

# Fuel Oil News

 Incorporating DOWNSTREAM

April 2025

## PREVIEW: UKIFDA SHOW 2025

THE TANKER MARKET REVIEWED

CUSTOMER CONVERSATIONS



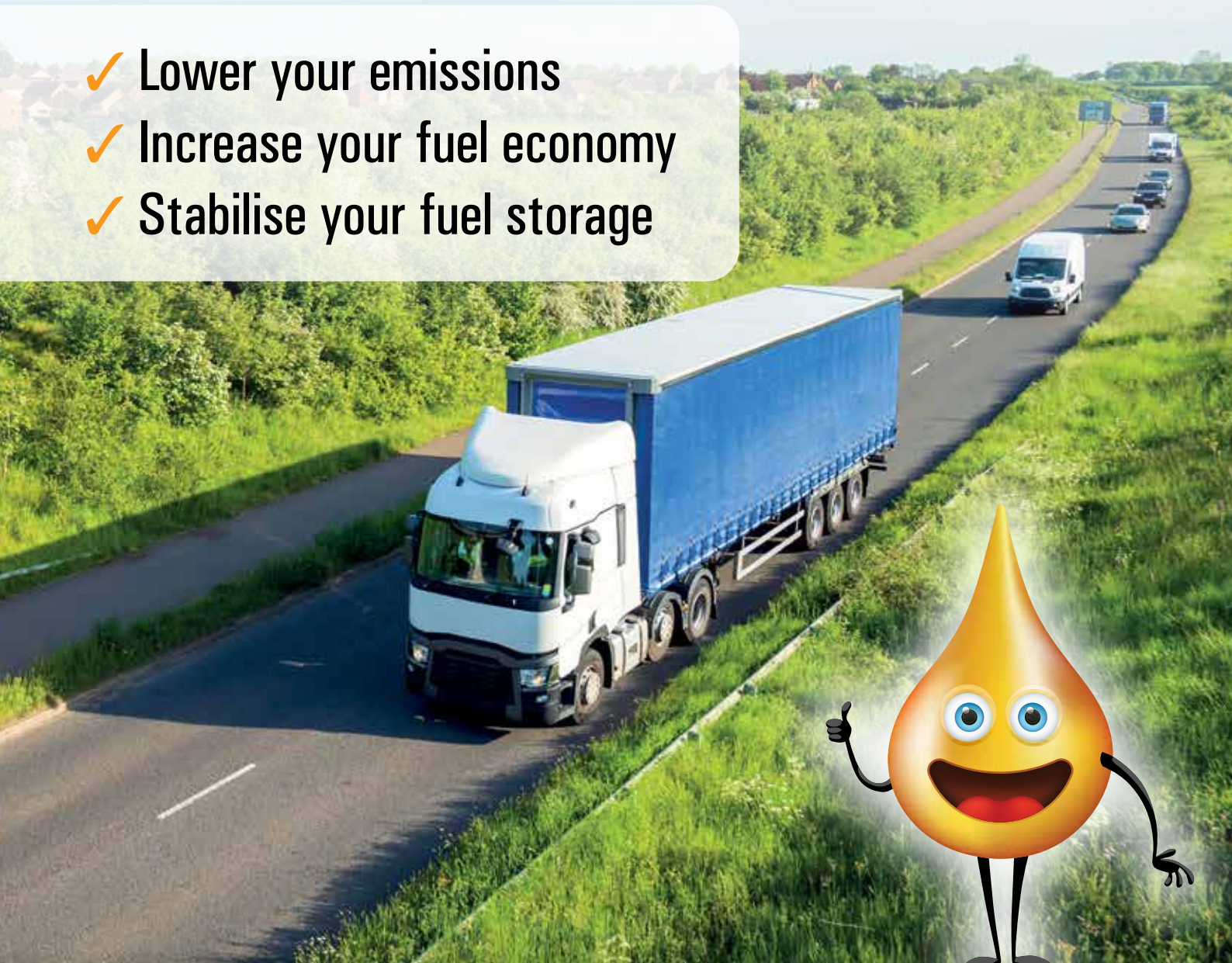
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## There's a time and a place for hybrids

In last month's introduction I highlighted the risk that can arise from entrenched and extreme positions – warning of their ability to hinder progress.

Advocates of hybrid solutions are rarely accused of narrow-minded thinking and, in many cases, rightly so. Hybrid heating systems may well have their place in the array of solutions to decarbonisation of heat. Hybrid vehicles seemingly have a part to play in delivering transport decarbonisation. There may even be a valid argument for cockerpoos, schweenies, whoodles and yorkipoos to take their place in the roll call of canine breeds.

But there is one place where hybrids definitely do not belong, and that is in our ever-popular 'In Profile' feature. Yet, in our March issue, the eagle-eyed amongst you spotted that that is exactly what we served up.

Our sincere apologies to the intended subject of the feature, Duncan Lambert, who took it, as those who know him would expect, with an excellent degree of humour.

We are pleased to publish the 'purebred' version in this issue.

As for the other industry figure who became entangled in this accidental hybridisation... well, you'll have to wait a little longer to learn their identity.

While you may now turn directly to the penultimate page in a bid to discover whether Duncan really does prefer cheese to chocolate, I hope you will return to enjoy everything else this packed issue offers.

In these pages you will find a full preview of the upcoming industry show, an in-depth review of the tanker market, valuable insights from our conversations with your customers, and the first of our new quarterly price reviews. We also explore the implications of this month's NIC and minimum wage increases and share the latest thinking and innovations around future fuels.

And yes, we really do feature Duncan Lambert – properly – 'In Profile'.

With not long to go until we have the opportunity to meet together in Leeds, we are all looking forward to catching up with you there.



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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

The unmistakable skyline of the Humber Refinery owned by Phillips 66. Working to deliver both a reliable supply of energy now and a low carbon future, they are headline sponsor for UKIFDA Show 2025 which we preview on pages 21 to 28.



## In this issue

On pages 15 to 17 we are 'In Conversation' with your customers to hear their thoughts on the industry. Businesses impacts of NIC and minimum wage changes are covered on page 18 and latest thoughts on the tanker market can be found on pages 33 to 35.

# Phillips 66 pledges support for young people

Phillips 66's Humber Refinery is the latest local business to champion the borough's young people, as it becomes a Founder Patron of Horizon Youth Zone.

As a Founder Patron, Phillips 66 Limited will contribute towards the charity's annual running costs, which will enable the new Youth Zone to offer first class facilities, opportunities and support for thousands of young people living in and around Grimsby.

## STEM commitment

Phillips 66's support for Horizon Youth Zone comes from a commitment to improve STEM education and offer great opportunities to young people in North East Lincolnshire.

Following a visit to the Youth Zone site, the Phillips 66 team felt inspired by the facility and understood just how much of an impact the Youth Zone will have. Not only will its funding support the Youth Zone's running costs, but discussions have also begun around how Phillips 66 might offer its insight to deliver educational STEM support to the Youth Zone's members once it opens, having already successfully engaged young people in the area with other programmes.

When asked about the new partnership with Horizon, Paul Fursey, Phillips 66 Limited Lead Executive UK and General Manager Humber Refinery said: "This is an investment in the future. By supporting the Horizon Youth Zone, we are not only contributing to the development of young minds and supporting collaboration, but also creating opportunities



for growth, learning, and a positive change.

"We look forward to being a key skills partner as empowering young people with STEM skills today means a brighter, innovative, and more sustainable future for all."

## A huge thank you

Horizon Youth Zone Chair Jason Stockwood commented: "I'd like to say a huge thank you to Phillips 66 not only for its support as a Founder Patron, but also for its pledge to help upskill Grimsby's young people through its STEM education work.

This dual support shows its dedication to providing not only the sustainability of Horizon Youth Zone, but also to empowering the area's young people to unlock their full potential."

## Transforming young people's lives

Horizon CEO, Lucy Ottewell Key added: "We are so appreciative of Phillips 66 for their support of Horizon Youth Zone. Its funding will be instrumental in providing young people across North East Lincolnshire with opportunities to thrive, connect, explore their talents and develop essential life skills."

Horizon Youth Zone is being delivered in partnership with OnSide, North East Lincolnshire Council and supported by several businesses and philanthropists. The Founder Patron campaign aims to achieve long-term sustainability, to ensure Horizon Youth Zone will be transforming young people's lives for generations to come.

Horizon Youth Zone is due to open late Autumn this year.

# There's nothing standard about Tommy's FPL performance

As the run in to the season end gathers pace the January winner of the Fuel Oil News Community Fantasy Football League recently received his prize.

Surprising the winner, Tommy Farrow-Brown of Standard Fuels, Andy Walkden of league sponsors ESL Fuels took the opportunity of a recent visit, to hand Tommy his prize.

*Pictured: Andy Walkden ESL Fuels presents the monthly award to Tommy Far of Standard Fuels*



# NWF Group acquires Northern Energy Oil in £8.3m deal

NWF Group has acquired Harrogate-based Northern Energy Oil in a deal worth as much as £8.3m in line with the group's strategy to grow its fuels distribution business, which represents the UK's third largest operation, through consolidation.

The acquisition increases Cheshire-based NWF Group's presence in the North East of England, where it is currently under-represented, and increases its fuel volumes by around 6%.

Chief Executive Chris Belsham said: "We are delighted to announce the acquisition of Northern, which represents an excellent example of NWF's strategy at play to consolidate the highly fragmented fuels distribution market.

"This acquisition, our first since Geoff Boorman in 2023, demonstrates our intent to pursue attractive, earnings-accretive transactions, consistent with our strong and established track record."

## A secure future

The sale follows a strategic decision by Northern Energy to focus on continuing to build its growing LPG business while enabling its oil operations to benefit from being part of a larger organisation.

Howard Illingworth, Northern Energy's chairman said: "We're proud to have been serving businesses and households across the region for almost 100 years, having started by supplying milk from local farms before expanding into agricultural fuels, heating oil and, most recently, LPG.



"Selling our oil business to a larger player who is well-placed to compete in what is a changing oil market is the best way to secure its future over the long term."

More than 30 people employed by the distributor will transfer to NWF Fuels, which intends to operate from a new base in the locality. No jobs will be lost as a result of the sale, and the business will continue to trade under the Northern Energy name in the medium term.

Northern Energy reassured its customers that services would not be impacted and that NWF Fuels will continue to run the business as it currently operates, with the same people providing the same service as they do today.

Howard continued: "In NWF Fuels we have found a buyer who understands the business, is committed to investing in its development,

and shares our passion for excellent customer service. They clearly see the value in a great business with fantastic people and loyal customers and we are confident Northern Energy Oil will continue to thrive under their ownership.

"We've been very successful in growing our LPG business over the past 10 years and the sale of Northern Energy Oil means we'll now be investing 100 per cent of our energy, focus and resources into building it further."

## Ongoing pipeline

Welcoming "our new Northern colleagues to the group" Chris confirmed that further deals are very much on the table for NWF Group saying: "Our pipeline of potential fuels acquisitions remains active, supported by our robust financial position."

# Another fleet HVO switch delivers significant carbon savings

**In an initiative expected to save roughly 2,529 tonnes of carbon emissions in the next 12 months, North Ayrshire Council has switched 36 refuse collection vehicles from diesel to HVO.**

According to the Council, the reduction equates to more than a fifth of total fleet-produced emissions. Fuel distributor Certas Energy will supply the HVO with approximately one million litres expected to be consumed over the course of the year.

The Scottish Government has stated its ambitions to phase out the need for new petrol or diesel vehicles in public sector fleets by 2030,

and end the sales of diesel HGVs for vehicles between 3.5 and 26 tonnes by 2035.

Council leaders say this move demonstrates commitment to aligning the Council's priorities with the Government's sustainability ambitions.

## HVO uptake increasing

Darren Holloway, Commercial Director for Energy Solutions at Certas Energy, said: "We are thrilled to be fuelling the transition to net zero for North Ayrshire Council, who are one of a growing number of public sector organisations switching to HVO.

"Demand for HVO is growing year-on-year



The image, provided by North Ayrshire Council, shows a HVO-powered refuse collection vehicle with Councillor Tony Gurney, Cabinet Member for Green Environment and Economy, and Phil Diffin, Assistant Manager for Waste Resources at North Ayrshire Council, Scotland.

across the UK as more organisations are understanding the sustainability benefits of switching to this fuel. We anticipate this trend to continue for the next decade, and the public sector will be a key driver for this."



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## Craggs Energy is awarded Renewable Fuel Supplier Accreditation

**West Yorkshire-based Craggs Energy has been recognised as a Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme supplier.**

Lisa Wilson, Marketing Manager, explained what this means: "Craggs Energy has been approved as a member of the prestigious Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme (RFAS). RFAS membership endorses Craggs Energy's commitment to sustainability and a low carbon future for transport. It provides verification of Craggs Energy's renewable fuel supply chain and gives customers the ability to access Greenhouse Gas (GHG) data, ensuring accurate and representative information for company carbon reporting.

"Managed by Zemo Partnership, RFAS membership aligns Craggs Energy closely with the wider objectives of the Partnership, which is a leading force in the development of innovative and collaborative solutions that are designed to achieve a low-carbon future within the transport sector."

### Net zero pledge

Commenting on the membership, Matthew Crockett, Managing Director, said: "We recognise the urgent need to address climate change and are steadfast in our pledge to

become a net zero company. Joining the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme is a natural step on our journey towards providing cleaner, greener fuel solutions for our customers.

"Now, customers can be assured that – through the RFAS – our renewable diesel (HVO) supply chain undergoes rigorous checks that examine everything from feedstock cultivation, collection, and production to distribution to our customers."

### A greener future

Matthew Crockett added: "We are thrilled to be part of the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme and to collaborate with Zemo Partnership. This initiative reflects our ongoing commitment to reducing carbon emissions and supporting businesses and individuals in their transition to more sustainable energy sources. We invite businesses and individuals to join us in making meaningful strides toward a greener future.

"Through RFAS, customers seeking renewable diesel can be confident that Craggs Energy is a trusted provider of renewable diesel nationally, in Yorkshire, and across the North West of England."

## Ireland alliance continues push for broader decarbonisation approach with key appointment

**Philip Hannon has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating (TAZCH).**

Bringing together businesses from across Ireland, TAZCH is an alliance of those who are committed to finding new solutions that reduce emissions and create a more sustainable heating system for the country.

Philip will lead the alliance's ongoing efforts to pave the way for the introduction of new and advanced renewable liquid fuels which can help deliver zero carbon heating and make carbon neutrality a reality.

### A crucial time

With over 25 years of experience in public affairs, communications and advocacy, Philip was a Ministerial Special Advisor in five separate Government Departments, across two administrations. For almost a decade, he was Communications and Public Affairs Manager at the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association, and most recently was Policy Director at Liquid Gas Ireland.

Commenting on his appointment, Mr Hannon said: "I am delighted to be taking up this role at such a crucial time for the home heating sector in Ireland and abroad. The sector can play a significant role in reducing carbon emissions as efforts continue to tackle climate change. It is becoming increasingly clear that a broader approach to tackling reducing emissions should be followed.

"I look forward to working with my colleagues in TAZCH to ensure the role of new and advanced renewable liquid fuels is central

to a broader approach from Government."

**See all the latest industry moves on page 13.**



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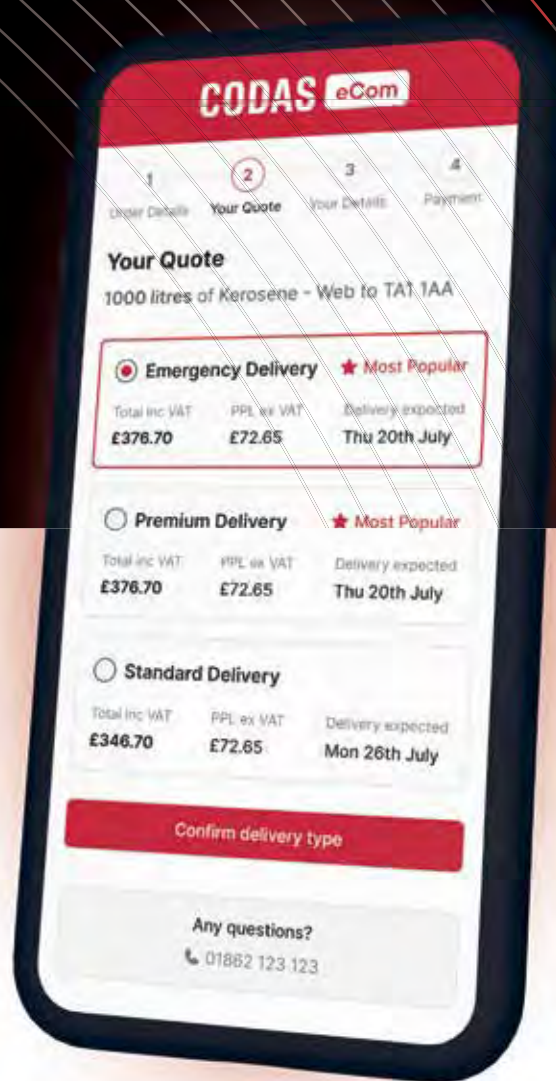
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### New brand unites Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels

The sister employee-owned companies have unveiled a bold, new, unified North Star brand.

