

# Fuel Oil News

 Incorporating DOWNSTREAM

December 2025



**COMMUNITY AT CHRISTMAS**

DELIVERING INSIGHTS: ONLINE MARKETPLACES

LATEST INDUSTRY DATA



*Wishing all our friends,  
customers and partners  
a Merry Christmas and a  
prosperous new year!*



## A constant in a sea of change

So here it is.... I'm sure I don't need to continue typing to have you all adding 'Merry Christmas' in your heads. But the real question is: Is everyone actually having fun?

Fun has felt in short supply this year. Not just for our own industry, but far beyond it. The challenges I touched on in the final issue of last year, only seem to have gathered pace. Faster consolidation, lower demand, rising costs, squeezed margins, and a supply chain that feels to be just one disruption from the edge. It's no wonder brows have been a little more furrowed and hairs a little greyer this year.

And yet, in the many conversations I have had with those in our dedicated community – especially in recent weeks – the response, without exception, has been one of calm determination. A readiness to meet each obstacle that comes, sort it out and 'get the job done' – because that's what this industry does. It's a mindset that is as impressive as it is familiar.

As the industry continues to juggle progress on innovation and sustainability with the day-to-day of getting energy exactly where it needs to be, we hope Fuel Oil News can remain a steady presence in a shifting landscape.

Our aim is simple: to keep informing, analysing and guiding, so we can support you today as we shape tomorrow together.

For your continued readership, your hard work delivering energy throughout the UK and Ireland, your exceptional commitment to working together and your efforts to shape the industry's future, everyone at Fuel Oil News offers a heartfelt 'thank you'.

And, because it **is** Christmas, we've mixed our industry insights with a generous dash of festive fun. Thank you for your wonderful response to our call for your traditions and jokes.

We hope that, when you at last close the depot doors, turn off your phones and emails and head home for a well-earned break, our Community Christmas pages unfurrow a few brows and elicit a few heartfelt chuckles.

We wish you, and yours, a very merry and healthy Christmas.



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# Fuel Oil News

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

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## On the cover

An image of a tanker in snowy Cotswold countryside created by Cotswold Petroleum with a little topical help from AI. A rose-tinted view of winter fuel distribution perhaps, but the reality of juggling technology and sustainability progress with maintaining core focus is discussed on pages 9 to 11



## In this issue

Delivering Insights on pages 33 – 35 offers an honest review of online marketplaces, while we ride the rollercoaster of life as a distributor on pages 21 & 22. Our festive community special runs through pages 25 - 31 while the latest industry data is shared on pages 16 to 19.





## Celebrating a legacy: WCF's Jo Ritzema retires after years of dedication and service

Jo Ritzema, former Executive Chair and Managing Director at WCF Ltd, has retired after many years in the business. She celebrated her retirement with a big party!

Jo reflected: "My retirement party showcased everything that makes WCF so wonderful, as friends and long-service colleagues came together from across the business to say goodbye.

"The room was full of love and energy as we danced the night away. It was a great evening, with so many thoughtful touches such as a memory globe and, of course, an amazing cake personalised with my future adventures.

"Many of the people in the room had joined WCF as a result of acquisitions I had made and seeing everyone together as one



family made for a very special farewell. Thanks to Phil and his daughter Rebecca for their care and love in organising."

### A long and illustrious career

Phil Murray, Chief Executive Officer WCF, added: "One of our core values is to "celebrate"

our successes, so it was only right and proper that we held an event to celebrate Jo's long and illustrious career at WCF.

"The drinks were flowing; the band brought the energy and there were even a few happy tears shed by a few of us on the night. All-in-all, it was a fantastic and fitting way to thank Jo for her many years of service and wish her well in her retirement."

Fuel Oil News extends its best wishes to Jo on her retirement. Following an extremely well-earned break, Jo has kindly agreed an interview with Fuel Oil News to share reflections on her remarkable career in the downstream fuel sector and give her observations of industry developments over that time. We look forward to featuring our conversation with Jo in a future issue.

## WCF wins prestigious regional business award



Further celebrations for WCF, with the Cumbrian-based fuel distributor named Business of the Year at the 2025 in-Cumbria Business Awards. Held in Carlisle, the awards recognise and celebrate outstanding businesses across Cumbria.

CEO Phil Murray said: "This is such an incredible achievement for the entire team who are continually driving the business forward.

