on site, the Prax Group appointed Luc Smets as general manager of the refinery. Luc confirmed that the acquisition "provides an opportunity to close a gap in the supply chain," which is achieved due to the fact that, "the Prax Group has control of the refinery's oil products

output, trading, and logistics — with the Finaline pipeline, rail loading, truck loading, and terminals."

A nimble response to customer needs

Logistics is a key factor in terms of how the refinery will operate going forwards. "Our logistics assets are very attractive," commented John Regan, sales director. "In some ways, they are as important as the refinery's production capacity. We are able to move products at a very low cost in every direction — to Grangemouth, Jarrow or London, for example. These assets include the Finaline pipeline and shares in the Buncefield oil depot, which are crucial to deliver jet fuel to Heathrow, but also other products to the Greater London area. The Group's structure means that it is both flexible and nimble, so we can move quickly to respond to any opportunities as they arise."

This includes being responsive to the individual needs of their customers. "At the Prax Group, we are resolutely service-orientated, and we really value relationships," John explained. "Our focus is always our customers, whoever and wherever they may be. Some distributors may wish to pick up product by rail and ship, rather than road, and the refinery

can accommodate all these requirements. Prax Lindsey Oil Refinery will play a substantial role in the Prax UK supply chain, in line with the company's vision to become an integrated global oil conglomerate."

Despite its globally connected infrastructure and worldwide operations, the Prax Group remains committed to its home-grown ventures, as demonstrated by the recent announcement of significant investment into its Jarrow Terminal, located in the north east of the UK, with funds spread across several projects on the site; some of which are upgrade works, and some of which are to support new business.

Investing in future readiness

The announcement was a timely one, as the team recently celebrated five years of Prax operations at the facility. Having first acquired Jarrow Terminal on 29th February 2016, the site operations team received their first rail import on 8th May of that same year, an astounding accomplishment at the time. The Prax Group is now in the process of acquiring the freehold for the whole site, giving it full ownership of the terminal. Put simply, the Group recognises the value of the Terminal in



terms of its importance to the UK's national infrastructure, and its key role in securing and supplying energy for its customers, both locally and nationally.

The long-term plan is to make Jarrow a strategic hub, to increase throughputs – which is great news for the terminal's many customers, as this will ensure security of supply going forwards. The plan is for the terminal to be able to throughput five products: super unleaded gasoline, premium unleaded gasoline, gasoil, diesel and kerosene. The Prax terminals team, headed up by the Group's head of terminals, Adam Smith, is managing Jarrow's investment projects in-house. The

entire team has been involved in the project consultation and background decision-making process, which not only gives them full control of all projects, but also ensures that improvements are being made directly as a result of on-the-ground feedback. More importantly, however, it ensures that the team can continue to run operations at the terminal without any service disruption.

This is all to the benefit of the terminal's wide customer base, guaranteeing continuity and security of supply, whilst enabling Jarrow Terminal to meet the demands of the market, ensuring that the business is prepared for the ever-changing future of the industry.