#### What matters to you, matters to us

Lisa Wilson, Marketing Manager, for Craggs Energy commented: "Embodied in the joint new company strapline 'What Matters to You, Matters to Us', the rebrand sees the introduction of a new look for both businesses' fleets and websites, and a fresh new, unified corporate manifesto detailing their joint commitment to playing a part in their regional communities, serving these with responsibility and integrity.

"It also sees the launch of a new 'giving back scheme', where 25p will be donated to Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees, and to Age UK Devon, for every delivery made through to the end of June 2025. Raising much needed money for the charities this scheme makes good on their commitment to bring positive benefit to their communities."

Rachel Horner, Chief Executive Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees, commented: "It's great to have Craggs Energy as our latest charity partner, particularly as they help so many older customers living in rural off-grid locations and villages throughout their regions. Now, every single one of their deliveries will generate vital funds for our work."

#### Enhancing customer experience

"Since becoming employee-owned in 2022, the businesses have introduced initiatives to enhance customer experience and loyalty, at the same time as supporting their communities," Lisa explained.

"These include the cold weather priority scheme, set up in partnership with UKIFDA, and, more recently, the Cosy Heating Club offering prizes and other benefits to monthly direct debit customers,

"Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuel were also the first UK fuel delivery companies in to cut minimum orders of heating oil for pensioners from 500l to just 300l helping those affected by removal of Winter Fuel Payments to spread the cost of their heating oil.

#### Unification

Matthew Crockett, Group Managing Director, added: "The rebranding signifies the unification of two strong regional brands with one purpose, one manifesto, a common commitment to our customers, and a unified brand identity. Part of our long-term growth plan, the rebrand aligns with our commitment to sustainability, the enhancement and innovation of services, and our connection with communities.

"For us, being employee owned is a passion and a commitment," Matthew added. As 100% employee-owned businesses, we're big believers in people and working together towards a shared goal, which for us is embodied in our belief that we exist to fuel the heartbeat of our local communities."

*Customers will begin to see the new brand identity appear on tankers and delivery vehicles from March.*

### WCF Changers: Charity ball raises more than £9,000

A Valentine-themed charity ball thrown by Lincolnshire-based **WCF Changers**, has raised more than £9,000 for the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance (LNAA).

The event, also generously supported by other local businesses, was part of WCF Changers ongoing support for LNAA which has seen the team raise more than £24,000 for the charity over the past four years.

Charlotte Carratt of WCF Changers said: "The LNAA provides an essential service for our region, and, as a team, we want to do everything we can to support its lifesaving work. We are so grateful for the support from local businesses who donated the time, money and prizes which helped make the ball such a success. Their generosity shows how much the LNAA means to everyone across Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire."



#### An independent charity

The LNAA responded to 1,724 incidents in 2024. The service needs to raise £13 million this year and relies on donations to remain operational.

Joe Harper, LNAA Corporate Partnerships Manager said: "The ongoing support from Charlotte, Jess, and everyone at WCF Changers means the world not just to us, but also to our patients and their families.

"As an independent charity, support like this is vital to our continued operation. At an average cost of £4,000 per mission, the amount raised at the ball will pay for two life-saving missions."

#### A generous donation

The Ball featured a silent auction, with hugely sought after prizes, and raised an impressive £6,974 on the night which was boosted by a donation of £2,183 from WCF Changers' parent company WCF Ltd.

*Planning a charity event? Contact [claudia@andpublishing.co.uk](mailto:claudia@andpublishing.co.uk)*

### BoilerJuice: Football sponsorship supports community

Continuing its community support programme, **BoilerJuice** is sponsoring a new football team this year.

#### People, relationships and communities

Cayla Price-Murphy, Supplier Relationship Manager, said: "At BoilerJuice, we believe business is about people, relationships, and the communities we serve. So, this season, we're thrilled to sponsor the Dormanstown Football Club's Under-7s team in Teesside!

"This opportunity came to us through Tom Lawson, Sales Manager at Mini Tankers, who introduced us to the idea of supporting this fantastic grassroots team."



*Fuel Oil News wishes the best of luck to Dormanstown Under-7s in their upcoming fixtures!*

# What price oil? Q1 2025 in review

IN ASSOCIATION WITH *THE OIL MARKET JOURNAL*

FOLLOWING YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE VALUE YOU PLACE ON OUR ANNUAL PRICE REVIEW EACH JANUARY, WE WILL NOW BE REVIEWING THE MOVEMENTS OF, AND IMPACTS ON, BRENT CRUDE AND HVO DIESEL ON A QUARTERLY BASIS. WITH DATA SUPPLIED BY THE OIL MARKET JOURNAL, WE WILL HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THE KEY EVENTS THAT IMPACT PRICING.

## Q1 2025

2025 began with supportive sentiment as markets awaited the expected pro-business agenda of President Trump. However, markets were soon hit by a combination of tariff uncertainty, US repositioning on Russia/Ukraine, ARA stock build and US recession fears. After early rapid gains, Q1 brought sharp losses to oil, the US dollar and stock markets, amid extreme trade and geopolitical uncertainty as the post WW2 world order came under unprecedented strain.

### January

January got off to a bullish start as Biden announced, in his final days in office, further sanctions on Russia with the IEA warning of a tightening of crude markets as a result. Demand was bolstered by an extreme cold snap in the US and cold weather across NWE.

Peace prospects in the Middle East increased when Israel and Hamas announced a ceasefire days before Trump took office amid strong threats from the president-elect. Donald Trump was inaugurated for a second term as US President on 20th January. During his inaugural address he repeated his 'drill baby, drill' phrase and promised to unleash a new era of US crude production.

Market downside was limited as the first of what was to become many tariff announcements was soon made against Canada and Mexico. Trump appeared at the Global Economic Forum in Davos and demanded that OPEC increased production to reduce oil prices which would in turn lower inflation and allow central banks to ease interest rates.

### February

February was dominated by the 'will-they-won't-they?' of US trade tariffs. The first tariffs promised were suspended for 4 weeks on 3rd February. The month saw countless tariff threats against US trade partners; however, none came to fruition following last minute negotiations between governments.

US consumer confidence fell in February, in the single largest fall seen since 2021, as a direct result of tariff uncertainty.

In further bearish news, ARA gasoline stocks hit a record high in early February highlighting the issues faced by European refineries as the Dangote refinery progresses towards full production in Nigeria. The new refinery will dominate the African market, a traditional export destination for European refineries. The first jet kero tanker sailed through the Red Sea since the start of the Houthi attacks, easing European supplies. US crude stocks also rose sharply, increasing by 8.7 million barrels in a single week.

Another major development in February was the reorientation of the US towards Russia in the Russia/Ukraine war. On 12th February Donald Trump had a phone call with President Putin of Russia. US VP JD Vance went on to lambast European democracies at the Munich Security Conference which was swiftly followed by a meeting of US and Russian officials to discuss a peace agreement in Ukraine. However, Ukraine was not represented at the talks. The US voted against a UN motion condemning Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine's President Zelensky visited the White House on 28th

February to sign a pre-agreed minerals deal. The visit was cut short when an interview in the Oval Office descended into a disturbing row triggered by an apparent disrespect caused by Zelensky's Churchill style wartime attire and an accusation by JD Vance of a lack of gratitude towards the US for its support. The overall impact of the US turn from its traditional European allies towards Russia was that the perceived likelihood of a 'peace at any cost' agreement in Ukraine and the potential for unfettered Russian oil flows spooked markets further.

### March (as of 14th March)

March continued on a similar bearish trajectory with increasing concern over the lack of coherent US trade and foreign policy. Tariff threats and counterthreats were traded before the first implemented (at the time of writing) tariff was enacted with a 25% tariff on steel and aluminium from all nations.

On 3rd March the US paused intelligence cooperation with Ukraine.

March brought hope of a European economic revival as Germany announced intentions to alter the constitutional debt break to unleash defence and infrastructure spending. On the same day, the EU proposed up to €800 billion for increased defence spending as the continent faced the prospect of an uncertain partner in the White House. US energy policy also developed as the Energy Secretary announced his intention to refill the SPR reserves and also that the US seeks 'lower' oil prices but would not specify a figure.

March brought renewed concerns of recession in the US with an Atlanta Fed model predicting Q1 GDP contraction on 4th March. Matters were not helped when Trump failed to rule out a recession in a friendly interview on Fox News, a channel on which he and other members of his administration regularly appear. US NFIB Small Business Optimism Index wiped election gains as traditionally Republican small business owners grew tired of uncertain trade policy. Meanwhile the S&P 500 officially entered a correction having lost 10% value in just three weeks.

The weakening global markets passed onto wholesale prices and forecourt pump prices with the week ending 9th March seeing the weekly average fall in UK B7 and E10 retail prices since September.

## Biofuels

Biofuels got off to a poor start, dragged by ICE Gasoil. However, prices soon found support as on 9th January the EU formally adopted the Anti-Dumping Directive against Chinese origin biodiesel.

In February, strong HVO supplies to the ARA hub saw premiums to ICE Gasoil fall sharply while the spot/swap premium fell to \$25.53/t on 20th compared to \$142/t on 15th January. The HVO premium to blended ULSD FAME-10 rocketed in Q4 2024 on a number of supply issues. This premium had largely eased by January, beginning the year 13.18pp above B7. The correction continued in Q1 and by 14th February HVO was at a discount to B7 diesel and remained below the B7 price until 7th March.

All other biofuel premiums to ICE Gasoil rose sharply as Gasoil weakened. UCOME prices briefly came under pressure from low HBE



ticket prices which reduced physical blending. On 12th February Neste announced that it was pausing investment in its Rotterdam biorefinery. There was a global disincentive to invest in biofuels, largely driven by policy in Washington. Other oil majors, such as BP, announced reductions in biofuel investments. UCOME prices continued to find support in the wake of the removal of Chinese rebates on UCO exports. Chinese tariffs

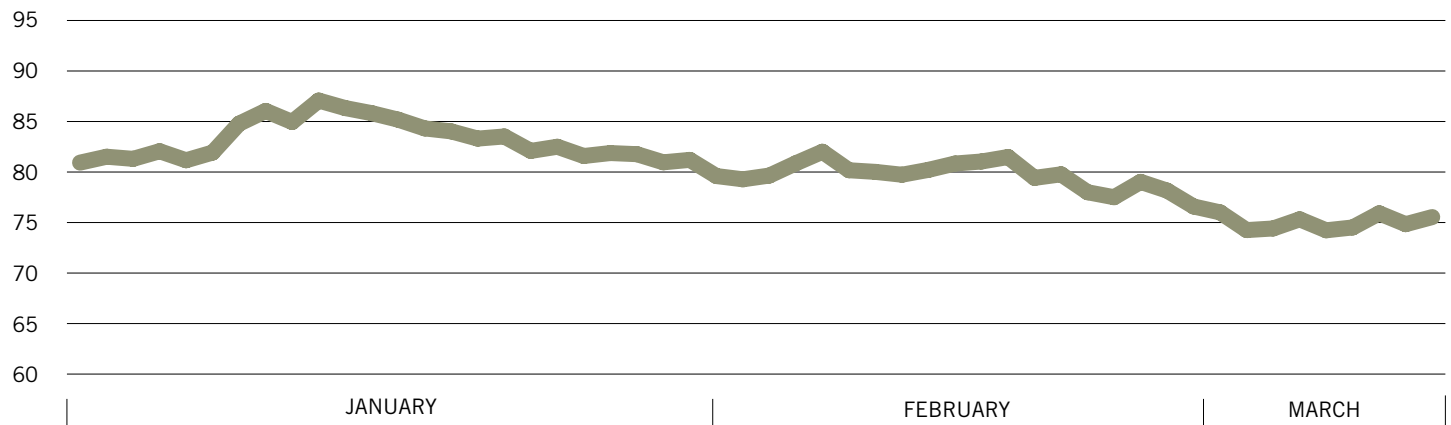
on Canadian rapeseed exports brought bearish sentiment to RME in March. RME is the primary feedstock in FAME-10.

All data and analysis provided by The Oil Market Journal. To find out more and request a free trial:

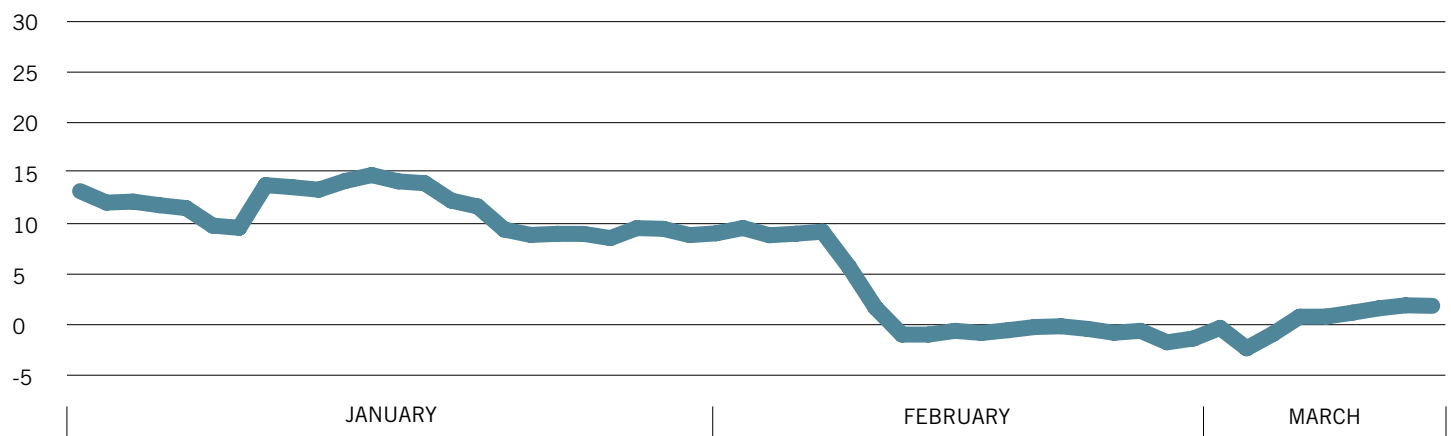
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## Q1 prices 2025

### ICE Brent Crude - \$/b (ICE)



### The B7/HVO price differential – ppl



B7 Diesel (Blended ULSD FAME-10) is 87.84% ULSD 10ppm UK + 12.16% FAME-10 (RED) + 0.850ppl development fuel + \$20/t shipping. The Argus HVO Class II price in pence per litre is converted from tonnes to litres using a conversion rate of 1282, and into sterling using the FT exchange rate. The HVO price in ppl for road diesel and off-road diesel includes the value of two non-crop certificates and duty.

## Q1 2025 Key dates

### JANUARY

- 9** EU approves Chinese biofuel Anti-Dumping Directive
- 10** US announces further sanctions on Russia
- 13** Cold weather over US & NWE
- 15** Israel Hamas ceasefire
- 16** ARA gasoline stocks hit record high (and continue to throughout January)
- 20** Trump inauguration, drill baby drill, tariffs for Canada, Mexico and China from 1
- 23** Trump demands OPEC lower oil prices and banks cut interest rates
- 29** Ukraine attacks 317,000 bpd Lukoil NORIS refinery in Kstovo.