"As a part employee-owned business, our team is at the heart of everything we do, and their ideas and passion ensure that we are a forward-thinking, innovative business which delivers across a diverse range of sectors.

"The in-Cumbria Awards showcase the strength, depth and success of the local business community, and we are proud to have won this award against such tough competition."

WCF is a diverse family of businesses operating in retail, logistics and leisure. It has over 370 employees working across more than 30 locations in the UK including three fuel distribution businesses, WCF Chandlers, Allan Stobart Lubricants & Fuels and WCF Fuels North West.

This latest accolade follows WCF recently achieving a place in the large business category of the 2025 "Great Place to Work UK" list for its sector, identifying the workplace as one of the best in the UK for retail, hospitality and leisure.



## Certas Energy recognised with sustainability award

Certas Energy was announced winner of this year's APEA Environmental Protection and Sustainability Award for its HVO initiatives.

The award, presented at the APEA Live event in Milton Keynes in November, recognises Certas Energy's role in accelerating the availability and adoption of HVO. The company was recognised for its contributions to the Low Carbon Truck Programme with DP World in Southampton as well as for opening the UK's first HVO-only bunker at Tyseley Energy Park in Birmingham.

In the past year alone, Certas Energy has supplied 3.2 million litres of HVO to fuel more than 30,000 HGVs across the UK, demonstrating its commitment to meeting the growing demand for sustainable fuel alternatives.

The company also finished runner-up

for the Best Innovation Award, Best New Fuel Installation Award, and the Health, Safety and Excellence Award.

### Supporting the transition

Bryan Main, Managing Director (Mobility), was among those from Certas Energy accepting the award and he commented: "After finishing as runners-up in three categories last year, we are all so pleased to have gone one step further this year. This award is recognition for the passion, collective efforts and investments we have made as a business to accelerate the access and awareness around HVO.

"As market leaders, Certas Energy will now use this momentum to continue to innovate and support our customers across sectors in their transition to net zero."



## Government launches consultation on alternative heating solutions for off-grid homes

In a pivotal moment for rural heat decarbonisation policy, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has announced a new consultation to explore alternative heating solutions for off-grid homes.

The move represents the most significant step since the Energy Act 2023, in widening the range of technologies being considered for rural and harder-to-treat buildings – an issue that has long been a point of tension between policymakers and industry.

Launching the consultation, titled “Exploring the Role of Alternative Clean Heating Solutions”, DESNZ emphasises the importance of “consumers having a choice of suitable low-carbon heating technology options”.

While the Government continues to view electrification – particularly heat pumps – as the primary pathway for domestic heat decarbonisation, it now explicitly acknowledges that not all homes are suitable for heat pumps or heat networks. As such, it invites information on a range of “alternative electric technologies” as well as emerging options beyond individual hydronic heat pumps.

The consultation sets out a comprehensive review of technologies that could support the decarbonisation of rural and off-grid properties. Crucially, the Government states it “will not propose that any household or business installs a low-carbon option which is not suitable for their property” and confirms that it will review the potential for systems fuelled by solid biomass and renewable liquid fuels as well as hybrid systems, to play a role in rural areas, alongside electric alternatives.

Alongside assessing technology performance, DESNZ is seeking evidence on several key issues including:

- Conversion and running costs
- Property suitability and disruption
- Demand and feedstock constraints for renewable fuels
- Sustainability

The consultation will also consider consumer benefits as well as the circumstances in which renewable liquid fuels may offer the greatest impact.

### Considering the role for obligations

The evidence gathered will also inform any future decisions on support mechanisms or obligations.

Delivering on commitments made when



the Energy Act 2023 received Royal Assent, the consultation also marks the first formal step in exploring the feasibility of a Renewable Liquid Heating Fuel Obligation (RLHFO). DESNZ notes that such an obligation “could play an important role in the future” in accelerating decarbonisation of some off-gas-grid homes but stresses that any decision would depend on secure supplies of sustainable feedstocks as well as ensuring that scarce resources are prioritised appropriately across sectors.

The consultation will consider how an obligation might be implemented, the level of market readiness required, and the alternative possibility of a voluntary arrangement developed in partnership with industry.

While the consultation closes on 10 February 2026, the Government indicates that formal decisions are unlikely until later in the decade – a timeline that has raised concern within those in the rural heat sector.