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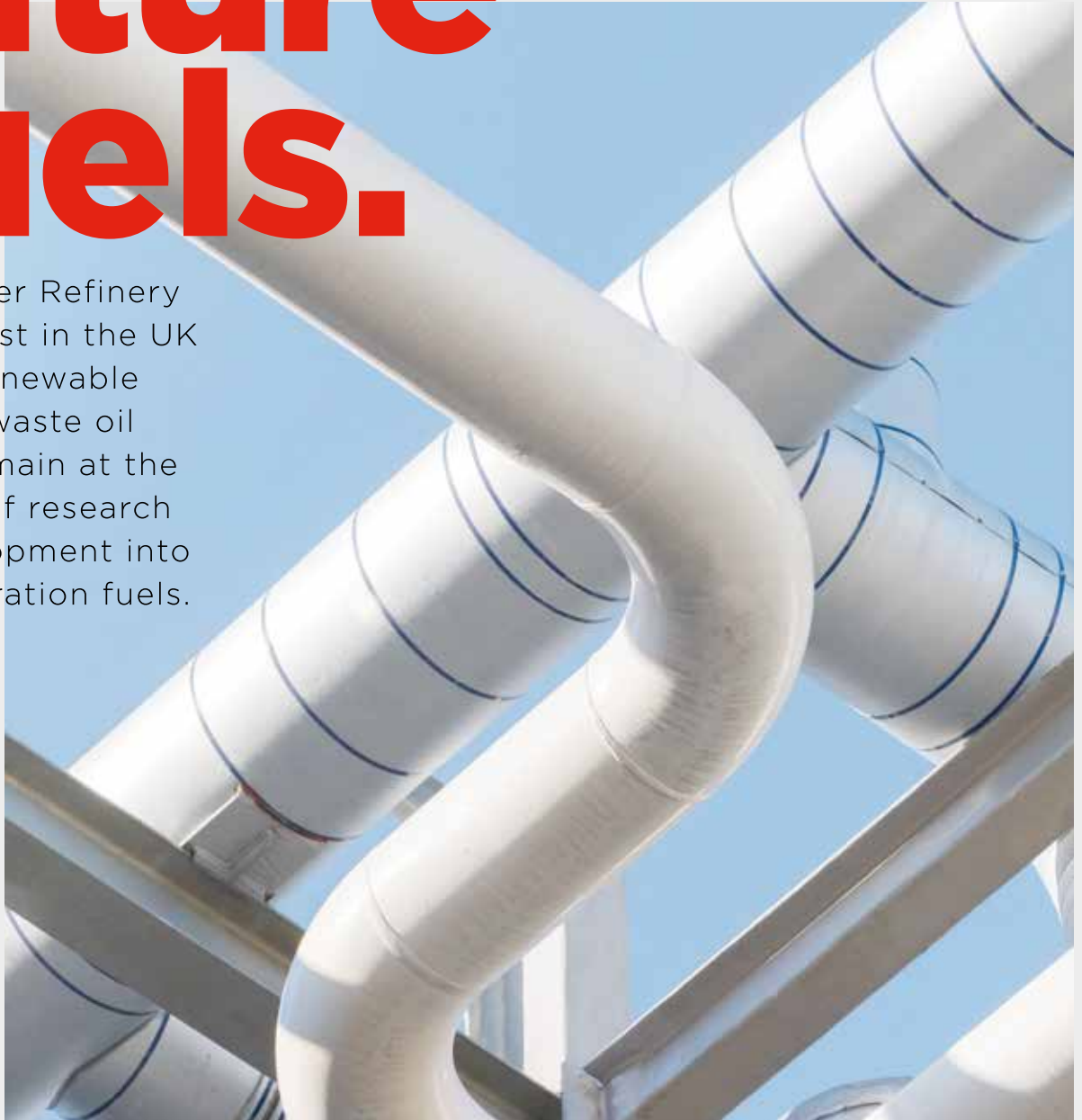

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PROVIDING ENERGY.
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The difference between flame retardant and arc flash resistant

MARK LANT, TECHNICAL EXPERT AT PROGARM TALKS US THROUGH THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FLAME RETARDANT AND ARC FLASH RESISTANT PPE, AND WHY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.



In any potentially hazardous environment, it is of fundamental importance to understand how risks can be mitigated. Here we consider the risk of arc flash incidents and the need to protect your team with specialist protection from the dangers such an incident can pose.

Mitigating risk with safe working practices, and by providing appropriate garments that offer superior Arc Flash protection, saves lives every day. For many decades, flame resistant clothing has helped reduce the risk of severe burn injuries to workers. These types of garments are either made from treated cotton or, more often nowadays, self-extinguishing materials. Both of which provide managers with a reliable option for keeping their teams safe. However, while most health and safety professionals are confident about fire and electrical safety protection, they may be less knowledgeable against the dangers posed by an arc flash incident.

Contrary to popular belief, flame retardant PPE can't protect against burns in an arc flash incident, as these burns aren't caused by fire, but by thermal energy. This means that protecting a team against an arc flash incident requires more specialist garments.

What is an arc flash?