### FEBRUARY

- 3** US tariffs delayed
- 6** ARA petrol stocks record high
- 7** Jet tanker through Red Sea, Sing fuel oil crack positive first time in 5 years
- 12** Trump calls Putin
- 12** Neste delays Rotterdam biorefinery
- 17** US Russia talks in Saudi Arabia
- 21** US consumer confidence largest fall since 2021
- 24** US votes against UN motion condemning Russia
- 28** President Zelensky visits White House

### MARCH

- 3** US aid to Ukraine paused
- 4** Atlanta Fed model predicts Q1 contraction
- 5** Germany to alter constitutional debt brake
- 5** EU announces €800 billion of defence spending
- 7** US Energy Sec to bid for funding to fill SPR
- 9** UK B7 & E10 retail pump prices see first fall since September
- 10** US energy secretary targets 'lower' oil price
- 10** Tanker fire in North Sea
- 11** US NFIB Small Business Optimism Index wipes election gains
- 13** S&P 500 down 10% in 3 weeks, enters official correction



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## Potential impacts of April's NIC and minimum wage changes

April 2025 brings significant financial changes for UK businesses, including small and medium-sized fuel distributors. With increases in National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and the National Minimum Wage, employers will face higher payroll costs, squeezed margins, and difficult decisions on pricing and staffing.

These changes, announced by Rachel Reeves in October 2024, as part of her Autumn Budget, come at a time of rising costs and market consolidation in the fuel sector. In an industry where margins are tight, the impact could be significant – but government mitigation measures, such as an increased Employment Allowance, may provide some relief.

Employer NICs increase from 13.8% to 15% from April 2025, meaning businesses will pay more per employee in payroll taxes. The threshold at which NICs apply is also dropping from £9,100 to £5,000, meaning more of each employee's salary will now be subject to NICs.

These changes may significantly impact smaller businesses. With many of those in our community falling into that bracket we consider the potential impacts on fuel distributors of these changes.

### Key changes

#### National Insurance Contribution changes

- From April 2025, employer NIC rate rises by 1.2 percentage points, bringing it to 15%.
- Lowered Earnings Threshold: Decreases from £9,100 to £5,000.

#### Revised wage rates

- National Living Wage (21 and over): Increase of £0.77 to £12.21 per hour, a 6.7% rise.
- 18-20 Year Old Rate: Increase of £1.40 to £10.00 per hour, a 16.3% increase.
- 16-17 Year Old and Apprentice Rate: Both increase by £1.15 to £7.55 per hour, an 18% rise.

These changes are likely to have several implications for smaller distributor businesses:

**Increased operational costs:** Fuel distributors already face rising costs, from fluctuating fuel prices to vehicle maintenance and insurance. With the increase in NICs and wages, a company could see a significant increase in annual payroll costs.

For smaller distributors, this could force difficult decisions:

- Reduce workforce or driver hours to control costs



- Pass on higher prices to customers, potentially impacting competitiveness.
- Absorb the costs, further tightening already slim margins

Some experts believe that the National Insurance increase will not only have a detrimental effect on businesses – but also on workers. Businesses may become more cautious about hiring new staff or expanding operations, potentially hindering growth, and may even consider reducing their workforce.

Simon Gleeson, a Partner at business advisory firm Blick Rothenberg, said: "Employers National Insurance increase of 1.2%, whatever Rachel Reeves says, is a tax on jobs – small business will have to pass this on as they are mostly operating on razor thin margins – either salaries or job numbers will fall, or prices will rise to cover the cost. This will hit the working people where it hurts."

### Impact assessment

To consider the potential impact here is an example calculation for a 'typical' smaller fuel distribution business with 9 employees and annual wage bill of around £350,000

#### Prior to April 1st 2025

- Employer NIC threshold: £9,100 per employee
- NIC applies to: £350,000 – (£9,100 × 9) = £268,100

#### NIC at 13.8%

- 13.8% of £268,100 = £36,799.80

#### From April 1st 2025

#### NIC increases to 15% and Employer NIC threshold reduces to £5,000

- NIC now applies to: £350,000 – (£5,000 × 9) = £305,000
- 15% of £305,000 = £45,750.00

### Impact summary

With NIC increased to 15% and the threshold reduced to £5,000, the business in our example would pay around £8,950 more per year in staff costs before any minimum wage impacts.

### Mitigation

The government has introduced measures intended to mitigate these impacts:

**Increased Employment Allowance:** The Employment Allowance rises from £5,000 to £10,500, providing eligible smaller businesses with some relief by reducing NIC liabilities for those distributors and offsetting increased costs.

The increased allowance helps offset the impact on payroll of the increases in Employer NIC and National Minimum Wage.

The increase is a crucial support measure for small and medium-sized fuel distribution businesses – in our example it reduces the annual impact of April's changes to around £3,450.

### Potential benefits

#### Easing recruitment challenges

Recruiting and retaining skilled staff is becoming increasingly expensive. The higher allowance effectively lowers the cost of employment, making it easier to:

- Hire additional drivers or support staff
- Offer competitive wages to retain staff

#### Maintaining competitive pricing

The NIC relief enables businesses to absorb some of the increased operating costs, reducing the pressure to pass them on to customers.

For small and medium-sized distributors, the allowance will be crucial to offset rising payroll costs, invest in staff, and maintain competitive pricing while protecting margins and supporting long-term business growth.

It is applied automatically, via payroll, once claimed by a qualifying business.

### Managing costs

While the increased Employment Allowance will offer some respite, businesses must consider the need to manage rising costs effectively through strategies such as:

- Reviewing staffing costs and considering efficiency improvements
- Exploring ways to further optimise operations such as through greater automation of digitalisation
- Adjusting pricing models to maintain competitiveness

As the industry navigates these changes, staying proactive will be key to maintaining profitability and business sustainability.



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# The downstream customer

THERE WOULD BE NO DOWNSTREAM INDUSTRY WITHOUT THE CUSTOMER. **CLAUDIA WEEKS**, COMMUNITY CONTENT LEAD FOR FUEL OIL NEWS, SPOKE WITH SEVERAL DOWNSTREAM CUSTOMERS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY REALLY THINK OF THE INDUSTRY, WHAT WORKS WELL, WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT AND HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THE TRANSITION TO A GREENER FUTURE.

## The customers

Claudia spoke with downstream customers from across the country:

- Sue and David Weeks live in a large, detached bungalow, set in four acres in a rural location in Surrey. The property is nearly 100 years old.
- Elspeth and Adam Haque and their two primary school aged children live in Cheshire. They live in a semi-detached house which is approximately 100 years old.
- Peter Ford lives in a Grade II listed 17th Century house which is constructed over a medieval cellar with many additions over the years. The house is in the conservation village of Churchill, 2.5 miles from the market town of Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire.

Claudia asked each customer how they felt initially about moving into a property that required kerosene for home heating. Were they confident in what the process involved?

Sue responded: "We moved into our home 37 years ago. We had no qualms at all about using oil as we thought oil was a 'step up' from the solid fuel heating system we had in our



Sue and David Weeks and Teasel the Dog!

previous cottage which included a beautiful inglenook open fire.

"When we moved into our present home, a working Potterton boiler was already in place in the outhouse, together with a huge oil tank so we just carried on with that method.

"Before we had to change the boiler, we investigated converting to gas (as our immediate neighbours were doing at the time) but it would have cost a lot of money to connect to the newly-laid supply in the lane as we are quite a distance from the lane.

Financially, at that time, it was not an option."

"We were a bit unsure about using oil at first as we had previously been living in a flat," Elspeth replied. We sought advice from neighbours on the best way to manage oil as fuel as we had no idea! They were very helpful!"

Peter has had a more complex experience with home heating: "After moving into the property in April 2012, we quickly removed the 30+ year old kerosene boiler and tank, opting for a 43KW biomass wood pellet boiler and a solar thermal panel to supplement the heated water tank.

"After 14 years, the boiler broke down and although repairable, it was no longer supported by the manufacturer Baxi. This situation, together with the fact that the price of wood pellets had sky-rocketed, due in part to the Ukraine war, made this heating method unviable.

"After many hours of research, during which time we considered an air source heat pump, bottled gas and full solar, we had no other option than to purchase a new oil boiler – based on cost and efficiency."



The Weeks' tank

## Choosing a supplier

We were keen to know what the main factor are when customers are considering a supplier for their home oil. Perhaps unsurprisingly, cost, remains a key factor for most.

"The main factor we consider is usually cost," replied Peter. "As this situation is new to us (November 2024), we are still getting used to relying on heating oil. We currently use BoilerJuice, based on their competitive pricing."

Elspeth agreed: "We usually look at cost and availability as the priority. We did originally use one local company but then moved to a cheaper supplier. We pay in monthly to the supplier so when the order is due there isn't one large lump sum payment to be made."

Sue added: "The main factors we consider when choosing an oil supplier are cost and customer service."

## Reputation matters

When asked whether the reputability of their supplier mattered, and whether they looked at customer service reviews of a supplier; there was a mixed response from the customers we spoke to.

Elspeth replied: "Of course we look at the reputability of our supplier. We think it matters, and we want a well-reviewed company and will make sure that we monitor customer feedback prior to ordering."

"Our decision on supplier was made after reading reviews and speaking to various neighbours," responded Peter.

Sue added: "No, we don't do any of those things although we probably should!"

## The ordering process

We asked how the customers knew how much heating oil to purchase, and how often they found themselves purchasing.

Elspeth replied: "We now have an oil monitor which alerts us when we are running low, so we know when to order. It's been really useful! We purchase online as it's usually very straightforward."

"We have a delivery every couple of months in the winter of either 500L or 750L," Sue responded. We tend to top up in the summer, depending on price, as it is usually cheaper in the summer. So, we probably have about 4 or 5 deliveries each year, totalling about 3,500L.

"We find the buying process quite easy, either on the phone or online."

Peter added: "As mentioned above, we are new to this type of heating. With the property being fairly large, old, and not particularly well insulated, our usage has been quite high since November due to the cold temperatures we have been getting. However, we have found the buying process is quite straightforward and easy to understand."

## The purchasing decision

Claudia was keen to discover whether the consumers used fuel marketplace websites or buying groups when purchasing fuel for their homes.

Peter reflected: "We are currently using BoilerJuice, who monitor the oil price and give a list of options. I think this makes the buying process relatively easy and we will continue with them for the time being.

"We also tend to use BoilerJuice," stated Sue. "We can't use a buying group as we need a smaller 4-wheeled tanker to access our property."



"This is a shame, as buying groups are usually 2p or 3p cheaper. BoilerJuice has given us good service over the years and are competitive. Also, they often seem to use the same company with the same driver who knows the setup at our home as they must pull the hose quite a long way uphill to the tank as it's hidden by a hedge.

"We have been let down by companies over the years, and believe, in times of oil shortages, we are more likely to get deliveries if we are regular customers, so we haven't changed suppliers recently.

"In the past, there wasn't a great choice of suppliers but nowadays there are lots of suppliers to choose from. When there was a limited choice, we settled on using one and paid by direct debit each month, but realised we got better deals from smaller companies when they sprang up."

Elspeth added: "I find using a fuel marketplace useful to get the best deal and it allows us to choose the best options for us. We've changed suppliers before based on cost alone."

## How do suppliers determine pricing?

All the customers we spoke with expressed an interest in learning more about the pricing fluctuations of oil and how suppliers determine their pricing:

- Peter: "I don't know much about this, but I would be interested in finding out more."
- Elspeth: "It would be interesting to know what factors push prices up for the consumer."

- Sue: "We presume it's based on the current barrel price of crude oil but are unsure how pricing is established. My husband, David, looks at this price regularly and would take advantage of a lower price if we needed any oil purchasing. We'd certainly be interested in finding out more."

## An urgent requirement

We asked the customers if they felt confident that their supplier could support them if they had run out of oil and needed an urgent supply.

Elspeth said: "This happened to us a few times in the first couple of years after we moved in! It's been a learning curve! We now realise there can be a few days delay in receiving your oil and there is a premium price to be paid for last minute deliveries!"

Sue reflected: "We think that oil distributors would help, but the quicker you want your oil, then the more you must pay. You can opt for various dates at varying prices online.

"If we ran out of oil then we would phone but probably the quickest delivery would be within a week!"

## Automated ordering

Claudia asked the customers whether they are using, or have considered using an automated ordering system with a tank level monitor:

- Elspeth: "We have a tank monitor, but we still make the order ourselves. The monitor isn't connected to an automated delivery system, we have considered this though and may set

it up in the future.”

- Peter: “I have a wireless tank monitoring system and have been offered automated ordering which I am currently considering.”
- Sue: “David prefers to look at the tank level gauge himself, as he wouldn’t fully trust an automatic level monitor, and he also believes there would be an extra cost associated with this.”

### Service and Maintenance

Care and maintenance of a fuel tank is important, as is ensuring that the tank is accessible for the driver. We asked the customers for their thoughts on service and maintenance.

“With a brand-new tank, servicing isn’t required yet,” responded Peter. “The tank location is within fifteen feet of the roadside and is certainly easily accessible for filling from the roadside.”

Sue said: “The gauge and filters on the tank are checked as part of our yearly boiler service. However, our tank certainly isn’t easy for the drivers to reach. It’s quite a way up the hill and we need a mini tanker for deliveries.”

“We have not really looked into service and maintenance before,” responded Elspeth. “And I probably should! The driver accesses our tank via a side gate and coming round to the back of the property which is relatively easy.”

### Low carbon heating solutions

Wanting to discover whether the customers have considered acquiring a heat pump or other low carbon heating solution, Claudia asked them for their thoughts:

- Elspeth: “We would certainly be interested in having a heat pump but probably not for this property. The initial costs would be high, and I feel the whole house would need to be modernised to gain full efficiency. Solar

batteries are another option but again that would be a huge initial cost for us.”

- Peter: “As previously mentioned, we really did consider all other options, including heat pumps, but were advised that our property was not suitable for them.”
- Sue: “We would be interested in a heat pump as we know they are more environmentally friendly, but I think that they are better for new, well insulated houses. I do have several questions about them such as: would it be warm enough? Would it actually save us any money? Aren’t they large and noisy?”

### The energy transition

We asked the customers how they felt about the government plans for net zero and the energy transition.

Peter is passionate about making positive choices for the environment and has been in regular touch with his MP about the options for home heating.

Here, Peter explains more: “When forced to go back to oil, we chose our new boiler because it was compatible with HVO.

“Having written various letters to the government, we are hoping that HVO will be available soon and cheaply, to domestic customers. The fact that it reduces carbon emissions by nearly 90 percent should be enough of an incentive for the government to act quickly instead of kicking the can down the road.

“I do not believe that the heating oil providers would be adversely affected by any product change. They would still be delivering a heating fuel alternative and should therefore be lobbying government on behalf of potential HVO customers.”

Elspeth also felt strongly that this issue is important and something that they are increasingly thinking about: “Obviously we will



Peter's home

comply with any future requirements for net zero from the government and we are keen to consider a move to a more energy efficient property longer term.

“The energy transition is vitally important and as we have young children, we want to make greener choices for their future.”

Sue added that for them, the issue isn’t currently a priority but if HVO became readily available for domestic customers then they would happily consider this option.

### Thank you to the industry

In discussions with the customers, it was clear that they are appreciative of those in the downstream industry and have had many positive engagements with suppliers:

- Elspeth: “All the suppliers that we have dealt with have been very efficient and we have never had any concerns. We’ve appreciated their guidance and support as we’ve got to grips with our home heating over the last few years!”
- Peter: “Our last three deliveries have been from Patterson Oil via Boiler Juice. The sales staff and tanker drivers have all been very pleasant and helpful so please pass on our thanks.”
- Sue: “We would like to mention Boiler Juice and the delivery drivers who come to our home. They are always considerate and helpful. They often deliver it when we are out and do a great job.”

Understanding customer preferences and demands will be core to the industry as it moves forward through the energy transition.

As an industry, we know that the customer is the most important part of the business as without the customer, there is no business.

With this in mind, Fuel Oil News will continue to regularly engage with the customers of the downstream industry. If you have a customer that you would like us to speak with so they can share their thoughts and ideas on the industry, then please do let us know:

[claudia@andpublishing.co.uk](mailto:claudia@andpublishing.co.uk)



Peter's tank

# A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Jenny Clucas

WELCOME TO OUR FEATURE WHERE PEOPLE FROM MANY DIFFERENT ROLES IN THIS INDUSTRY WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH A TYPICAL DAY IN THEIR WORKING LIFE. THIS MONTH, FUEL OIL NEWS SPEAKS WITH **JENNY CLUCAS**, SECRETARIAT FOR THE DOWNSTREAM FUEL DISTRIBUTION FORUM (DFDF), TO DISCOVER HOW JENNY SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.