Industry bodies UKIFDA and OFTEC have welcomed the consultation as a long-awaited milestone, and are encouraging both industry stakeholders and oil-heated households to participate. They reaffirm their commitment to working “constructively with DESNZ to shape off-grid policy that is both achievable and affordable”, while highlighting issues around the accuracy of data included in the consultation and the significant time lag before decisions will be made.

Both organisations stress that renewable liquid fuels offer a practical, low-disruption decarbonisation option for oil-heated homes – one that allows consumers to retain existing boilers while delivering immediate emissions reductions.

Noting the industry-led Kehelland village trial in Cornwall in the consultation document, the Government acknowledges the role the industry has played, welcoming “steps being

taken by the liquid heating fuel industry to decarbonise applications using LPG and kerosene heating oil”, as well as “the readiness of industry to share insights from industry-led research and analysis”.

As a result of the three-season industry demonstration project, the trade associations confirm that the industry is “ready today to deploy at speed”, warning that delays in policy clarity could hold back investment and slow progress towards net zero. They also caution that some of the consultation’s assumptions – particularly around boiler conversion and running costs – require closer examination to ensure they reflect real-world experience.

As DESNZ gathers evidence on a broader suite of technologies, this consultation marks a significant opportunity for rural communities, manufacturers and fuel suppliers to help shape the next phase of off-grid decarbonisation policy.

### A call to engage

Paul Rose, CEO of OFTEC, and Ken Cronin, CEO of UKIFDA, commented: “We urge everyone in the industry to engage in the consultation to ensure the widest range of evidence is considered. OFTEC and UKIFDA are ready to work constructively with DESNZ to shape an off-grid policy that is both achievable and affordable.”

While the Government remains firmly committed to an electrification-first strategy, its recognition that alternative solutions will be needed for a number of hard-to-treat homes represents a meaningful shift. With final decisions unlikely until later this decade, robust engagement now will be vital to ensuring that future policy is practical, affordable and capable of delivering rapid emissions reductions without placing undue pressure on rural consumers.



## Fuelling confidence: Why infrastructure readiness matters more than ever

IN LIGHT OF THE TURBULENCE CREATED BY RECENT SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS – MOST NOTABLY THE CLOSURE OF LINDSEY OIL REFINERY – FUEL OIL NEWS INVITED INDUSTRY LEADERS TO SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS MEAN FOR THE RESILIENCE OF THE UK FUEL SECTOR. IN THE FOLLOWING PIECE, ARVAN RUIA, CEO OF EET RETAIL, EXAMINES HOW INFRASTRUCTURE READINESS, STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AND PARTNERSHIP-LED SUPPLY MODELS ARE SHAPING THE INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE TO TIGHTENING DOMESTIC CAPACITY AND RISING DEMAND PRESSURES.

The recent closure of Prax's Lindsey Oil Refinery has reignited critical conversations about the resilience of the UK's fuel supply chain. Any reduction in domestic refining capacity naturally raises concerns and underscores the importance of robust infrastructure and agile response strategies within our sector.

Fuel availability is not just a convenience – it is a lifeline for economic activity and daily life. When a major refinery closes, the ripple effects can be significant: transport networks, retail forecourts, and essential services all depend on uninterrupted supply. This reality makes infrastructure readiness more than a technical requirement; it is a strategic imperative for the entire energy ecosystem.

At Essar Energy Transition (EET) Fuels, the impact of Lindsey's closure was immediate. As news broke, urgent supply requests poured in from public transport operators, commercial fleets, hypermarkets, and independent retailers – all seeking reassurance that their supply chains would remain secure. The ability to respond quickly and decisively was not a matter of chance. It was the result of deliberate planning and investment.

### Building resilience through investment

Earlier this year, EET Fuels completed a \$130 million investment in Stanlow Refinery. This was not simply about increasing output; it

was about embedding flexibility and resilience into operations. The investment enabled logistics capacity to scale up, expanded the fleet by 30%, and streamlined terminal loading processes to handle higher throughput efficiently.

Our national terminal network – including Kingsbury, Oikos, Grangemouth, and Northampton – provided coverage across the UK, ensuring that even remote regions could be served without disruption. This infrastructure backbone allowed the business to absorb sudden demand spikes and maintain continuity for customers when uncertainty was at its peak.

### Resilience beyond infrastructure

Physical assets alone do not guarantee resilience. Relationships and commercial agility play an equally critical role. During this period, flexible commercial terms were introduced to support customers under financial pressure – competitive pricing, extended credit lines, and tailored supply agreements that provided stability when it mattered most. These measures eased uncertainty and gave partners the breathing room they needed to stay steady in challenging conditions.