Hotter than the sun and louder than a bullet being shot, an arc flash is when an arcing fault releases dangerous levels of radiant energy, which vaporises metal that spews from the arc. The air is super-heated causing pressure waves that can throw individuals across rooms and create a deadly molten shrapnel. They can be caused by voltage spikes, worn connections, cable strikes or gaps in insulation, and are a risk even in low-voltage set ups.

Treatment for those that survive an incident can require years of skin grafts, hospital stays and rehabilitation – they may never recover sufficiently to regain their lifestyle, so it's safe to say that choosing the appropriate PPE is key when it comes to arc flash safety.

How does flame resistant differ from arc flash?

Unfortunately, although flame resistant clothing meets acceptable industry standards for the risks associated with fires, unless they are specifically designed and certified they are not designed to also withstand an arc flash incident.

There are, in fact, separate safety standards for arc flash clothing, which go further than the ones for fire resistance, meaning that the level of protection provided by flame resistant clothing does not match that of arc-resistant PPE. Indeed, fabric used in arc-resistant garments must meet higher tear resistance and tensile strength than those required for fire-resistant clothing.

This is because arc flash protective clothing is designed to not only protect operatives from fire, but from the thermal energy generated by an arc flash, which can also cause external and internal burns.

While the threads used for the structural seams must be fire-resistant, under IEC 61482, arc flash resistant clothing has various standards that separate it from fire-resistant clothing. Each arc-resistant garment must be designed in a way to allow the wearer to quickly remove the item, must always have long sleeves rather than short sleeves, and feature no exposed metal.

However, it's not just the fabric that needs to be arc flash resistant, in order to provide the ultimate protection, garments should have every stitch, button, popper, zip and press-stud as flame resistant to provide enhanced and effective arc flash protection as well as durability.

When searching for appropriate arc flash PPE, safety experts should keep their eyes peeled for SafetyICON marking or equivalent, which allows workers to see what type of protection they offer, as well as suitable, arc resistant components, which have been safety approved and tested to withstand an arc flash incident.

Making the right choice

There's no disputing the danger posed by arc flash incidents, but to fully understand the protection offered by making the correct PPE choice here are five ways ProGARM arc flash PPE saves lives.

- 1 Protects you from internal burns caused by the energy in an arc flash incident
- 2 The garments instantly extinguish to avoid the additional risk of fire
- 3 Thermsafe fastenings don't melt or fail, meaning clothing can be safely removed
- 4 The fabrics have inherent protection, so they offer as much protection one year later as they did on day one
- 5 They are super-comfortable which means that users will wear it properly so allowing it to do its job. Our experts know that any PPE must make it easier for enable workers to do their job, not hinder it.





PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

JULY
IN VIEW

AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE TOKYO OLYMPICS, WE CONSIDER THE COMPLEXITY OF ENERGY IN JAPAN

It's been an occasional tradition of this report to try to link major sporting events to fuel markets! So it was that we looked at London in 2012 (Olympics), Russia both in 2014 (Winter Olympics) and 2018 (World Cup), Brazil, also twice, in 2014 and 2016 (World Cup and Olympics) and South Korea in 2018 (Winter Olympics). With no spectators and an understandable lack of fanfare, most of us seem to have forgotten that Tokyo is hosting this year's (delayed) Olympics – but we won't let that stop us writing another wholly useless report on the world of oil and energy and how it plays out in Japan!

Just like the weirdest Olympic event ever (the cycling Keirin – originally from Japan and the one with the guy on an electric bike at the front), energy across the Japanese archipelago is a complex and tactical affair. Much of this stems from the fact that the country has virtually zero mineral raw materials. It has next to no coal reserves, produces no oil and has a tiny number of operating gas fields. For the 3rd biggest economy on earth, that is an unusual position to be in and has inevitably required careful energy planning, along with the strategic development of strong international relationships to mitigate such a large reliance on imported energy.

“ENERGY ACROSS THE JAPANESE ARCHIPELAGO IS A COMPLEX AND TACTICAL AFFAIR.”