## MY ALARM GOES OFF AT...

On a normal day, my alarm goes off at 7.00am. If I have a face-to-face meeting and must travel, it will be 5.30am or earlier.

## THE FIRST THING I DO IS...

Some stretching exercises! I try to keep relatively fit with lots of walking and running, both of which I greatly enjoy.

On running days, it's stretching, kit on and out for a run. The feeling afterwards makes it always worth the effort. Running also helps me to clear my mind; I often solve problems and write tricky emails in my head whilst running.

## I PREPARE FOR THE DAY AHEAD BY...

It varies based on whether I am working from home or have meetings to attend.

Generally, I prepare for the day ahead by reviewing my action lists (both my work to-do list and my daily tasks list) and by checking my emails. If I am travelling for meetings, I will have prepared the day before (I am nothing if not organised).

## I CAN'T LEAVE THE HOUSE WITHOUT...

Taking a shower! I will also check that I have my work phone and personal phone with me.

## MY TYPICAL DAY –

I work part-time now (3-6 days per month) so there is no typical day for me!

I manage the Downstream Fuel Distribution Forum (DFDF) – a partnership of employers, industry bodies and trade unions - and all its various projects and activities, including the Petroleum Driver Passport (PDP) Scheme, working closely with the Chair, Technical Associate and PDP Scheme Manager and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Over the last 30 years, skills and competence have been key elements of my roles. My role with DFDF centres on health and safety and

competence and training in the downstream fuels sector.

As part of this, I work on the maintenance and development of the PDP Scheme and my current focus includes additional training for retail trained drivers, ensuring that all drivers complete their annual training and assessment as well as other DFDF projects, such as forecourt competence and future fuels.

If I am working from home, my working time is a mix of answering email queries, online meetings, progressing projects, drafting papers, as well as planning and preparation for meetings.

Most meetings are now conducted online. I interact regularly with a wide range of stakeholders including the major hauliers, Government Departments, Trade Associations and Unions. The DFDF and PDP Management Group's meetings, for which I provide the secretariat, alternate between online and face-to-face. Such meetings will regularly have 20+ attendees, and face-to-face meetings will understandably have more interaction and discussion, which I greatly enjoy (although, I have to remember that I am taking the minutes!).

Other days can include on-site meetings with terminal operators, hauliers and smaller distributors – these are always fascinating, as I get to see the work of the DFDF in practice. Throughout the year, I also represent the DFDF at conferences and exhibitions to promote our work and the understanding of the future strategy and direction of the sector.

I am also still involved in the wider skills world as a judge for Trade Association Skills Awards and very active in my village. I chair our village charity, and I am a member of several groups, including the local choir.

## MY MOST MEMORABLE WORK MOMENT...

There are too many great moments over my long and varied career to have a most memorable one. However, with respect to my current role, launching the PDP Scheme in 2014, only 18 months after it was first proposed, was very memorable: an incredible achievement for all concerned and a testament to the commitment, hard work and dedication of all DFDF members!

## THE WORST PART OF MY JOB...

There's no worst part. The role is fulfilling and occasionally challenging, but I love it.

## THE BEST PARTS OF MY JOB...

I particularly enjoy the variety of the work and organisations that I interact with. I enjoy meeting new and interesting people, being a very small part of planning for the future of the fuels sector, and the wonderful colleagues I work with.

## I RELAX AFTER WORK BY...

My relaxation ideally comes from being outdoors – walking and gardening. I love hiking and hill walking, although Northamptonshire, where I live, is not famed for its major hills. Other than that, after working I like spending time with my step-grandchildren and cooking an evening meal with my husband.





#### MY FAVOURITE MEAL IS...

Dinner – either just with my husband or with family and friends; there is time to chat and enjoy the meal. It reminds me of times I had in the farmhouse kitchen growing up.

#### ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE IS...

A clock, lots of reading material and hand cream (essential given the gardening with no gloves).

#### THE LAST THING I DO EACH DAY IS...

A bit romantic but, kiss my husband goodnight.

#### I'M NORMALLY IN BED BY...

Usually by 10pm, as I like to have time to read – I always have several books on the go at any one time (a murder mystery, a factual history book, and something challenging). Plus, I am a lark not an owl!




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**Blaid Raybould** has joined **Greenery** as Head of UK Ground Fuels.

Prior to joining Greenery, Blaid spent nearly seven years at Phillips 66 working in various roles across their supply and trading operations, and in his latest position he had responsibility for their commercial operations of renewable fuels globally. With his previous experience working across various areas of the industry, Blaid brings a wealth of industry knowledge to his new role at Greenery where he is responsible for managing the commercial sales and supply team in the UK.

Commenting on his recent appointment, Blaid said: "I have joined Greenery at an incredibly exciting time. We have a strong global supply chain, and I am excited to have joined at a time where we are exploring new market opportunities and are strategically positioned to provide our UK customers with highly competitive fuel solutions."



**Daniel Webb** has started a new position as Head of Sales at **Prema Energy**.

Described as a "fuel industry veteran" Dan Webb brings with him 17 years' experience gained across various industry companies and leverages deep knowledge for exceptional customer service. Prema Energy

describes him as "driven to build loyalty, delivering tangible value to clients. His expertise translates into practical benefits, ensuring customer satisfaction and lasting partnerships."



The Commercial Sales Team at **Your NRG** has welcomed new starters **Max Cummins** and **James Lister** saying that they will bring



fresh perspectives and skills and play a crucial role in supporting expanding operations, providing expert advice and support to help

customers navigate the complexities of fuel management when running a business."



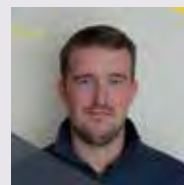
Formerly Commercial Director, **Martin Cooke** has moved to the role of Country Director- Fuel UK at Radius!

**Craig Fisher** has joined **Just Tankers** as a Detailer. Richard Armour, Commercial



Director for the business commented: "I am delighted to welcome Craig Fisher to our busy team at the Flagship site in Petersfield, Hampshire."

"Craig has joined us following many years of detailing and preparing classic cars, Austin Healey, Jaguar, Bentley etc., and is now adding this experience to the "Rolls Royce" range of the tanker world, ensuring all are prepared and handed over to the highest standards."



**Sam Walsh** has joined **IFC Inflow** as a Business Development Manager with the industry service provider highlighting his "strong background in

technical sales" and "wealth of expertise that will be instrumental in helping us continue to deliver exceptional solutions to our clients."

Sam commented: "I'm excited to be part of IFC Inflow and look forward to helping clients find the best solutions for their unique needs. The industries I'll be working with come with their own set of challenges, and I'm eager to help businesses improve safety and streamline their processes."



**Will Wright** is the new Marketing Coordinator for **Xpress Fuel** with the 24-hour fuel supplier highlighting his passion for marketing and a

dedication to excellence. Enthusiastic for his "fresh perspective and creative energy" the business is "looking forward to seeing the innovative ideas he will bring to the business."

## New director appointments at Logistics UK

Business group **Logistics UK** has appointed four new non-executive directors, strengthening its multimodal offering. **Mark Grimshaw-Smith**, **Jamie Hartles**, **Professor Rem Noormohamed** and **James Wroath** bring a wealth of experience from across the industry.

"Our new non-executive directors join Logistics UK at a key time for our sector," says Phil Roe, the organisation's President, "and bring a wide range of knowledge to help us drive the organisation on to the next stage of its development."

Mark Grimshaw-Smith, Head of Rail and Supply Chain for Cemex UK, brings more than 40 years of experience in the movement of heavy construction materials.

Professor Rem Noormohamed has extensive experience in technology, AI, data and intellectual property law, as well as in business change and digital transformation.

With 18 years' experience in third party logistics, Jamie Hartles is currently the Chief Executive Officer – Logistics at Howard Tenens. He is passionate about the use of state-of-the-art technology to enhance business resilience and minimise environmental impact of all logistics movements.

Appointed Chief Executive Officer of Wincanton in 2019, James Wroath previously headed the North American division of the airline catering division of Lufthansa AG, and held the role of SVP for Kuehne+Nagel in North America for both Contract Logistics and Overland Transportation.





# What do you want to be when you grow up?

**When I see you at the UKIFDA SHOW 2025 in Leeds on May 14th, don't be surprised if this is the first question I ask you, and please don't be offended if I then ask your age.**

I am unashamed in bringing this up, as it will be one of the key topics we discuss at our conference. Recently, I was inspired to revisit my profile piece in Fuel Oil News, published in April 2022, where I answered this very question. It is very much as I remembered - I wanted to be a chemistry teacher. Looking at historical consumer polling, this was a common choice for many of my age, alongside wanting to become a doctor. Interestingly, while it didn't rank high, being a lorry driver was also on the list—yes, they had already been invented.

However, recent surveys of young people have shown that nearly a fifth answered 'Gamer' or 'Streamer' to this question, closely followed by 'Video Game Developer', while 20% of ten-year-olds want to be an 'Influencer'. Unsurprisingly, careers like fuel distribution, tanker driver and transport manager have not featured on any recent lists.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the average age of workers in the UK is 42. In our industry, that figure is much higher: 60% of our drivers are between the ages of 46 and 55.

## Why does this matter?

The same ONS report states, "An occupation with an older age profile could also pose challenges for labour supply in future if not enough young people go into that type of work."

Four years ago, after completing UKIFDA's first employment survey, it became evident that the fuel distribution sector faced an age problem. While there is nothing wrong with being older and wiser, we must find ways to pass on the skills and knowledge of these key

roles and inspire the next generation. This is why we decided to launch the Young Person of the Year Award. At the time, some believed this sectionalising of the working population was inappropriate, but I reasoned that we could hardly have an Older Person of the Year Award, and I also wanted to spark a conversation that, over time, would highlight success stories.

Four years and four winners later, I am pleased to report that the previous award recipients are still thriving in the industry. I now want their success and stories to inspire others. Therefore, we have invited them back on May 14th for a live podcast in Leeds, hosted by Alex Wolfe of Wolfe Power Club. We will explore questions like: What made them enter our industry? What motivates them to stay? What advice do they have for others, especially for employers and UKIFDA?

On the subject of inspiration, I am sure everyone is now aware that UKIFDA's long-standing Technical Manager, Tony Brown, has moved on to a new role within the industry. During the four years I have known Tony, I have been in awe of the extensive technical knowledge he has acquired throughout his career in this industry. On behalf of all UKIFDA members and my colleagues, I would like to thank him for the invaluable help and advice he has provided to us all.

This year's approach to the conference element of the UKIFDA SHOW 2025 will focus on conversation rather than formal presentations. We have named this section 'Speakers' Corner', inspired by the original Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, which is the world's oldest free speech platform. At the UKIFDA SHOW Speakers' Corner, we will discuss not just careers but also future fuels, the impact of Donald Trump and the regulation of our industry.

I look forward to seeing you there.

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# Industry Awards

THE ANNUAL UKIFDA AWARDS RECOGNISE AND CELEBRATE THE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS OF REMARKABLE COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE EVOLVING LIQUID FUEL DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRY.

THIS YEAR'S AWARDS WILL BE PRESENTED AT THE UKIFDA SHOW 2025. TAKING PLACE ON 14TH MAY 2025 AT THE FIRST DIRECT ARENA IN LEEDS, THE EVENT WILL FEATURE PRESENTATIONS THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND EVENING. THIS NEW DYNAMIC ELEMENT PROMISES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL ATTENDEES.

KEN CRONIN, CEO OF UKIFDA, STATED: "WINNING, OR EVEN BEING SHORTLISTED FOR, A UKIFDA AWARD PROVIDES SIGNIFICANT RECOGNITION FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS, HELPING BUSINESSES ENHANCE THEIR CREDIBILITY, BUILD TRUST IN THEIR BRAND, AND SHOWCASE EXCELLENCE IN THE LIQUID FUELS SECTOR."

"THESE AWARDS ARE A TANGIBLE TESTAMENT TO THE DEDICATION AND INNOVATION THAT CONTINUE TO DRIVE OUR INDUSTRY ONWARD. THEY ARE A MUCH-ANTICIPATED PART OF THE EVENT.

"THEY ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO PUSH BOUNDARIES, EXPERIMENT, AND SET NEW STANDARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THIS EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE."



## Customer Service Award sponsored by Worldpay

This is the third year **Worldpay** has sponsored the Customer Service award.

The team at Worldpay are passionate about payments and their clients. Corporate Sales Director Alison Sweeney comments: "As a global payments leader, we partner with our customers to help them modernise their systems and ease technology burdens so businesses can deliver great customer and partner experiences. We are delighted to be sponsoring the award again."

## Recognition for a customer service star

The Worldpay Customer Service Award celebrates outstanding talent in customer service at a regional or national level.

This award is dedicated to individuals who consistently go above and beyond for customers, transform customer service through innovative initiatives or technologies, and deliver exceptional support that resolves issues and leads to new business opportunities. The award recognises someone who:

- Ensures customers receive the guidance and answers needed.
- Shows empathy, responsiveness and resourcefulness when troubleshooting problems.
- Has a positive attitude regarding overall ability, adaptability and communication.

- Takes ownership of problems and follow through to completion.
- Has transformed customer services with a new initiative, system or technology.



## Driver of the Year Sponsored by OAMPS

**Karl Jones, Account Director of OAMPS Hazardous Industries**, the specialist adviser to the hazardous fuels and environmental sectors and sponsor of the prestigious Driver of the Year Award, said: "We're exceptionally proud that 2025 marks the 25th year since we began sponsoring the search to find the industry's best tanker drivers across the UK and Ireland way back in 2000. And while 25 years may typically be associated with silver, we know we'll find real gold among the inspirational stories put forward for nomination.

"Not only do the skills, behaviour and positive action of these exceptional drivers deliver results every day in providing fundamental fuel and reducing spills and preventing pollution incidents, but their efforts also underpin the sector's contribution to net zero. By raising awareness of and supporting increased use of alternative liquid fuels, they are aiding the transition to a greener future while helping remote villages stay connected and keeping off-grid populations warm.

"As a specialist fuel distribution insurer, we are looking forward to applauding and showcasing the achievements of the best drivers out there."

## Celebrating a stand-out delivery driver

The OAMPS Driver of the Year Award recognises those who excel in delivery standards, demonstrate quick thinking and exceed expectations at either a national or regional level. This award also honours drivers who serve as ambassadors for their company and mentor their peers.

The award recognises someone who:

- Consistently maintains & demonstrates industry best practice.
- Helps raise awareness of tank safety.
- Conducts deliveries safely and professionally.
- Displays exceptional customer service, performance and quick thinking, going above and beyond.
- Is an ambassador for the company or industry.



## Green Award Sponsored by Oilshield

For the 7th year, **Oilshield**, which provides insurance and risk management solutions for fuel oil distributors, is sponsoring the Green Award.

Tom Ower, Development and Marketing Lead said: "The sector is certainly moving forward year-on-year to reach a greener future, and it's great to be involved with events like UKIFDA's Show, where we get to pool knowledge and network.

"The entries are always inspirational, and deciding on the winner is tough. This year's award will represent companies making significant changes in the industry and we look forward to learning more about the entrants' latest green achievements and milestones."

## Celebrating 'green' wins

The Oilshield Green Award recognises businesses and organisations making significant strides toward a decarbonised future.

This award showcases companies that have demonstrated their commitment to a greener world by having reduced carbon emissions or waste, developed environmental protection policies, or made progress in promoting renewable fuels and sustainable practices.

The award celebrates those who:

- Have created or introduced a product or



service that delivers exceptional 'green' requirements.

- Reduce carbon emissions and deliver energy savings or waste reduction.
- Have developed risk management policies that protect the environment.
- Implement continuous improvement measures for year-on-year sustainability progress.
- Promote future fuels to staff, customers and communities.



## Innovation Award

### Sponsored by Fuel Oil News

Margaret Major, Publishing Director for award sponsor Fuel Oil News, comments: "As the communication hub of the community, it's our privilege to share industry developments.

"It is crucial that we recognise companies that are innovating in our vital industry, improving the business of fuelling customers across a broad array of sectors, or delivering a pathway to a low carbon future.

This recognition is also a vital factor in motivating others in the industry to find solutions to overcome challenges.

"This is our fourth year sponsoring this important award, and each year we have been extremely impressed with the entries. We are very much looking forward to seeing what 2025 brings!"