The recent agreement with Harvest Energy (Dealerships) Limited further demonstrates this commitment. Through EET Retail, fuel delivery

responsibilities have been taken on for around 47 dealer-owned, dealer-operated forecourts across the UK. This strategic move strengthens Harvest network, ensuring uninterrupted supply and leasing opportunities at a time of heightened uncertainty.

As one of only four UK refineries manufacturing and delivering fuel to forecourts, EET offers strategically located supply hubs – Stanlow and terminals in Kingsbury, Northampton, Essex, and Grangemouth. This agreement marks a significant step in EET Retail's long-term, partnership-led strategy to expand its national footprint and become the UK's retailer of choice.

### What made the difference

- Increased output and capacity at Stanlow to meet rising demand
- Expanded fleet operations and improved terminal loading efficiency
- Flexible supply agreements and competitive pricing
- Support for essential services, including public transport and major retailers
- Nationwide terminal coverage to ensure uninterrupted supply
- Extended credit lines to help customers manage working capital pressures

These proactive steps reinforced confidence in the sector's ability to adapt under pressure.

### Looking ahead

The Lindsey closure has prompted a wider reassessment of supply chain strategies. Businesses are seeking to diversify sourcing, reduce exposure to single points of failure, and build stronger partnerships with suppliers who offer reliability and adaptability.

This is part of a broader evolution in UK refining. While the number of operational refineries has declined, the industry has responded with strategic investments in import terminals, expanded storage capacity, and new technologies. For EET Fuels, this is a moment to double down – not just to meet today's needs, but to future-proof operations.

The closure of Lindsey may mark a turning point, and it highlights the strength and determination of the UK's fuel sector – backed by industrial-scale infrastructure, strong partnerships, and a forward-looking mindset.

At EET Retail, the commitment is clear: to deliver resilience, reliability, and innovation. In times of uncertainty, confidence is everything – and that confidence will come from knowing the supply chain is secure, the infrastructure is ready, and the partnerships are strong.





Wishing all our valued customers & suppliers  
a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year



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### Barton Petroleum: Announces Leicester City FC partnership

Northamptonshire-based fuel distributor, Barton Petroleum Ltd, has announced a new partnership with Leicester City Football Club, joining the club's Community Partnership Programme.

Lawrence Burton, Director, shared his enthusiasm: "Supporting the communities we serve has always been at the heart of our business. We're thrilled that our Leicester Depot has partnered with its local club, Leicester City FC, and the Leicester City Community Partnership."

### An exciting milestone

As a family-run business with a strong community focus, Barton Petroleum sees this collaboration as a natural next step. "This partnership represents an exciting milestone for Barton Petroleum," Lawrence continued. "It connects our long-established business with one of the region's most respected and community-driven football clubs."

"For over 50 years, we've proudly delivered fuel to homes, farms, and businesses across the Midlands. Partnering with LCFC – a club with deep local roots and incredible community reach – allows us to give back even more, supporting local projects and celebrating everything that makes Leicester such a vibrant place to live and work."

Tim Croughwell, Leicester Depot Manager, added: "We're delighted to stand alongside a club that shares our values of teamwork, dedication, and local pride. Together, we look forward to making a meaningful difference both on and off the pitch."



### Craggs Energy Group: Celebrating 15 years of Simon Turner "making a lasting impact"

Craggs Energy Group recently celebrated an incredible milestone – 15 years of group service for Tank Services Manager Simon Turner.

Simon began his journey at another Craggs Energy Group company, Moorland Fuels, before joining the TankTopper team earlier this year, where they say "his positivity, enthusiasm, and trademark smile brighten every day in the office".

Announcing the impressive anniversary, the company commented: "Throughout his time with the business, Simon has been instrumental in the growth of Moorland Fuels, and in more recent years, Craggs Energy and TankTopper too. He has seen firsthand, the group's growth and evolution into the success it is today, and takes great pride in seeing the whole team share in that success since becoming an Employee Ownership Trust in 2022."

"Over the past 15 years, Simon has built strong connections and lasting friendships, often describing the company as his "second family." His willingness to help out wherever needed, along with his genuine commitment to supporting others, has made a lasting impact across the organisation."