Japan imports 3m barrels of oil per day (bpd), which is around 3% of world consumption and makes it the 4th largest oil importer on the planet (after USA, China and India). It's reliance on Middle Eastern oil is absolute (90% of imports), with the first trading relationship agreed and formulated with Saudi Arabia as far back as 1955. This complete reliance on oil imports is replicated with gas – the other “blue riband” energy event. Again, Japan has no material indigenous production, so 85m tonnes of Liquefied Natural Gas has to be imported each year. 20% of this volume



comes from the Middle East, but this time it is Australia in the gold medal position, with a 40% share of the Japanese market. As an island state with no inter-connecting pipelines, all Japanese gas has to be imported by ship, making the country the largest global importer of natural gas in the world. It is also a key factor behind Japan's Olympic-standard mercantile fleet, with over 1,000 Japanese flagged oil, gas and chemical tankers plying the world's seas...

The strategic thinking behind having such a strong shipping fleet is no doubt along the lines of “if you can't control the product, you better control the transportation” and a similar line of thought has been applied to Japan's energy manufacturing sector. The country may be short of oil, but it certainly makes up for it when it comes to the processing of the stuff, with 21 refineries and a total daily throughput capacity of 3.5m bpd (circa 550m litres per day). As a comparison the UK, with roughly half the population of Japan (65m Brits to Japan's 125m), has only 6 refineries and a combined capacity of circa 1m bpd. A further difference in infrastructure scale can be observed in the number of petrol stations in both countries; whilst both markets have experienced a significant contraction in numbers, Japan still has 29,000 petrol forecourts compared to the UK's 8,500.

So far, so (old school) fuel, but it should also be noted that Japan now has far more automotive electric charge points (just shy of 50,000) than it does petrol stations. This aggressive electrification of the transport fleet is largely the result of strategic shifts made by the country's leading car manufacturers (Toyota, Nissan, Honda), rather than any green legislation emanating from the Japanese government. In fact in most environmental disciplines, Japan lags well behind European

and American states. The country still relies on (imported) coal for a quarter of its electricity and a further 40% comes from a combination of Natural Gas and Oil. Renewables only account for 10% of the energy mix, whilst Nuclear is now a shadow of the pre-Fukushima period, when it contributed over a third of the nation's electric power (via 50 nuclear generators). That figure is now down to 3% from the country's four remaining generators.

“NO PLACE FOR JAPAN ON THE GREEN PODIUM JUST YET.”

No place for Japan on the green podium just yet then, although along with many other developed nations, Japan has committed to “Net Zero” by 2050. Their Green Growth strategy has identified 12 sectors that can contribute to this decarbonisation agenda and these include renewable energies, hydrogen production and carbon capture / recycling. Even more fundamental however is the inclusion and significant focus on the recovery of the nuclear industry, to help meet low carbon targets. The logic of including this zero emission energy source is clear and Portland feels it will be a blueprint for other developed nations, as they grapple with the practical problems of decarbonising fossil fuel dependent economies. Just like Seb Coe prior to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, nuclear has become the forgotten man of the energy sector – written off, criticised and unloved. Coe bounced back at the LA Coliseum in the 1500m final and comfortably took gold – could the nuclear industry do the same and defy the doubters? We'll see, but in the meantime enjoy the Olympics and remember that the guy on the electric bike with the rucksack (why?!), cannot win a medal at the Keirin...!

For more pricing
information,
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A look at the shape of the future UK downstream oil sector landscape

We are living through a time that has heralded much change and, before considering the future evolution and shape of the UK downstream oil sector, we will remind ourselves of the substantial amount of change that has already occurred in this current millennium.