### Rewarding leading innovation

The Fuel Oil News Innovation Award recognises businesses that are leading change through innovative ideas, technologies and approaches.

This could include a groundbreaking product or service that advances fuel distribution, a new business model or concept that significantly impacts the sector, or a partnership or trial that introduces a fresh approach with proven results.

This award is open to UKIFDA members and non-member companies. A member company must make a nomination for a non-member company.

Entries may:

- Be a new patent or design blueprint relevant to liquid fuel distribution.
- Demonstrate improved efficiency, cost, time and safety.
- Be a new distribution method, subscription

service or digital platform.

- Showcase a new trial or pilot testing programme with results.
- Be new business model or idea making an impact on the sector.



## Young Person of the Year

### Sponsored by Just Tankers

#### Recognise and reward your young talent

The Just Tankers Young Person of the Year Award celebrates emerging talent in our industry. Nominees include those from regional or national organisations who demonstrate commitment, innovation and the potential to inspire others.

This award recognises those making a meaningful impact early in their careers, particularly in areas like sustainability and operational improvements

The award recognises someone who:

- Has made a positive impact on the organisation.
- Always strives for excellence and frequently exceeds expectations.
- Be an excellent point of contact for customers, suppliers or team members.
- Demonstrates commitment and skill, making an impact in their early career.
- Brings new ideas to challenges - from sustainability to operational improvements.
- Inspires and shows promise as a future leader in the industry.



## Depot of the Year

### Sponsored by Pen Underwriting

The search for the best fuel distribution depot among UKIFDA members is complete.

The winner of this award will be the distributor that has shown itself to be a leader in industry standards, safety and operational improvements.

All depots that have been audited and approved by UKIFDA's technical manager as part of the association's Depot Certification scheme within the past 12 months will be automatically entered into the competition.

# 2025 Event sponsors

UKIFDA appreciates the support of all the sponsors of this year's awards as well as the other sponsors supporting this year's essential industry gathering.

## Headline sponsor



Phillips 66 returns as the event's main sponsor, ensuring a high calibre gathering of industry professionals.

## Outside space sponsor



## Café area sponsor



## President's drinks reception sponsor



## Awards sponsors

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**JUST TANKERS**

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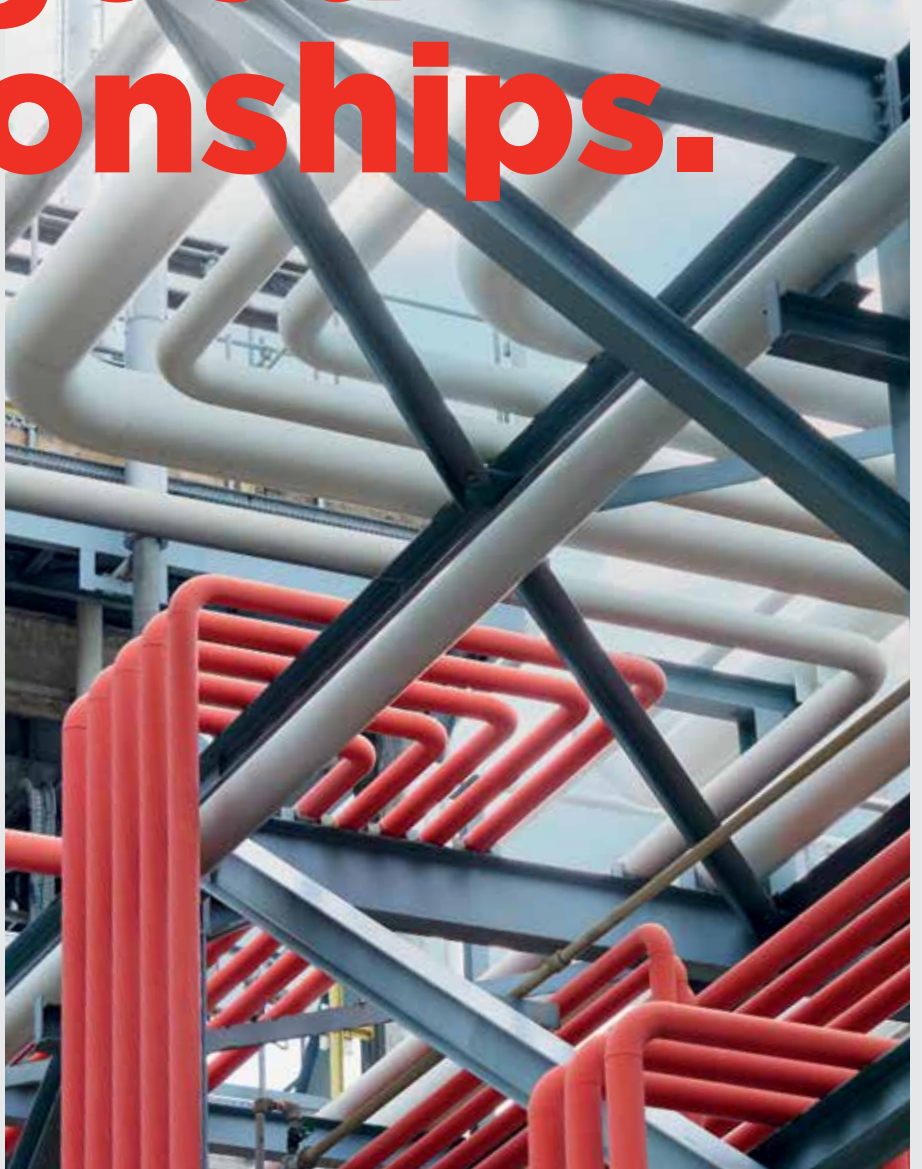
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IMPROVING LIVES.



## UKIFDA Show 2025 Exhibitor Profiles

### Adler & Allan

34

As the UK's most trusted environmental services partner, our mission is to help organisations reduce risk to the environment and their operation by managing assets compliantly while achieving commercial, ESG and net zero goals.

### Ajak Energy

30

A specialised logistics company serving our customers' across the UK and Europe from our central base in South Yorkshire.

### Ajax Solutions Ltd/MCD

18

We lead the market in cloud-based tank-level monitoring and industrial sensors. Our advanced process solutions are meant to empower businesses with maximum operational efficiency, safety, and sustainability.

### Alfons Haar

32

Alfons Haar continues to go from strength to strength. Alfons Haar is the one stop shop for tanker operators in the UK. With complete in-house design and manufacturing of all of our equipment, direct sales in the UK and a service department providing repair and maintenance across the UK and Ireland.

### Alpeco

6

Alpeco Ltd has been supplying liquid handling and flow control equipment to a wide range of industries and applications around the world for over 40 years. We offer an extensive range of road tanker products, alongside a range of fuel handling, depot and industrial processing equipment such as flow meters, pumps, valves and loading skids and arms.

### Boilerjuice

29

We are the No.1 online heating oil marketplace, and the independent platform of choice for heating oil suppliers. Since 2014, we have been working with suppliers to help grow their businesses, margins, and volume.

### CDS

17

Market leading innovator CDS has been developing software for the downstream liquid fuel industries for over 50 years. CODAS is the UK and Ireland's number one software solution for distributors used by the majority of the top 20 UK distributors of liquid fuels.

### Celstia TST

50

With more than 10 years within the IoT ecosystem, we have a long experience in the design, manufacturing and industrialisation of IoT custom products.

### Close Brothers Vehicle Hire

40

Our businesses provide financial support and advice to small businesses and individuals in the UK through a range of financial services.

### Collins Youldon

25

Collins Youldon is a leading manufacturer of electric and hydraulic rewind catherine reels and horizontally mounted hoses in mild steel, 304 and 316 stainless steel for a wide variety of applications including distribution of fuel oil for domestic, agricultural and industrial use, AdBlue, lubricants, LPG, chemicals, aviation fuel, marine and offshore refuelling, wet waste and fire-fighting.

### Dreamtec

9

DreamTec Systems is a complete onboard stock, order and delivery control system that allows distribution-based companies to take control of operations in a whole new way. Providing complete transparency over every aspect of your distribution activities, our system enables you to effectively manage your stock and resources, and make informed decisions in real time.

### DTN

43

DTN is a global, data, analytics, and technology company that delivers trusted operational intelligence for organisations with complex supply chains worldwide.

### DTS

44

D.T.S. Powered by DeliverUP offers a valuable asset for fuel delivery operations – a dependable and user-friendly system that organises essential delivery data.

### Emco Wheaton

10

EMCO Wheaton - Pioneering Fuel Systems for a Sustainable Tomorrow. With a rich history of innovation, EMCO Wheaton is your go-to provider for advanced, eco-friendly fuel systems that drive efficiency, reliability, and sustainability in the ever-evolving world of energy.

### Exolum

13

Making the world move – Europe's leading bulk liquid logistics provider.

### FAST

12

Fuel Additive Science Technology (Fast) trades under the name Fast Exocet. We are a fuel additive company based in the West Midlands, accredited under ISO 9001 for the formulation, manufacture, and distribution of our additives, which are used in gas oil, heating oil, diesel, and petrol. Our additive range is used by approximately 500 UK and Ireland fuel distributors and many thousands of end users.

### Fox Insights

3

FoxInsights enables more than 220 Partner companies across Europe to optimise their business processes and resource efficiency using intelligent tank data analysis. FoxInsights develops data-driven, customer-oriented, and measurably successful solutions that create real added value for sales, marketing, and logistics. This makes them one of the leaders in remote monitoring intelligence for heating oil, diesel, lubricants, LPG, and waste oil.

### Fuel Oil News

48

Supporting Today. Shaping Tomorrow.

The leading information platform for the UK and Ireland fuel distribution sector, delivering essential news, expert insight, and strategic guidance. While addressing the industry's immediate needs, we also champion the transition to a fossil-free future, providing the knowledge and support businesses need to operate today and prepare for tomorrow.

### FuelSoft

21

Fuelsoft delivers an industry-leading, scalable system with enhanced performance, connectivity and built-in business continuity, providing distributors with all the tools they need.

### Harlequin MFG LTD

51

Leading manufacturer of innovative polyethylene storage tanks and systems.

### Harvest Energy

46

Harvest Energy is part of the Prax Group, one of the largest independent refiners, blenders and suppliers of fuel dealing in crude oil, petroleum products and bio-fuels, with a complete integration across the oil value chain, from upstream to downstream. Harvest Energy has become a recognised independent downstream fuel brand in the retail and commercial sectors and a trusted partner to its dealers. The Group's refinery provides security of supply and quality products that are competitively priced, supplied and delivered with a strong customer focus.

### Hazchem Safety

37

Supplying quality workwear, PPE and safety equipment to the fuel distribution Industry.



## Hytek (GB) 7

We've supplied fuel dispensing equipment to a wide range of industries for almost 40 years.

Through our own Hytek Engineered products, and our Pumptronics and O.L.E. brands, we are both one of the UK's leading commercial pump manufacturers and tank gauge manufacturers.

## IFC inflow 24

Since 1987 IFC Inflow has been designing, building, and selling loading arms, folding stairs, tanker access gantries, fall prevention equipment, and tanker loading skids.

We also sell several key complementary products, including bulk flow meters, high-speed transfer pumps, depot automation equipment, dry disconnect couplings, and swivel joints. Now, IFC Inflow has become one of the largest liquid loading and safe tanker access specialists in the UK and Ireland.

## Integer Micro Systems 47

Specialist software suppliers to the freight, logistics and fuel distribution industries. network designers and hardware system integrators, Integer Micro Systems is a specialised freight forwarding and fuel distribution software company with over 40 years of software development experience.

## Intertek 27

Caleb Brett in the UK provides inspection and laboratory testing services to measure quality and quantity of crude oil, gas, petroleum, petrochemical and chemicals products.

## Just Tankers 4

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## Kingspan 2

Supplier of energy management solutions offering tank telemetry to harness your data with a hardware solution for every tank.

## Magnus Monitors 15

Tank level monitoring re-imagined. Next generation solutions enabled by AI.

## MechTronic 41

With over 20 years in the industry MechTronic continues to be a market leader through its OptiMate solution, delivering efficiency for customers across the UK and Ireland.

## Meller Flow Trans 33

Meller supplies and installs engineered product transfer solutions, specialising in all forms of liquid handling technology, covering aggressive chemicals, petroleum's, liquefied gases, food stuffs and lubes.

## Mitchell & Webber Industrial services 28

Driving industrial efficiency with environmental and energy solutions. With a strong foundation in the fuel industry, our team is dedicated to maintaining liquid fuel systems and offering expert transport of petroleum products and hazardous waste streams across the UK.

## Oamps Hazardous Industries 16

OAMPS Hazardous Industries, is a specialist insurance advisor to the hazardous fuels and environmental sectors, with 40 years of consistent commitment to the sector.

## Oilshield 36

Oilshield provides motor and commercial combined insurance to those involved in the downstream fuel oil distribution industry all under one policy.

## ORTEC 42

We help many of the world's best-run organisations make better data-driven decisions.

Our decision support software and data science expertise enable you to improve your business results and make a positive impact on the world.

## Otodata Tank Monitors 49

Otodata has been a key player in the tank monitoring industry for over ten years. Our goal has always been to produce a monitor with very low cost of ownership - making large-scale implementation affordable for all fuel resellers.

## Pepperl+Fuchs 22

Committed and passionate about delivering solutions and products that optimally support customers automation challenges.

## Phillips 66 17

Providing energy. Improving lives.

## Precision Products Engineering 11

PPE is a plastic injection moulding expert with years of experience working with a multitude of plastic resins, products and assemblies.

## Schenk Tank Transport 20

A leading international tank transport company, committed to excellence and dedicated to exploring new markets and expanding into emerging niches.

## SOS Sales Ltd. 38 & 39

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## The Oil Market Journal 1

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## Touchstar Technologies 52

Touchstar's FuelStar planning, optimisation and delivery software partners with the ATEX-approved TS3300 in-cab mobile computer to improve efficiency in the transportation of bulk goods. Back-office job scheduling and management software allows jobs and routes to be planned with ease.

## Williams Tanker Services / TIP Tankers 26

WTS are the stand out choice to assist you in keeping your tanker operation running strong and looking good while TIP Tankers have a wide range of tankers so we are able to provide what you want when you need it.

## Wolf Safety 31

Designs and manufactures safe, tough and reliable ATEX and IECEx lighting for safe use in potentially explosive atmospheres. Where there's an explosion risk, Wolf is number one. With British manufacture, design and innovation at its heart, every Wolf torch and light is ATEX certified – giving you total confidence when lives depend on it.

## Worldpay 14

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## Yara 8

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# SHOW 2025 Evening Gathering

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SHOW 2025 WILL CONCLUDE WITH THE UKIFDA GATHERING. REPLACING THE TRADITIONAL FORMAL DINNER, THIS NEW FORMAT INCLUDES AN ENTERTAINING EVENING COMPÈRE AND PRIZES AND SURPRISES THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT.



## Engaging and entertaining

This year, a new format enhances networking opportunities with a drinks reception, followed by a relaxed dining experience featuring delicious bowl food.

It's the perfect setting for networking and building connections!

## Secure your spot

Attendees will also have the chance to enjoy casino tables until midnight, and the venue is open for socialising until 2 a.m.

**Tickets are priced at £85 per person, which includes the drinks reception, an informal dinner, two drinks vouchers, and entry to the casino!**

## Exciting awards

Several prestigious awards will be presented during the evening gathering.

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# PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

MARCH IN  
VIEW

## VEHICLE BATTERIES: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH THAT REDUCES THE INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE

Last month, we covered the topic of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) in the road haulage sector and concluded that the nature of optimised road transport meant a transition to electric mobility for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) was unlikely. Amongst several fundamental problems, a lack of on-road charging infrastructure, coupled with the time taken to charge constantly operating vehicles were the main arguments against truck electrification. But what if there was a way of bypassing charging infrastructure and at the same time, massively reducing the time taken to replenish batteries?

Whereas Europe's chosen path (and to a lesser extent the USA) has been to follow the charging infrastructure model, China (the biggest HGV market in the world) is now full steam ahead towards a very different vision – battery swapping! Gone are the requirements for a costly network of mega-chargers, making huge demands on the grid and rapidly degrading truck batteries because of the speed of charge required (for optimised operations). Instead, an increasing number of Chinese trucks are simply swapping “flat” batteries for ready charged ones, all in the space of 5 minutes!