Proudly celebrating his milestone, the group toasted Simon for his continued hard work, positivity, and passion saying: "Here's to the next 15 years!" *Congratulations Simon!*



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# Cotswold Petroleum: 10 years of reliable fuel supplies

COTSWOLD PETROLEUM IS AN INDEPENDENT, FAMILY-OWNED FUEL DISTRIBUTION COMPANY BASED IN SPRINGHILL, JUST OUTSIDE MORETON-IN-MARSH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE. THIS YEAR MARKS THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BUSINESS. ESTABLISHED IN 2015, COTSWOLD PETROLEUM BEGAN AS A PARTNER COMPANY TO BARTON PETROLEUM.

**CLAUDIA WEEKS**, COMMUNITY CONTENT LEAD FOR FUEL OIL NEWS, SPOKE WITH **OLIVER BURTON**, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE BUSINESS, HOW THE LAST TEN YEARS HAVE BEEN AND WHAT THEY HAVE PLANNED FOR CHRISTMAS!



## A family-run business

Fuel Oil News wishes Oliver and the team at Cotswold Petroleum, a very happy tenth anniversary in business! Claudia asked Oliver to share how the business has changed and developed over the last decade:

"Thank you," Oliver began. "It's been an incredible journey reaching our tenth anniversary at Cotswold Petroleum. When we launched the business, our primary goal was to provide reliable fuel solutions to our local community, and I'm proud to say we've stayed true to that mission."

"Over the past decade, Cotswold Petroleum has undergone significant transformations. Initially, we focused on establishing our presence in the local market, building relationships with customers, and understanding their needs. As we grew, we expanded our offerings to include a wider range of fuel products and services, always prioritising quality and customer satisfaction."

"Today, Cotswold Petroleum is not just a fuel supplier; we're a trusted partner in our community, known for our reliability and customer-centric approach. We've embraced new technologies and sustainable practices, ensuring we're not only meeting the needs of our customers today but also contributing to a greener future. It's been a rewarding journey, and we're excited about what the next decade holds!"

## Business values

"I would like Cotswold Petroleum to be associated with values such as reliability, integrity, and community commitment," shared Oliver when asked about their business principles.

- 1. Reliability:** We aim to be the go-to fuel supplier that customers can count on for timely deliveries and consistent service.
- 2. Integrity:** Transparency and honesty are paramount in our dealings, whether with customers, suppliers, or employees. Building trust is essential for long-term relationships.
- 3. Community Commitment:** We strive to positively impact the local community through support for local initiatives, events, and charities.
- 4. Sustainability:** As we look to the future, promoting sustainable practices in fuel distribution and exploring greener alternatives is vital.
- 5. Customer Focus:** Understanding and responding to our customers' unique needs is at the heart of what we do. We value their feedback and continuously seek ways to enhance their experience.

"These values encapsulate what we stand for and guide our actions as we grow and evolve in the industry."

## Location, location, location

Being based in the Cotswolds offers a unique blend of beautiful landscapes, a strong community, and a supportive local economy,” Oliver continued.

“The region is a wonderful place to work. We take pride in being part of this vibrant community, contributing to its growth through our strong relationships with customers and partners.

“Since 2015, our Moreton-in-Marsh Depot has seen significant growth and improvements. Initially, we started with a modest fleet of three tankers. Over the years, as our operations expanded and demand increased, we’ve invested in our logistics and infrastructure, leading to a current fleet of around nine tankers.

“This expansion has allowed us to enhance our delivery capabilities, improve efficiency, and better serve our customers in the region. Additionally, we’ve implemented new technologies for tracking and managing our fleet to ensure timely and reliable service.

“In terms of future expansion, we’re always open to exploring new opportunities. While we have a strong focus on serving the Cotswolds and surrounding areas, we recognise that there might be demand in other regions.

“Any expansion would be approached strategically to ensure we maintain the quality of service our customers expect.”

## A rural community

It’s clear that Oliver and the team are proud to be a part of the local Cotswold community: “Being part of the rural community in the Cotswolds means a lot to us at Cotswold Petroleum.

“The sense of belonging and connection with our neighbours and customers is incredibly rewarding. We take pride in supporting local events, such as the Moreton Show, which showcases the agricultural heritage and vibrant culture of the area.

“Our involvement in the community allows us to contribute to local initiatives and support local businesses, fostering a spirit of collaboration. It also gives us the opportunity to engage with residents, understand their needs, and ensure our services align with the community values.

“Ultimately, being part of the Cotswold community reinforces our commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices, ensuring we give back to the place we call home.”