Four particular developments are noteworthy:

- The 'Majors' no longer enjoy the dominant position prevailing in the second half of the 20th century, when they supplied circa 55-60% of the inland market, with the exception of the aviation fuel sector, where they continue to significantly dominate the country's two main airports, Heathrow and Gatwick.
- The refinery network has diminished in size from 9 facilities to 6.
- The middle 'tier' of the landscape has seen a number of ownership changes resulting in new or different participants.
- The market position of the wholesalers / importers has grown substantially, from around a 7% share at the start of the millennium, to between 35-40% and even higher in ground transport fuels (circa 45%). Two companies have featured especially prominently:
 - Greenergy, which started in 1992, is now the market leader, with national distribution coverage and a particularly strong position in the supply of products to supermarkets (especially Tesco & Sainsbury) which, as a group, now supply around 45% of the road fuel market (vs. around 6% in 1990).
 - Certas Energy is a wholly owned subsidiary of Dublin based FTSE100 company, DCC, which entered the market in 2001 by buying BP equity distributor, Scottish Oils, and then, over the ensuing 15 years, embarked on an ambitious distributor acquisition programme, which included the equity distributor businesses of Shell (Shell Direct), Texaco and Total (Total Butler).

The chart below provides a summary of the landscape's evolution over the past 11 years.

	2010	2021
Major Oil Companies	BP, Esso, Shell, Total	BP, Esso, Shell
Mini Majors/Mid Size Refiners	CocoPhillips, Ineos, Petroplus, Chevron, Murco	Phillips 66, PetrIneos, Essar, Valero, Prax Petroleum ¹
Re-sellers/Wholesalers/Importers	GB Oils, Greenergy, Harvets Energy, Mabanaft, Prax Petroleum, World Fuels	Certas Energy, Greenergy, Mabanaft, Puma Energy, World Fuels

Note (1) Total brand and associated imaging is available from Prax Petroleum retail channel, Harvest Energy, to independent dealers.

Looking ahead

We will now consider the main developments that are expected to determine the shape of the sector up to the end of the current decade, looking at its principal component parts.

DEVELOPMENTS IMPACTING ON THE FUTURE SHAPE:

The over-arching development that will play the central role will be the pace of the energy transition away from all fossil fuels towards renewable sources. Taking the main components of the downstream oil sector in turn:

Refining:

There are currently six refineries supplying the UK market, all of which were originally commissioned 50+ years ago, but how many will be required by the end of the decade? Especially in the light of the following:

- The expected 'trajectory' of inland product consumption: while levels are projected to largely recover from last year's sharp fall-back within the next year or so, beyond that at best they may plateau for a few years to be followed by a steady decline.
- Depressed refining margins, which are still to recover from last year's decline to / below break-even levels.

- Increasingly stringent emissions requirements, the measures introduced to enforce and the associated compliance costs.

Further, net exports account (2019 out-turns) for 40% of refinery petrol production-with indigenous requirements capable of being covered by 3-4 of the existing facilities. In contrast, net imports of derv and Jet A-1 account (2019 out-turns) for just under 50% and two thirds respectively of inland consumption.





It remains to be seen if any of the refineries follow the co-processing precedent set by the Phillips 66 Humber plant, with a renewable diesel unit since 2018 now with a capacity of 150,000 mt/year, with plans to expand to 250,000 mt in 2024. In mainland Europe both Total in France and ENI in Italy have gone a step further by conversion of former oil refineries in to 100% biofuels facilities- two in each case. Will these precedents be followed by any of the UK refiners?

The clear balance of probability is that the refinery network will be smaller by 2030; factors such as security of supply and supply resilience will also be important determinants of the size and shape of the network come 2030.

Ground transport fuels:

Sales of these grades (diesel, petrol & gasoil) represent 60% of total inland refined product deliveries, so are the bread and butter for the participants in the downstream oil sector.

The past year, in particular, has seen a rapid pick-up in EV sales and this trend is expected to accelerate, with increasing attention and encouragement from government. Mindful of the more ambitious 2030 GHG emissions reduction target (-78% vs 1990) and the ban on ICE vehicle sales from that date this prompts two critical questions:

1. To what extent will the current filling station network, currently numbering 8,386 outlets, shrink in the face of declining petrol & diesel usage?
2. How many mid-size refiners and fuel re-sellers/wholesalers can be accommodated by a reduced market for the three ground transport fuels?

The answers (outcomes) to the above questions will be key to shaping the kind of

competitive landscape in 2030. Directionally, there are likely to be fewer players and, maybe, some different/new ones from the wider energy or other sectors?