Clearly, there are significant advantages with this method. Firstly, the batteries do not require charging then and there, so can be charged “at leisure”. This not only costs less but significantly extends the battery's life. Furthermore, because the batteries are not integrated into the truck itself, they are owned by the charging station and effectively leased to the truck operator. This reduces the initial cost of the truck and means that the life of the battery is disconnected from the service level of the truck, which hugely improves the residual value of the vehicle (see last month's report on funding of trucks and residual values). It also highlights a significant divergence in the type of trucks being manufactured in China versus the West. EU and US truck makers have continued to integrate batteries into the chassis of their vehicles (which makes battery swapping nigh-on impossible), compared to the separated battery location increasingly being adopted by Chinese e-truck makers.

None of this is to say that interchanging a 7.5 tonne battery is a straight-forward and simple process. The battery-swapping centres must also act as a charging hub, which necessitates industrial level connections to the grid. Furthermore, the weight and risk (pierced batteries) involved in the process requires total robotised automation which, when added to heavy duty cooling requirements (to stop overheating) and fire safety obligations, means



“CHINA (THE BIGGEST  
HGV MARKET IN THE  
WORLD) IS NOW FULL  
STEAM AHEAD TOWARDS  
A VERY DIFFERENT  
VISION.”

both the initial capital investment and ongoing operating costs are substantial. It is however, still considerably cheaper and quicker than installing hundreds of thousands of individual chargers up and down the road network. In this light, mega-charging sites, set-up at already established logistics / warehouse hubs would seem a practical and cost-effective solution.

Once again, the proof is in the pudding and there seems to be ample evidence that this method of HGV electrification is beginning to get traction. In 2020, there were 500 battery swap stations in China. By 2023, that number had increased to 3,500 and this year, it is estimated that the number will be in excess of 35,000. Of course, these sites still serve a small proportion of the 2.4m heavy trucks in China (over 90% of which are still diesel powered), but a 900% increase in swapping centres

over a 2 year period is probably a trend that shouldn't be overlooked!

Of course, there is a total logic in China adopting battery swapping technology. Anyone who has followed the journey of automotive electrification will know that China dominates the sector and (to be frank) has set out to dominate from the start. Initially they hoovered up the mineral extraction rights for precious metals such as lithium and cobalt. Then they cornered the refining and processing industries to convert those metals into batteries (90% of lithium-ion refining takes place in China), before going on to perfect the battery technology. Finally, they transferred that technology into electric vehicles and predictably, ascendancy in the electric automotive sector has followed; 65% of the global e-car pool, 90% of e-buses and now 80% of e-trucks all come from China...

For many, these figures are worrisome in the extreme, as they point to complete reliance on China for electric vehicles. It is ultimately this fear and the long-term consequences for western automotive manufacturers, that might ensure HGV battery swapping never takes off in Europe or the USA. If that was the case and EU / US manufacturers doggedly stick with the charging infrastructure model, then e-trucks seem an unlikely pipedream, with all the issues we raised last month presenting continual obstacles. European governments are already behind their targets for full car electrification (the UK requires the installation of 100 new public chargers every day for the next 10 years to meet its 2035 target) and so, turning attentions to the more complex job of truck electrification (frankly) feels unlikely. Either trucks will stay with internal combustion engines, or the West will have to accept battery swapping and the inevitable domination of Chinese trucks and technology.

For more pricing  
information,  
see page 46

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# Review of the UK & Ireland fuel tanker market 2024

THE FUEL TANKER MANUFACTURING MARKET IN THE UK AND IRELAND HAS EXPERIENCED A DYNAMIC YEAR IN 2024, WITH VARIOUS CHALLENGES, IMPROVEMENTS, AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE. WE GATHERED INSIGHTS FROM SOME KEY INDUSTRY VOICES: **JOBY CLARKE** OF COBO TANKERS & SERVICES, **DAVE STANLEY** OF TANKQUIP, **ADRIAN MASON** OF ROAD TANKERS NORTHERN AND **MARK SKELTON** OF ROAD TANKERS ARMAGH. THEIR RESPONSES HIGHLIGHT BOTH COMMON THEMES AND DIFFERING EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE SECTOR.



## Challenges in 2024

The primary challenges faced by tanker manufacturers in 2024, varied depending on the company. Joby Clarke of Cobo Tankers & Services pointed out that rising costs in energy and labour significantly impacted pricing in 2024. With some of the lead times for 2022 / 2023 contracts meaning these trucks were delivered in 2024, production costs had risen significantly in the interim – an increase that, depending on the nature

of the agreement, could not always be passed on to customers. This has resulted in customers that are looking to place orders now experiencing notable price increases compared to orders that were fulfilled in 2024, but placed two to three years ago.

For Dave Stanley at Tankquip, the biggest hurdle was ensuring continuity in barrel supply, an issue they have now successfully resolved. Meanwhile, Adrian Mason at Road Tankers Northern noted that 2024 was largely a good year, with no major challenges aside from ongoing uncertainty in Europe, which affected parts pricing and made life difficult for the buying department.

## Supply chain and parts availability

There was unanimous agreement that the supply chain has improved significantly compared to previous years. Joby noted that truck chassis lead times have come right down, with it now being possible to get one in approximately 12 weeks, though he did warn against customers becoming complacent in planning their replacements. With some hesitant to commit, assuming that these shorter lead times can be matched, Joby cautioned that, as the months roll by, any new orders placed will be 'on the road' the wrong side of next winter.

Dave echoed the feedback around lead times, confirming that the supply of chassis and parts has improved greatly and that there are now no serious delays across the supply chain. Adrian also confirmed an overall improvement, with no major shortages affecting their production.

## Lead times for new tankers

Lead times appear to vary depending on the approach of the manufacturer. Joby mentioned that Cobo has some availability for builds this year and is still able to get some ready for pre-Christmas delivery. Dave highlighted the benefits of Tankquip's stock build programme that allows them to deliver within 6-9 months, and sometimes even sooner if stock units don't sell too quickly. Adrian shared that while they have limited availability for the end of the year, they are constructing a number of stock 26-tonne DAF XD models that should be ready for the winter period.

## Advice for distributors looking to order

A common piece of advice from all manufacturers was to place orders early. Joby emphasised the need for customers to act now if they want deliveries in time for winter, saying that they need to "get orders placed quickly". Dave agrees that planning ahead is essential in tanker orders and highlighted Tankquip's competitive pricing, noting availability of 12, 18, and 26-tonne units towards the end of the year. Adrian also advised distributors to act now urging them to "get in touch early to avoid disappointment".

## Order books and future demand

The demand outlook appears strong across the board. Joby spoke appreciatively of Cobo's solid customer base with many firm orders in place for next year, as distributors plan their businesses ahead. Dave acknowledged that while Tankquip is a smaller operation, they have enough business to keep them going. Adrian confirmed that, with ongoing steady demand, Road Tankers Northern has only limited availability towards the end of the year.

## Staff recruitment

Recruitment remains a mixed issue. Adrian noted that finding skilled fabricators and fitters is becoming increasingly difficult and remains a real challenge to the industry. Dave has a different perspective on



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staffing matters, humorously stating that Tankquip has no direct staff, instead relying on a trusted network of suppliers and suggesting that he only has to give himself a stern talking to from time to time!

## Developments in tanker building

There have been some notable advancements in tanker manufacturing this year. Dave mentioned Tankquip's work on sophisticated waste oil tanks that the company was extremely proud of. Adrian shared that Road Tankers Northern is introducing a new barrel with an improved mounting system from September onwards, which will eventually become their standard design.

## 2024 highlights

Each respondent had different highlights for 2024. Joby enjoyed reconnecting with industry colleagues at UKIFDA EXPO in Liverpool as well as on the annual Cobo distributor trip to Spain. Dave's wry humour kicked in when he suggested humorously that simply making it to Christmas was a highlight for him! Adrian was particularly proud of winning Tanker of the Year, a significant achievement in the industry and an award he described as "the highlight for any manufacturer".

## Hopes for 2025 and beyond

Looking ahead, Joby hopes for economic stability, which would allow businesses to plan investments with greater confidence. After the challenges of 2024, Dave is simply hoping for a less bumpy ride through 2025, with more consistent and regular turnarounds. Adrian is looking forward to bringing more innovation to the industry with RTN aspiring to continue to be the best at what they do.

## Customer view

To gain further insight, we spoke with Mark Skelton from Road Tankers Armagh (RTA) and various distributor customers to understand what they value most from their tanker manufacturers.

Mark emphasised the importance of a full-package purchase, which avoids the need for customers to get involved in chassis ordering or technical specifications, minimising hassle. Additionally, customers appreciate taking delivery direct to their yard of a fully tested, decaled, registered tanker, ready to operate, reducing downtime.

RTA is known for its customer communication, keeping clients informed throughout the build process – a factor highly valued by those experiencing it for the first time. Richard Connon of Connon Brothers Scotland shared how previous uncertainty over lead times and delivery dates had frustrated him, but with RTA and Norscot DAF, he was kept informed throughout every stage – an experience he described as a pleasure, saying: "When the tanker arrived, it was tested, calibrated, and ready for the road – a full 5-star experience."

With a new tanker representing a significant investment, John Hughes of Klass Oil highlighted the importance of attention to detail, stating, "I always know that the finished product is second to none, right down to the finer details."

Equipment availability and support also ranks highly on the list of customer wants with customers favouring different systems but with the same demands for quality, technical support and peace of mind.

"I have always chosen Emco as my metering system," John shares. "The drivers find it so easy to use and from my point of view it certainly is the system to fit and forget in terms of problems. "There is nothing that Tom Cunningham doesn't know about metering systems, so having this peace of mind in the background is vital to Klass Oils choice of metering system."



Richard shares how they have always run with Alpeco on their tankers suggesting that "fitting the new TEX system was a no brainer". With very positive feedback from the drivers, Richard suggests it is "the best Alpeco metering system to date."

Simon Cullen of AA Oils is a fan of the MechTronic Optimate metering system, a choice again largely driven by driver feedback. "We find that this works very well for us, the drivers love it and MechTronic are always on hand any time for technical info. They are always looking to update and improve the system which is very good for us as a customer."

Mark further explained RTA's customer-focused approach, sharing: "Customers have multiple meetings with us to tailor specifications to their needs. All our builds are scheduled from the outset and throughout this process, the customer is kept up-to-date with a live build matrix showing them every stage of their build. Regular calls and online meetings ensure there are no surprises at final delivery and the customer gets exactly what they have ordered."

Reliable delivery scheduling is a crucial aspect for distributors, allowing them to plan for tanker replacements or new driver assignments as Mark noted: "This is an important and costly part of any business that needs careful planning to optimise the process."

"Ensuring customers receive their tankers as scheduled helps them plan efficiently, reducing costly downtime."

## Conclusion

The UK and Ireland fuel tanker manufacturing market in 2024 has seen significant improvements in supply chain reliability and strong demand, but challenges persist in pricing, recruitment, and economic uncertainty.

While each manufacturer has had a unique experience of 2024, the shared sentiment is that early ordering and forward planning remain crucial for distributors, while customers highlight the importance of transparency, reliability, and comprehensive service offerings.

The ability to provide a seamless, fully equipped, and tested tanker upon delivery is a significant differentiator, with customer feedback underscoring the value of clear communication and dependable lead times.

As the market moves forward into 2025, manufacturers hope for economic stability and smoother operations. With continued innovation, resilience and adaptation, the industry is perfectly poised to navigate the challenges and opportunities that 2025, and beyond, will bring and continue to meet customer needs effectively.



# TRANSITION TALK

## QMRE: Transforming plastic waste into sustainable solutions

**From waste to solutions through knowledge and innovation.**

**TIM STCLAIR-PEARCE** IS THE CO-FOUNDER OF QM RECYCLED ENERGY A COMPANY WHOSE SOLE FOCUS IS TO FIND AN ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTION TO END-OF-LIFE PLASTICS TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION.

Channelling almost four decades of experience in the plastics, paper and packaging industries Tim is helping to provide a solution for one of the most pressing environmental problems facing society today – how to deal with the millions of tonnes of plastic waste created every year.

Margaret Major, Publishing Director for Fuel Oil News, met with Tim to find out more about this solution and why the fuel industry is becoming increasingly interested in its possibilities.

QMRE is currently undertaking a nationwide roll-out of dedicated plastic to energy recycling centres which will use proven technology to turn plastic waste into valuable hydrocarbons.

QMRE's story begins with a challenge – tackling the inefficiencies in plastic waste recycling. Tim StClair-Pearce recalls an initial meeting with Kent County Council, where he questioned their claim of 95 % efficiency in waste management. Further investigation, revealed that only 9 % of plastic waste was actually being recycled, with the majority going to landfill, incineration, or export. This revelation set him on a journey to find a viable solution to the growing plastic waste crisis.

Travelling across the globe, the QMRE team examined existing recycling methods. In China, they encountered an industry struggling with inefficiencies, where converting plastic to oil required more energy than it produced. Pyrolysis was showing promise but lacked the efficiency to be viable. The key takeaway from this phase of research was the need for a continuous process – one that could operate efficiently without excessive energy consumption or emissions.

### Developing the QMRE technology

After extensive research, QMRE found an experimental model at Dresden University that aligned with their vision. They commissioned a pilot machine for around €200,000 and tested it in the UK. Despite initial scepticism from industry giants like BP, QMRE successfully proved the technology's potential, even receiving an apology from a BP representative after the results were showcased on the BBC News at Ten.

A key refinement of the process was to move from traditional pyrolysis to what they refer to as thermolysis – a cleaner, more efficient method that avoids direct combustion. Instead, the system captures and reuses the non-condensable gases to power itself, reducing emissions and increasing efficiency.

The feedstock is plastic waste – particularly soft plastics – for which the waste industry has no answers. No two plastics are identical and can't be mixed up, so they don't know what to do with it and it ends up in what is called belt stock.

Belt stock is piled high in many, many counties because if it is incinerated, the resultant high levels of emissions will shut down the generator. Needing something like 30 tonnes of fuel oil to get the generator going again, waste licenses are jeopardised.

As Tim StClair-Pearce explains: "A solution

was needed that didn't involve burning the product, so we derived a solution based on pyrolysis that we call thermolysis because pyro means fire, and we don't use fire. Lysis is separation."

"We trap the light gases that are non-condensable and feed them into a genset generator and it provides 70 % of our power. So, we have very little waste, and we have very little coming into the site."

### How it works

QMRE's process takes one kilogram of plastic waste and converts it into one litre of usable oil. About 12 % of the original material is converted to gas, which is then used to generate 70 % of the energy needed to power the system. The remaining 3 % becomes carbon ash, which is repurposed into road-building materials through a partnership with Associated Asphalt.

Unlike conventional waste processing, QMRE's system does not rely on large, centralised plants. Instead, their modular model allows smaller facilities to be set up closer to waste sources, reducing transportation emissions and costs. This approach aligns with their goal of building 100 sites across the UK, each capable of processing 10-20 tonnes of plastic waste per day, collectively addressing 10-20 % of the country's packaging waste.





### Turnkey solution

QMRE provides a comprehensive turnkey solution for businesses and organisations looking to process plastic waste efficiently. The company offers a ready-to-operate processing unit, handling everything from site setup to staff training and ongoing technical support. This makes it an attractive proposition for waste management companies, industrial sites, and organisations seeking to reduce their environmental impact while benefiting from the financial incentives of converting plastic waste into valuable fuel.

To set up a QMRE processing unit, customers need approximately one acre of land and an investment of around £7.5 million for a fully operational facility with four VIXLA systems. Each unit is designed to handle 5 tonnes of plastic waste per day (a total of 20 tonnes), providing a scalable and profitable solution for waste processing and fuel production. Within three years, customers can recoup their investment through oil sales, RTFO credit earnings, and operational efficiencies.

QMRE also assists clients in securing long-term contracts for their output, whether in the plastics or fuels market. Customers can choose to sell their recycled oil to a major petchem, or plastic manufacturing or supply it to fuel blenders and refiners looking to integrate sustainable alternatives into their fuel mix. QMRE's expertise ensures that every client has access to the most profitable and sustainable pathways for their end product.

### Commercial applications and partnerships

QMRE has secured an offtake agreement with a major petchem for the recycled oil which will be used in the production of renewable plastic.