## The customer

Oliver explained what makes a customer choose Cotswold Petroleum as their main supplier:

- 1. Local Expertise:** Being based in the Cotswolds, we have a deep understanding of the region and its specific needs. This local knowledge allows us to provide tailored solutions and timely service.
- 2. Reliability:** We pride ourselves on our dependable delivery service. Our customers know they can count on us to meet their fuel needs consistently and efficiently.
- 3. Customer Service:** Prioritising strong relationships with our customers. We take the time to listen to their concerns and ensure their satisfaction, which fosters loyalty.
- 4. Quality Products:** We offer high-quality fuels and services, ensuring our customers receive the best products available.
- 5. Community Commitment:** Our active involvement in the local community resonates with customers who value supporting businesses that care about their surroundings and contribute positively to the area.

“These factors combine to create a strong reputation and trust, encouraging customers to choose us as their preferred fuel supplier.”



## The team

Cotswold Petroleum is a proudly family-run business with Richard Burton as its Founder and Chairman, Lawrence Burton as Director and Oliver Burton as Commercial Director.

Oliver reflected on the impact it makes to the business: “Together, we strive to maintain a family-oriented approach while also focusing on professional growth and customer satisfaction. This family dynamic helps us create a supportive work environment and fosters a strong connection with our community. The company also works as a family.

“When Cotswold Petroleum was founded in 2015, we started with a small team of five dedicated staff members. Since then, the company has grown significantly, and we now have a team of around twelve employees. This growth reflects our commitment to expanding our operations and providing excellent service to our customers in the region.

Claudia asked Oliver some quick questions about his colleagues from the past ten years...

- Who’s been the funniest person you’ve worked with, and what made them so entertaining?  
Dan Allen is always telling a joke but is still continually reliable, professional and joyful. A great asset to the company.
- Can you think of someone whose ideas always stood out? What made their thinking different?  
Ollie Watson-Bryant, throws suggestions in on improvements in all aspects of the business.
- Has anyone ever really surprised you, maybe with a hidden talent or unexpected skill?  
Leon Ballard used to be a scratch golfer.
- Who’s someone you’ll always remember working with, and why did they leave such a mark?  
Rob Johnson who is incredibly dedicated, hardworking and focussed – a fantastic manager. Charlie Johnson, Rob’s son, is following in his father’s footsteps. Charlie brings fresh ideas and a modern perspective to the team. His eagerness to learn and contribute makes him an asset, and it’s exciting to see how he will shape the future of the company.



### The most enjoyable part of the industry

“What I’ve enjoyed most about operating in fuel distribution is the dynamic nature of the industry and the relationships we’ve built along the way,” revealed Oliver.

“Each day presents new challenges and opportunities, whether it’s optimising logistics, expanding our services, or adapting to market changes. I also take great satisfaction in knowing that we play a vital role in supporting local businesses and communities.

“Providing reliable fuel services helps keep everything running smoothly, from farms to shops. The appreciation we receive from our customer is incredibly rewarding.”

### The proudest accomplishment

“My proudest accomplishment in the business, has been witnessing the growth and transformation of Cotswold Petroleum from a small startup to a well-respected fuel supplier in the region. Building a reliable team and fostering a strong company culture has been incredibly rewarding.

“Additionally, establishing lasting relationships with our customers and becoming a trusted partner in the community stands out as a significant achievement. Knowing that we’ve made a positive impact on local businesses and residents is something I take great pride in.”

### The best industry advice

Claudia asked Oliver to share what the best piece of advice was that he has received in the industry. “It was ‘to embrace change and be adaptable’. The market is constantly evolving due to technological advancements, customer preferences and changes of law – to name a few. Staying flexible and open to new ideas allows us to pivot quickly when necessary, ensuring we remain competitive and relevant.

“I was also advised to focus on building strong relationships with both customers and suppliers. Trust and communication are essential in distribution, as they foster collaboration and lead to better problem-solving and innovation. This approach not only enhances our service but also creates a supportive network that can weather challenges together.”

### Festive fun

Fuel Oil News couldn’t resist the opportunity to ask Oliver some festive questions for this December issue:

- What’s your favourite Christmas film?  
Polar Express.
- What’s your best Christmas joke?  
What did the snowman say to the aggressive carrot?  
“Get out of my face!”
- What’s your favourite Christmas song?  
2000 Miles, Pretenders.
- What will you be eating on Christmas Day?  
Copious amounts of turkey and chocolate.