Of the existing participants, both BP and Shell have served notice of intentions regarding the electrification of transport, with ambitious plans around EV charging facilities across their networks. Further, BP acquired the UK's largest electric vehicle charging company, Chargemaster, in 2018, whose Polar network comprises circa 7,000 publicly available charging points. Shell acquired Dutch company, NewMotion in 2017, one of Europe's largest electric vehicle charging companies which provides circa 30,000 residential and business charging points and 50,000 public sites. The country's largest independent dealer group, MFG, plans to invest £400 million to install around 3,000 ultra-rapid 150kW and 350kW EV chargers at roughly 500 sites by the end of 2030.

Aviation fuel:

Full recovery from the 60% collapse in demand last year is not expected to occur until around 2024- and it may never get back to 2019 levels if long-haul traffic does not recover to prior levels. Notwithstanding that decline, aviation is viewed as one of the most difficult sectors to de-carbonise, at least in the short to medium term. There is rising interest, and activity, around the production of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), based on HVO, but the scale and general availability will remain limited for the foreseeable future.

Consequently, the competitive landscape is unlikely to experience any material change over the next ten or so years, with the existing dominant market players (BP, Esso, Shell) continuing to be so.

Heating oil:

In its 'Future Vision', published in July 2019, UKPIA declared a commitment to cease supply of heating oil to properties off the gas grid during the 2020s, when use of liquid fuels for space heating will fall to 'very low levels'. The Association does not envisage that a sustainable low carbon liquid fuel will have a future role in the energy supply system outside of the transport sector (ground transport, as well as aviation and maritime sectors).

Implementation of this commitment infers that an important part of the oil distributor's business portfolio will not exist in its current form by 2030, although there may be a place, albeit very limited, for a drop-in low carbon liquid fuel alternative, such as HVO.

The knock-on impact of the foregoing on the competitive landscape is very difficult to gauge at this juncture. Suffice it to say that, directionally, it will drive greater consolidation.

LPG:

The principal outlet for LPG, accounting for around two thirds of demand, is as a petrochemical feed stock for steam cracking to produce olefins- ethylene, propylene and butadiene- which are key building blocks for the chemicals industry. This is the one market for refined oil products which, it is envisaged, will enjoy longer term sustainability than the more 'mainstream' ones, although there is a potential threat from increased availability of ethane sourced out of US shale gas production.

Trying to speculate about the precise shape of the UK downstream oil sector landscape in circa 2030 is largely a 'guesswork' exercise so, in the foregoing narrative we've tried to identify and highlight some key pointers. In all probability it will not look too much different from that today- though maybe with fewer participants among those currently involved, but with the possibility of new/ different players from elsewhere in the energy sector, or beyond?

Time and evolving circumstances will tell!

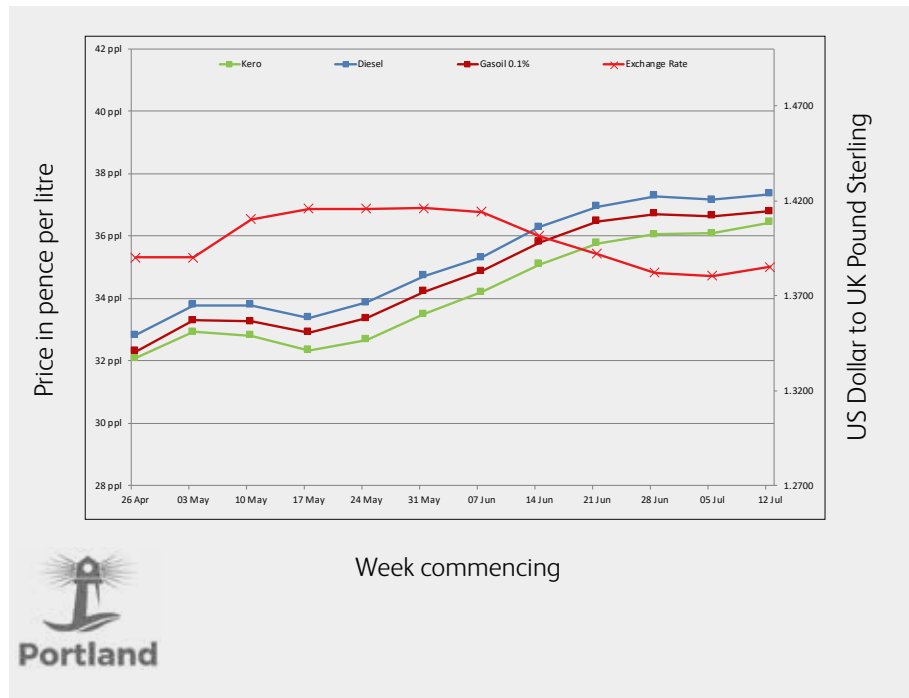
ROD PROWSE, worked for 30 years across the full spectrum of the downstream oil sector, in both the UK and USA, which has included leadership positions in both retail and wholesale fuels businesses. Rod draws on his extensive knowledge of this global industry to bring us 'Industry Insights'.