While QMRE's ambition is the creation of a fully circular plastics economy with net zero emissions, the process is also proving attractive to the fuel sector, where it can contribute to the production of both sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and low-emission diesel. With regulatory approvals progressing, the company is working to integrate their recycled oil into the DfT Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) scheme, making it an attractive alternative for fuel suppliers.

The RTFO presents a highly lucrative opportunity for QMRE, as the oil produced from plastic waste qualifies for credits under the scheme. These credits act as incentives for fuel producers to incorporate renewable and sustainable fuels into their supply chain, with significant financial value attached to them. Currently, each RTFO credit can be worth substantial amounts, and with the inclusion of refuse-derived fuels now formally recognised, QMRE stands to benefit from this growing market.

By producing oil that can be blended into diesel and other fuel types, QMRE's process can provide a sustainable alternative to fossil-based fuels while also ensuring that waste plastics are removed from the environment. With an estimated 83 billion litres of diesel used annually in road transport alone, even a small portion of QMRE's recycled oil entering the market could have a meaningful impact on reducing emissions and reliance on crude oil.

Additionally, companies looking to meet their net-zero targets are actively seeking alternative fuel sources that align with government incentives. QMRE's ability to generate RTFO-eligible oil positions them as a key supplier in the evolving fuel market. As

the demand for lower-carbon fuels grows, the value of these credits is expected to increase, making it even more profitable for companies to integrate QMRE's oil into their supply chains.

There will also be an opportunity for partnerships with fuel blenders and distributors who can take their product and incorporate it into commercially available fuel blends. With the right certifications and further advancements in refining technology, this oil could soon become a mainstream component of transport fuels, aviation fuels, and even marine fuels.

Additionally, QMRE is exploring solutions for specific plastic waste streams such as carpets and astroturf, products which are challenging to recycle conventionally. Their trials with carpet manufacturers demonstrated a 60% oil yield, with the potential to create a circular economy where old carpets are turned back into new materials. Other potential areas of interest would be NHS and farmers' plastic waste.

### Challenges and the road ahead

Despite rapid progress and excellent results, QMRE faces significant barriers to scaling up. Government support remains minimal, with no public funding received to date. Regulatory hurdles also slow down the adoption of innovative recycling technologies. The team continues to engage with policymakers, pushing for recognition of their process within existing waste management and renewable energy frameworks.

As demand for sustainable waste solutions grows, QMRE's approach offers a scalable and profitable model that can be replicated globally and the company's vision extends beyond the UK, with partnerships forming in Spain and Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland and France, Nigeria and South Africa.

### A circular economy for plastics

Ultimately, QMRE aims to create a fully circular plastic economy—taking waste plastics, repurposing them into new materials, and reducing reliance on virgin fossil-based plastics. While some of their product may enter the fuel market, their primary mission remains clear: to eliminate plastic waste and transform it into valuable, sustainable resources.

With private investment driving their expansion and increasing industry interest, QMRE is well-positioned to disrupt the plastic recycling landscape, proving that waste can be transformed from a problem to a solution.



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# Can hydrogen deliver?

## Industry leaders weigh in on costs, policy, and progress



Our March issue highlighted the potential role for hydrogen in delivering net zero, but industry leaders remain divided on whether it can truly deliver. The University of Manchester's new publication, *On Hydrogen*, provides expert analysis on the sector's challenges, while insights from industry voices at StocExpo 2025 shed light on the financial, technical, and policy hurdles that must be overcome.

*On Hydrogen* covers critical areas such as hydrogen production, storage, decarbonisation of industry and transport, and the future role of hydrogen interconnectors, offering expert analysis, evidence, and policy recommendations to address the UK's key hydrogen policy challenges.

The foreword by Baroness Brown of Cambridge, Chair of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee, warns that "the hydrogen bubble has burst."

She writes how hydrogen has been regarded as a "silver bullet" for decarbonisation of "almost everything" adding: "The trouble with bubbles is that once they have burst, it takes time for industry, governments and investors to regain confidence and take the subjects seriously again".

Despite these challenges, Baroness Brown asserts that green hydrogen remains crucial for industries like steel production and sustainable fuel manufacturing.

The crossbench peer - who also serves as Chair of the Carbon Trust, and the Adaptation Committee of the Climate Change Committee - suggests that hydrogen can be a "green growth opportunity for the UK", citing the

many ingredients the UK has to make it work including "ambitious net zero commitments and policies; including "some serious oil industry players who need an alternative to fossil fuels."

### The role for hydrogen

The report suggests that rather than replace fossil fuels in the short term, hydrogen could complement existing energy sources, helping to lower emissions from transport and industrial applications.

### Industry impact

Hydrogen presents both challenges and opportunities for fossil fuel producers and distributors.

The report highlights that over 90% of hydrogen today is fossil fuel based (grey hydrogen). This process releases large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Blue hydrogen adds carbon capture and storage (CCS) to the grey hydrogen process and is being explored as a transitional solution. However, concerns remain about its actual environmental benefits, as the effectiveness of CCS technology remains uncertain.

Green hydrogen (produced via electrolysis using renewable electricity) is the only truly low-carbon option but is currently expensive and limited in supply.

The report suggests that while battery-electric vehicles (BEVs) are becoming dominant for light-duty transport, hydrogen is being explored for harder-to-electrify heavy-duty transport such as HGVs, shipping, and aviation.

Hydrogen fuel cell vehicles are being considered for heavy transport, including freight trucks, buses, and trains. However, limited hydrogen refuelling stations and high fuel costs are barriers.

Hydrogen-derived e-fuels could play a role in aviation and shipping, but scaling up production requires major investment in infrastructure and renewable energy.

### Distribution challenges:

Unlike liquid fossil fuels, hydrogen is difficult to transport and store due to its low energy density and leakage risks.

The report highlights that hydrogen storage and distribution remain a major technical challenge, with underground storage being a potential long-term solution.

The report also suggests that the UK could develop hydrogen pipelines and interconnectors to facilitate distribution.

### Policy considerations

The transition to hydrogen requires significant policy and investment support. Policy mechanisms such as carbon pricing and subsidies will be crucial in making hydrogen economically viable compared to fossil fuels.

The report suggests that more stringent regulations are needed to ensure that only truly low-carbon hydrogen (green hydrogen) is incentivised.

### Diversification

As policy mechanisms evolve, major oil and gas companies are already investing in hydrogen,

viewing it as a long-term revenue stream. While hydrogen is unlikely to fully replace fossil fuels in the near term, gradual displacement in certain markets is reshaping investment strategies.

Hydrogen was also under scrutiny at StocExpo 2025, where industry leaders and energy transition experts examined its future.

Eugenia Belloni Pocorob, Lead H2 and CC(U)S for the Netherlands at BP, Amit Rao, principal consultant at S&P Global and Matt Wilson, Head of New Energy Markets at Navigator Terminals considered the financial, technical and geopolitical factors influencing hydrogen's adoption and highlighted the critical role of policy and investment.

## Hydrogen's role in decarbonisation

Eugenia Belloni Pocorob, highlighted its importance in reducing refinery emissions.

"Decarbonising refinery fuel is essential, and low-carbon hydrogen provides a clear pathway," she said. However, she acknowledged the formidable hurdles. "The technical and financial challenges remain substantial, but the opportunity for emissions reduction is undeniable."

As mentioned above, the transport sector is also exploring hydrogen's potential. Amit Rao noted its long-standing use in industrial applications but pointed to new areas of demand. "We are seeing airline manufacturers investigating pure hydrogen solutions beyond sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). It may seem far-fetched now, but technological advances happen rapidly," he observed.

## Investment and policy uncertainty

Despite its promise, the high cost of carbon capture and storage (CCS) and hydrogen

projects remains a significant barrier. "The scale of capital required for CCS projects is enormous," said Rao. "We have already seen major industry players reconsider their green commitments. The question is: where will the funding come from, and who will drive the transition?"

Investor hesitation is another factor slowing progress with Belloni Pocorob pointing that "We need a different type of investor – one willing to take a long-term view."

Government intervention has played a decisive role in advancing early-stage projects. Matt Wilson cited the UK's approach, where government-backed competition frameworks have helped de-risk investments. "By aligning the entire value chain, these initiatives have made projects more viable," he explained. "Future developments will build on this foundation."

## THE PANEL AT STOCXPO:



### Eugenia Belloni Pocorob: Lead H2 and CC(U)S for the Netherlands at BP

Born and raised in the Italian Alps, Eugenia pursued a humanistic education and subsequently obtained a degree in Chemical Engineering from Politecnico di Milano, followed by a PhD in Industrial Catalysis from KTH, Stockholm.

Relocating to the Netherlands, she first worked with Shell Chemicals in Pernis before moving to BP Rotterdam Refinery. During her 20 years of service at BP, Eugenia has gained extensive experience in various areas of the refining business. In recent years, she has focused specifically on leading the strategic development of transition engines and decarbonisation, with a particular emphasis on green and low-carbon hydrogen and their integration into emerging integrated energy hubs.



### Matt Wilson: Head of New Energy Markets at Navigator Terminals

Matthew Graduated from Teesside University with a BEng (Hons) in Chemical Engineering in 2010 and is the Head of New Energy Markets for Navigator Terminals UK. Matthew is focussed on addressing the demand for storage

and handling of new energy carriers and emissions reduction solutions in evolving markets, for which Navigator Terminals are geographically and technically well positioned to become a leader in the future.

Matthew joined Navigator Terminals from Johnson Matthey, where he gained more than 12 years' experience in the oil and gas and chemicals market.



### Amit Rao: Principal Consultant at S&P Global

Amit is a Senior Consultant in S&P Global – Oil Markets and Downstream (OMDC). He has ten years of professional experience working in the Oil and Gas industry, and is based in S&P Global's Paris office. In his work at S&P Global, Amit has been focusing on consulting activities in the oil midstream and downstream sector.

Amit's activity has been particularly focused on delivering commercial and technical due diligence reports related to storage portfolio assets in both the refined products and chemicals sectors. As part of these projects, he has been leading the analyses related to the technical conditions, market outlook, price and tariffs forecasting, contract review and financial modelling.

Before S&P Global, Amit was working at IFP Energies Nouvelles where he led the inhouse LNG intelligence and developed analysis on the LNG market supply, demand, and infrastructure.

## Geopolitical headwinds and the US factor

The trajectory of hydrogen investment is increasingly being shaped by global political dynamics. Rao warned that shifts in US policy could have far-reaching consequences. "We need to wait out the Trump presidency to gain clarity on the long-term outlook. Over the next four years, we are likely to see renewed trade conflicts – not just with China, but across the board. The US is moving towards decoupling from global markets, which will have profound implications for European industry," he said.

Rising defence spending in Europe could also reshape energy transition priorities. "If governments allocate 3% or more of GDP to defence, other sectors will inevitably face budgetary constraints," Rao cautioned.

## Cautious optimism

Despite these challenges, the panel remained cautiously optimistic. Belloni Pocorob noted that "We may have gone from 30 projects to fewer than five, but the fact that some are now moving into construction is significant. The energy transition is not just theoretical – we are starting to see real implementation," she said.

Wilson echoed this sentiment, highlighting progress in the UK. "The projects we have in place are gaining traction. The policy framework is set, and the risk profile has improved. This momentum will carry through to SAF and other hydrogen-linked sectors," he concluded.

Hydrogen remains a work in progress—full realisation of its potential will depend on sustained investment, targeted policy support, and overcoming economic and geopolitical challenges.

# Scottish Government emphasises importance of just transition as it rethinks Heat in Buildings Bill

With Ken Cronin, CEO UKIFDA, discussing recent progress towards implementation of legislation around biofuels in home heating and suggesting that it is now ‘a race to see which country will be the first to implement an obligation’ (Fuel Oil News March 2025) we review the Scottish Government’s decision to withdraw its current draft of the Heat in Buildings Bill and ask whether this marks a shift towards a more balanced and pragmatic approach to decarbonisation.

The liquid fuel distributor community across the UK and Ireland has long highlighted concerns around the consumer impact of current decarbonisation policy and this move signals a growing recognition that the transition to low-carbon domestic heating must be both fair and financially viable – not a



blanket push for electrification at all costs.

Acting net zero Secretary Gillian Martin announced that the bill, originally drafted under the influence of the Scottish Greens as part of the Bute House Agreement, will not

proceed in its current form. The key reason? It would “make people poorer.” Instead, Martin stressed the need for a revised bill that simultaneously reduces carbon emissions while also tackling fuel poverty – a stance long advocated by many within our industry.

## Disproportionate impact

The original legislation proposed strict timelines for replacing fossil-fuel boilers with heat pumps following the sale of a home. However, concerns mounted over the financial strain this would impose on homeowners, particularly given the high installation costs of heat pumps and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Martin’s decision to scrap the bill in its present form underscores the importance of ensuring that the transition to low-carbon heating does not disproportionately impact

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those who can least afford it.

A 'one-size-fits-all' approach that prioritises electrification without considering affordability and feasibility has long been a point of contention. The Scottish Government's latest move suggests a greater willingness to acknowledge these concerns and revisit a more inclusive pathway to low carbon heating. For the liquid fuel distribution industry, it further reinforces the central role for low-carbon liquid fuels in any heating transition strategy.

## Mixed response

Predictably, reactions to the decision have been polarised. Scottish Green co-leader Patrick Harvie, who drafted the bill, criticised the move, arguing that it undermines Scotland's climate ambitions and delays necessary action to move away from fossil fuels. Meanwhile, environmental groups like WWF Scotland have called it a "deeply concerning" step back in addressing fuel poverty through renewable heating solutions.

However, critics of the original bill, including the Scottish Conservatives, welcomed the decision, describing the previous proposals as "completely unrealistic" and "financially punitive." Their calls for a fairer approach to decarbonisation echo industry arguments for the inclusion of low carbon liquid fuels as a viable transition technology.

## Important precedent

The Scottish Government's move aligns with a broader shift from rigid decarbonisation policies to more pragmatic, socially responsible approaches.

Last year's decision to scrap Scotland's annual and interim emissions reduction targets in favour of a more flexible five-year measurement framework also reflects a shift towards feasibility over strict ideology.

As policymakers reconsider their stance on domestic heating, it is vital to continue to push for greater recognition of low carbon liquid fuels as part of the solution. To achieve a just transition, a mix of solutions must be included that consider consumer choice, cost-effectiveness, and existing infrastructure.

The Scottish Government has taken a step back to reassess – a move that could set an important precedent for the rest of the UK.

Continuing to support the drive for a pathway to decarbonisation of domestic heating, our industry must continue to engage with policymakers, to ensure that future heating policies embrace a pragmatic and equitable path to net zero, rather than an unrealistic push for electrification at any cost.

# From oil to future fuels: How storage infrastructure is evolving

For decades, bulk energy storage was predominantly fossil fuel focussed. With the shift towards alternative fuels, storage infrastructure is rapidly evolving to meet new demands.

This transformation was on full display at StocExpo 2025, where the event celebrated its 20th anniversary. Once a niche oil and gas focused gathering, it is now a global event for future fuels, energy security, and sustainability solutions.

## A changing landscape

When StocExpo first launched, the bulk storage industry was firmly rooted in crude oil, refined products, and petrochemicals. Fast forward to 2025, and the conversation has expanded to hydrogen, biofuels, ammonia, and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) – fuels that are increasingly critical in the push to decarbonise.

"Hydrogen is going to be a key part of the future clean energy mix," comments Margaret Dunn, who has been with StocExpo almost from its inception. "Energy transport, storage, and logistics will be crucial in matching hydrogen supply with international demand."

The inclusion of the Clean Ammonia Storage Conference at this year's event underlines the growing importance of new fuels. With ammonia emerging as a hydrogen carrier and bunker fuel alternative, storage terminals are exploring how to retrofit or build new infrastructure that accommodates both traditional and emerging fuels.

## The investment tightrope

For operators this presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While governments push for greener energy, the financial viability of new fuels remains unclear.

Amit Rao, principal consultant at S&P Global, expressed the challenge: "If we don't adapt, we risk being left behind. But if we overinvest in expensive alternatives, we could invest in our own bankruptcy."

Rao highlighted how Europe's energy priorities are shifting from prioritising emissions reduction to a greater focus on energy security – driven by geopolitical

tensions such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While biofuels, hydrogen, methanol and ammonia are promising, high costs and uncertain demand pose a significant risk.

"The industry is walking a tightrope," Rao added. "If we rush into alternative fuels without financial backing, we will tip over. But if we simply maintain legacy infrastructure, we will tip the other way."