Wholesale Price Movements: 19th June 2021 – 18th July 2021

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	36.06	37.16	36.62
Average daily change	0.35	0.35	0.35
Current duty	0.00	57.95	11.14
Total	36.06	95.11	47.76

All prices in pence per litre



Highest price
36.85 ppl
Tue 13 Jul 21

Biggest up day
+0.92 ppl
Fri 09 Jul 21

Kerosene

Lowest price
35.33 ppl
Wed 07 Jul 21

Biggest down day
-0.84 ppl
Tue 06 Jul 21

Highest price
37.94 ppl
Mon 05 Jul 21

Biggest up day
+0.91 ppl
Fri 09 Jul 21

Diesel

Lowest price
36.35 ppl
Wed 07 Jul 21

Biggest down day
-0.88 ppl
Tue 06 Jul 21

Highest price
37.42 ppl
Mon 05 Jul 21

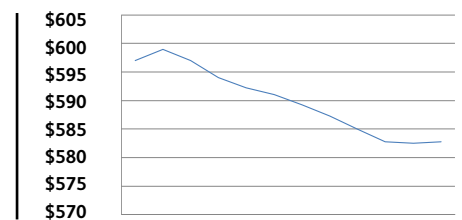
Biggest up day
+0.88 ppl
Fri 09 Jul 21

Gasoil 0.1%

Lowest price
35.81 ppl
Wed 07 Jul 21

Biggest down day
-0.89 ppl
Tue 06 Jul 21

Gasoil forward price
in US\$ per tonne



The Fuel Oil News Price Totem

	Trade average buying prices			Average selling prices		
	Kerosene	Gasoil	ULSD	Kerosene	Gasoil	ULSD
Scotland	38.00	50.27	98.10	43.32	53.71	101.94
North East	36.95	48.90	97.18	44.30	52.09	100.00
North West	38.52	51.50	99.57	43.65	54.51	102.10
Midlands	37.02	49.43	97.64	41.99	52.58	100.70
South East	37.12	49.39	97.62	47.37	54.88	100.28
South West	37.47	49.23	97.46	44.10	52.37	99.89
Northern Ireland	37.58	50.60	n/a	42.48	54.48	n/a
Republic of Ireland	51.34	56.03	99.04	56.12	59.34	102.18
Portland	35.33	46.95	94.33			

The price totem figures are indicative figures compiled from the Portland base rate using calculated regional variances.

Buying prices are ex-rack. Selling prices are for 1000 litres of kero, 2500 litres of gas oil and 5000 litres of ULSD (Derv in ROI). Prices in ROI are in €.

Wholesale prices are supplied by Portland Analytics Ltd, dedicated providers of fuel price information from refinery to pump.

For more information and access to prices, visit www.portlandpricing.co.uk

WELCOME TO AUGUST'S EDITION OF OUR SPECIAL MONTHLY FEATURE WHICH GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO 'MEET' AN INDUSTRY FIGURE AND, HOPEFULLY, TO DISCOVER ANOTHER SIDE TO THEM BEYOND THE WELL-KNOWN FACTS.

SPEAKING OF HIS FAMILY, RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND A LOVE OF CHOCOLATE, WE CHAT WITH **LUC SMETS**, GENERAL MANAGER AT PRAX LINDSEY OIL REFINERY TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT THE MAN BEHIND INDUSTRY SUCCESS.



“THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.”

LUC SMETS

Give your career history in 50 words or fewer?

I began my career working for ExxonMobil in different roles and in various locations. I later joined the Gunvor Group as general manager in Antwerp and Ingolstadt, and recently joined the Prax Group, as general manager at Prax Lindsey Oil Refinery.

Tell us more about yourself using 3 words

Challenge. Endurance. Value.

What were your childhood / early ambitions?

I wanted to become a carpenter, like my father and grandfather.

Tell us your greatest fear?

My greatest fear is a serious injury on site. Safety is always our number one priority, and we do everything in our power to mitigate risks, but you can never be too careful.

Describe your dream job (if different from your current job)

Making a difference in an economic activity that is needed by society.

What's the best business advice you've ever received?

Nothing is impossible, but resources are limited.

Share your top tips for business success

- Always look for value creation
- Think outside the box
- Manage all risks

What's your most recent business achievement of note?

Being part of the successful acquisition of Lindsey Oil Refinery.

Which is most important – ambition or talent?

Both, actually – you need them equally to achieve important goals in life.

What's the best thing about your job?

Leading a team of motivated and skilled employees.

Is there a quality that you most admire?

Honesty and integrity.

What are you most likely to say?

“Thank you!”

What are you least likely to say?

“It is your fault this happened.”

Describe your perfect day?

A day without surprises!

Do you have a favourite sports team?

The New England Patriots American football team.

What's the biggest challenge of our time?

Time management.

Cheese or chocolate?

I like cheese, but I love chocolate.

Share your greatest personal achievement?

Offering our three sons a good start in life.

What's your pet hate or biggest irritant?

Someone who doesn't respect others.

If you were elected to government, what would be the first law you'd press for?

Animal rights.

If your 20-year-old self saw you now, what would they think?

Why does he not spend more time with his family?

What is number 1 on your bucket list?

I don't have a bucket list.

What 3 things would you take to a desert island?

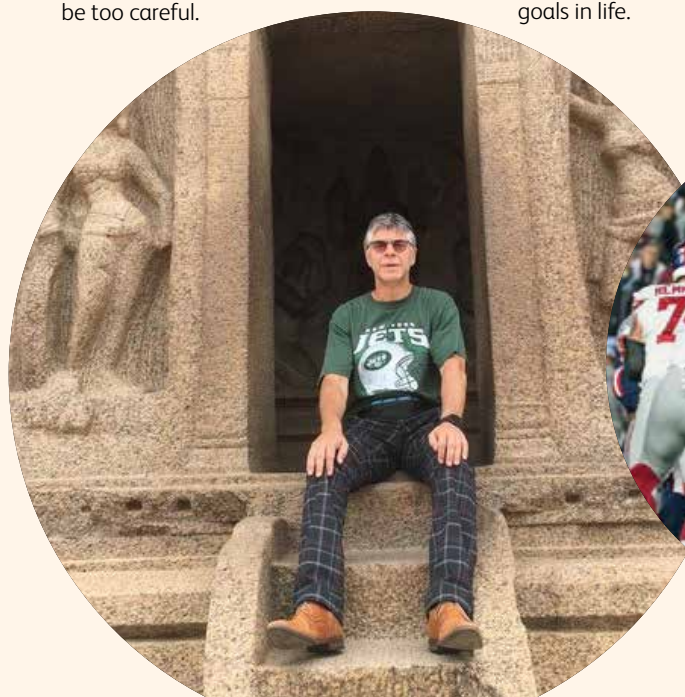
My wife, water and food.

Tell us something about you that people would be very surprised by?

I am colour-blind.

Who would you most like to ask these questions of?

Till Lindemann, the German singer/songwriter and poet best known as the lead vocalist in Neue Deutsche Härte band, Rammstein.



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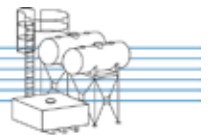
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