## What's next for bulk storage?

With aviation under pressure to decarbonise, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is gaining traction as a near-term solution. However, scaling up production requires new storage capacity, blending capabilities, and dedicated distribution networks.

Similarly, methanol, hydrogen, and ammonia are gaining momentum in the maritime sector, but require significant investment in new storage, safety protocols, and supply chain developments.

"Tanks are the backbone of the energy supply chain in Europe," commented Rao. "But European clean energy targets are reshaping the industry. The decisions we make today will define the sustainability of bulk liquid storage for the next 20 years."

## Three key takeaways from StocExpo 2025:

- ✓ Dual-fuel infrastructure is the future – storage terminals must prepare for a hybrid future.
- ✓ Cost and policy uncertainty remain major hurdles – investments must be carefully timed to balance risk and opportunity.
- ✓ Collaboration is key – stakeholder partnerships will be essential to ensure supply chain resilience.

With the push for a lower-carbon future, the industry must navigate the shift wisely – balancing legacy operations with preparation for the fuels of tomorrow. The next decade will be shaped by those who can adapt, invest, and innovate without tipping the scales too far in either direction.

The question is no longer if bulk liquid storage will evolve, but how fast – and who will lead the way.



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# TANK STORAGE

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# INDUSTRY INSIGHT

## Optimising fuel efficiency and sustainability: The evolving role of additives in the energy transition

The global fuel industry is undergoing a transformation, with increasing investment in sustainable liquid fuels and evolving regulatory frameworks shaping the future of transportation energy.

As the world moves towards decarbonisation, the role of fuel additives in ensuring efficiency, compatibility, and environmental benefits is becoming a key consideration.

With rising costs squeezing profit margins across every aspect of liquid fuel distribution, finding ways to improve efficiency is critical. Fuel additives present a compelling opportunity to reduce fuel consumption, lower operating costs, and enhance overall fleet performance.

The right combination of additives can improve combustion efficiency, extend

engine life, reduce maintenance expenses, and significantly cut emissions. For fleet managers striving to balance cost control with environmental responsibility, fuel additives are a strategic investment that can drive both financial and operational benefits.

As transport fuels continue to evolve, Tammy Coates, Global Business Manager for Fuel Additives, and Reg Disley, Global Sales Manager, at SBZ Corporation consider how essential additives will be, and highlight the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

### The role of sustainable liquid fuels and compatibility challenges

Internal combustion engines (ICEs) remain the predominant powertrain technology, with projections estimating nearly two billion still in operation worldwide by 2040.

To align with climate goals, fuels blended with sustainable components, such as biofuels, synthetic alternatives, and e-fuels, are being introduced to the market. While these fuels can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they also present new challenges in terms of fuel stability, combustion properties, and material compatibility.

Currently, UK and European regulations permit up to 10% sustainable liquid fuels to be blended with fossil fuels, with legislative frameworks anticipated to raise this limit further. However, higher proportions of sustainable fuels may introduce technical challenges, including:

- **Material compatibility issues:** Certain biofuels contain oxygenated compounds that can cause degradation of fuel system components, particularly in older engines

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not designed for these blends.

- **Increased deposit formation:** The molecular structure of some sustainable fuels leads to higher soot formation, injector fouling, and combustion chamber deposits, negatively impacting efficiency and emissions.
- **Combustion irregularities:** Bio-derived fuels can have different cetane or octane ratings compared to fossil fuels, affecting ignition delay and combustion stability.
- **Storage stability and oxidation risks:** Sustainable fuels are more prone to oxidation, leading to gum and varnish formation, which can cause filter plugging and corrosion within the fuel system.

“The key challenge is ensuring that as sustainable fuels evolve, they remain compatible with existing and new engine technologies,” notes Reg Disley, Global Sales Manager at SBZ. “Fuel additives will play a critical role in mitigating potential issues, from corrosion protection to maintaining optimal combustion performance.”

### Compatibility with evolving engine technologies

Modern internal combustion engines are adapting to improve efficiency and reduce emissions, often requiring different or fewer fuel additives. Advanced combustion techniques, direct injection systems, and hybrid powertrains necessitate formulations that complement evolving hardware while maximising efficiency.

Fuel additive manufacturers must ensure that their products remain effective in increasingly sophisticated engine designs. This includes developing:

- **Deposit control additives:** To prevent carbon buildup in intake valves, injectors, and combustion chambers, ensuring smooth operation and reducing particulate emissions.
- **Lubricity enhancers:** As ultra-low sulphur fuels become standard, lubricity additives help protect fuel system components from wear, especially in high-pressure common-rail (HPCR) diesel engines.
- **Cold flow improvers:** Necessary for biodiesel blends that have poor low-temperature operability, preventing fuel gelling and filter plugging in colder climates.
- **Detergent additives:** Improving injector cleanliness is crucial for gasoline direct injection (GDI) and diesel engines, which are more prone to carbon buildup.

Tammy highlights the importance of innovation: “Engine technologies are changing rapidly, and additive technology must keep pace. Whether it’s optimising fuel economy, reducing emissions, or enhancing deposit control, performance additives are

more important than ever.”

### Reducing consumption and emissions

One of the most discussed benefits of fuel additives is their role in improving engine efficiency and longevity. Studies indicate that well-additised fuels can contribute to better fuel economy, reduce emissions, and maintain engine cleanliness.

#### Key technical benefits of fuel additives

- **Deposit control:** Regular use of performance fuel additives helps prevent carbon buildup in critical engine components, such as intake valves and injectors. Industry-standard tests, including the DW10B and Inlet Valve Deposit evaluations, have demonstrated that deposit control additives contribute to maintaining optimal engine performance over time.
- **Fuel economy:** Industry data suggests that well-formulated fuel additives can improve fuel efficiency by up to 2%, although real-world results vary based on driving conditions, fuel quality, and vehicle maintenance.
- **Combustion optimisation:** Cetane improvers in diesel fuel and octane boosters in gasoline improve ignition quality, reducing knock and enhancing power output.
- **Long-term maintenance:** Vehicles consistently using unadditised fuel tend to suffer from increased fuel consumption and emissions due to deposit formation. Conversely, regular use of performance additives can prolong engine life and reduce unexpected maintenance costs.

There is plenty of evidence that suggests that a cleaner engine will give improved engine efficiency, lower NOx emissions, and improve fuel economy. Clean engines operate more efficiently by reducing friction losses and ensuring complete combustion, which in turn minimises harmful emissions and optimises fuel utilisation.

By using deposit control additives, vehicles can maintain peak performance while meeting stringent environmental regulations.

### The consumer perspective

For vehicle owners, particularly in an economic climate where maintaining asset value is crucial, fuel quality is a significant factor. Consumers may question whether premium fuels with additives justify their cost, but evidence supports their long-term benefits.

Additive-treated fuels help mitigate the effects of ethanol-induced corrosion in gasoline engines and lubricity loss in diesel fuel. Additionally, improved combustion

efficiency translates to lower CO2 emissions, aligning with regulatory requirements and sustainability goals.

As the transition to lower-carbon fuels progresses, the role of fuel additives in supporting both traditional and new fuel blends will be essential. While electric vehicles and alternative powertrains gain traction, internal combustion engines are expected to persist for decades. Until greener solutions become widely accessible, performance additives will continue to be an indispensable tool for optimising fuel quality and meeting regulatory demands.

### The future of fuel additives

Looking ahead, fuel additive development will need to address a multi-faceted landscape. The industry must adapt to regulatory shifts, evolving fuel formulations, and advances in combustion technology while demonstrating tangible benefits to consumers and businesses alike.

#### Future trends

- **Bio-based and renewable additives:** As sustainability takes centre stage, additives derived from renewable sources will gain importance in reducing environmental impact.
- **Nanotechnology in additives:** Emerging research suggests that nano-additives can enhance combustion efficiency, reduce emissions, and improve lubricant properties.
- **Smart fuel additives:** Adaptive formulations that respond to varying engine loads and fuel compositions will become more prevalent.
- **Hybrid-specific additives:** As hybrid powertrains continue to evolve, specific fuel additives will be developed to optimise performance in engines that operate intermittently.

As Reg Disley aptly summarises, “Fuel additives are not just about enhancing fuel – they are about future-proofing combustion engines against the challenges of a changing energy landscape.”

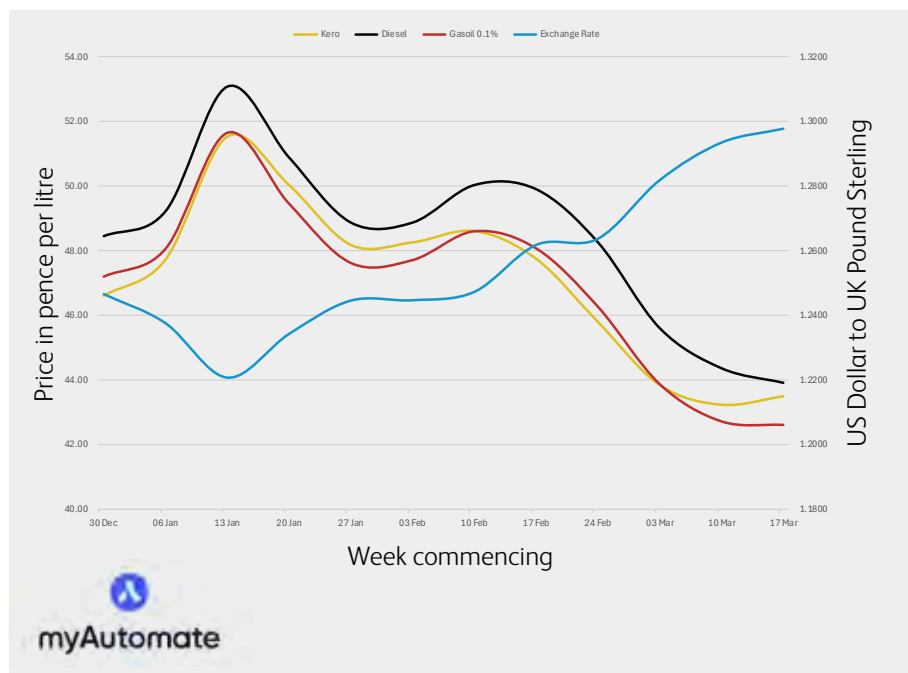
With the rapid transformation in fuel technology and regulatory landscapes, the fuel additive industry must remain proactive, ensuring its solutions align with both short-term and long-term market needs.

*As Global Business Manager for Fuel Additives at SBZ Corporation, Tammy Coates delivers market-driven solutions with expertise, agility, and integrity. With a strong background in sales and business development, she ensures SBZ’s fuel additives meet real-world demands with speed, availability, and effectiveness. Tammy’s customer-first approach drives SBZ’s reputation as a trusted partner in the industry.*

## Wholesale Price Movements: 19th January 2025 – 18th February 2025

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	44.54	46.18	44.45
Average daily change	0.55	0.62	0.55
Current duty	0.00	52.95	10.18
Total	44.54	99.13	54.63

All prices in pence per litre

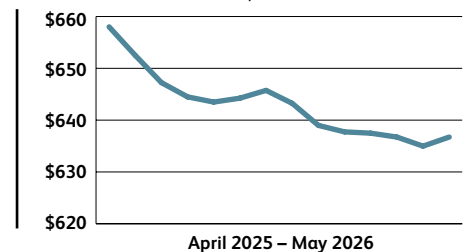


Highest price <b>48.51</b> Thu 20 Feb 25	Biggest up day <b>+0.95</b> Thu 27 Feb 25
<b>Kerosene</b>	
Lowest price <b>42.88</b> Wed 5 Mar 25	Biggest down day <b>-1.47</b> Wed 5 Mar 25

Highest price <b>50.83</b> Thu 20 Feb 25	Biggest up day <b>+1.02</b> Thu 27 Feb 25
<b>Diesel</b>	
Lowest price <b>43.8</b> Tue 18 Mar 25	Biggest down day <b>-1.95</b> Wed 5 Mar 25

Highest price <b>48.82</b> Thu 20 Feb 25	Biggest up day <b>+0.99</b> Thu 27 Feb 25
<b>Gasoil 0.1%</b>	
Lowest price <b>42.26</b> Fri 14 Mar 25	Biggest down day <b>-1.87</b> Wed 5 Mar 25

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	45.85	56.51	101.46	52.27	60.38	105.43
North East	44.80	55.14	100.54	53.71	58.74	103.46
North West	46.37	57.74	102.93	52.55	61.11	105.54
Midlands	44.87	55.67	101.00	50.89	59.22	104.17
South East	44.97	55.63	100.98	57.39	61.81	103.73
South West	45.32	55.47	100.82	53.34	59.01	103.33
N. Ireland	45.43	56.84	n/a	51.36	61.19	n/a
Republic Of Ireland	59.19	62.27	102.40	64.70	65.95	105.64
Portland	43.18	53.19	97.69			

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](http://www.portlandpricing.co.uk)

WELCOME TO APRIL'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.

THIS MONTH WE CHAT WITH **DUNCAN LAMBERT**, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT RIX PETROLEUM LTD.

## "NEVER STAND STILL OTHERWISE YOU WILL BE OVERTAKEN."

**DUNCAN LAMBERT**

### Give your career history in 25 words or fewer.

Trained as a general engineer, fell into sales with Rix, became a Sales Manager, Director, Managing Director and Main Board Director.

### Describe yourself in 3 words.

Loyal. Committed. Conscientious.

### What were your childhood/early ambitions?

Engineering: fixing anything with an engine.

### Describe your dream job (if you weren't doing this).

Formula one pace car driver.

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

Look beyond the bull sh...

### Share your top tips for business success.

Never stand still otherwise you will be overtaken. Surround yourself with good hard-working people. Don't take NO for an answer.

### What's your most recent business achievement?

Continuing to expand the business for the next generation.

### Tell us your greatest fear?

Failure. That's why you should work hard and smart.

### Which is most important – ambition or talent?

Ambition every time, I've seen too many talented lazy people.

### What's the best thing about your job?

Looking after people and developing their future.

### Which is the quality that you most admire?

Honesty.

### What are you most likely to say?

"Are you ok?"

### What are you least likely to say?

"I'm not interested."

### Do you have a favourite sports team?

England Rugby Union.

### Describe your perfect day.

Early start, fire up the classic car and drive off with the boys for breakfast.

### What's the biggest challenge of our time?

Getting a sensible settled government.

### Cheese or chocolate?

Cheese.

### Share your greatest personal achievement.

Pilot's licence.

### What's your pet hate or biggest irritant?

Negative people.

### If you were on Mastermind, what would your specialist subject be?

TVR sports cars.

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

Return of winter fuel payments.

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

That proves anyone can do it.

### What is number 1 on your bucket list?

More European car tours.

### What 3 things would you take to a desert island?

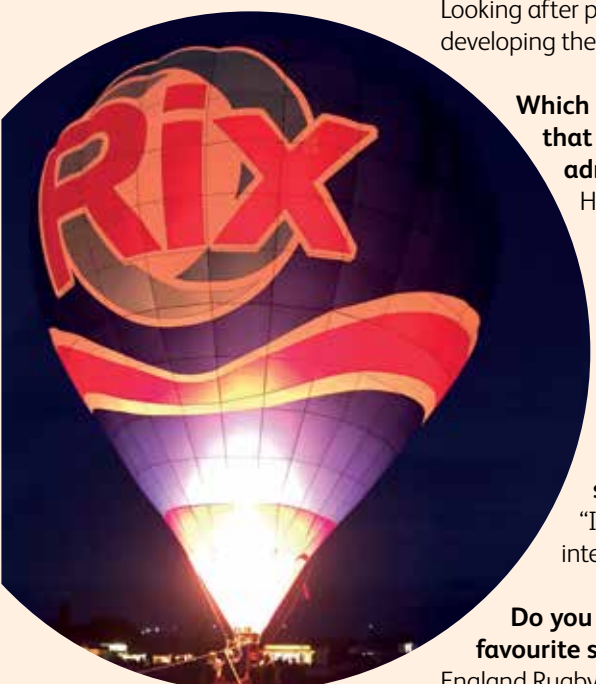
My wife, Guinness, iPhone.

### Tell us something that people would be surprised by.

I only like limited foreign food.

### Who would you most like to ask these questions of?

Robert Stephenson (The Father of Engineering).



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