### What does the future hold?

Claudia asked Oliver what the plans are for the business as it moves forward and prepares for the next decade in the industry. “Our vision for Cotswold Petroleum is to become a leader in sustainable fuel distribution while maintaining our commitment to exceptional customer service.

Over the next ten years, we aim to achieve the following:

- 1. Sustainability Focus:** We plan to invest in and transition towards greener energy solutions, including biofuels and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. By reducing our carbon footprint, we can contribute positively to the environment and meet the growing demand for sustainable energy sources.



Ollie the Elf with a Cotswold Petroleum tanker

#### 2. Technological Innovation:

Embracing technology will be key. We envision implementing advanced logistics and inventory management systems to enhance efficiency and accuracy in our operations. Additionally, adopting data analytics will help us better understand customer needs and optimise our services.

#### 3. Customer-Centric Approach:

We aim to deepen our relationships with customers by offering personalised services and loyalty programs that truly reflect their needs. Regular feedback loops will ensure we are consistently improving and adapting to their requirements.

#### 4. Community Engagement:

As we grow, we will continue to strengthen our ties with the local community through partnerships and charitable initiatives. Our goal is to be recognised not just as a fuel provider, but as a valued community partner.

#### 5. Expansion:

We see potential for growth in new markets, both geographically and through new service offerings. Exploring strategic partnerships and acquisitions will be part of our strategy to expand our reach and capabilities.

“By focusing on these areas, Cotswold Petroleum, under Barton Petroleum, will not only enhance its position in the market but also ensure a sustainable, customer-focused future that aligns with the evolving energy landscape.”

A huge congratulations to the whole team at Cotswold Petroleum on their anniversary. We can’t wait to hear what the next 10 years holds for the business!

# A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Cheyenne Lolley

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 **CHEYENNE LOLLEY**, SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE FOR HALSO AND EL OILS, TO FIND OUT HOW CHEYENNE SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.



**MY ALARM GOES OFF AT...** 7am.

**THE FIRST THING I DO IS...** brush my teeth.

**I PREPARE FOR THE DAY AHEAD BY...** doing my morning skincare and having a cup of tea.

**I CAN'T LEAVE THE HOUSE WITHOUT...** giving my dog a goodbye cuddle!

**MY TYPICAL DAY** – The first thing I do when I get into the office is grab a cup of tea and clock in for the day. I then load up my emails and work through them; these could range from quoting customers for any products they may need, to placing the orders for customers.

Next, I move onto EL Oils orders from the previous day; I will take the orders off schedule and confirm they have been delivered, checking all paperwork is signed and dated, and double checking the prices are correct, before confirming the orders so they can be sent off for invoicing.

We would have had several calls already, so I will be answering those as I go, helping our customers with whatever they may need; this could be placing orders over the phone, getting specific ETAs for deliveries, helping customers with payments etc. I will then have a look at our third-party orders, checking the portal to see if they have been delivered, and then booking in our carriage charges to confirm the orders for invoicing.

Some days differ slightly. On a Tuesday morning, one of our sales reps for EL Oils will come into the office to catch up with me to make sure everything is in check; we will check all orders are priced correctly and scheduled for when they should be and discuss any products that may be on order. On other days of the week, we would have several phone calls throughout the day to go over these things too.

After my morning admin tasks are completed, I will start making a list of potential customers. The next part of my day will consist of calling through these customers introducing us as a company and quoting them for any oils or lubricants they may need.

It's then time for lunch – I try to have something healthy most



Cheyenne in the office



Cheyenne at the depot

days, but we often have a treat on a Friday! I tend to eat the same thing every day until I get bored and then move on to something different.

After lunch, I go back to my inbox to reply to the latest emails and put any new orders in that have come through. Now it is time to do the scheduling for EL Oils for the following day. Either my colleague or I will put this onto the system, but we will both look at this to ensure orders that need to be scheduled are done so. A driver's sheet will then be printed so the schedule can be given to the driver, and a loading authority is sent to everybody in EL Oils, so we are all up to date with what is scheduled for that day.

After this, I will spend the remainder of the afternoon replying to any emails that come through, answering the many phone calls to help our customers and looking for future customers!

**MY MOST MEMORABLE WORK MOMENT...** would be doing the Staffordshire County Show. It was such a great event to participate in, and I really enjoyed connecting with customers face-to-face.

It was good to be able to chat with them in person and go through products they may not have known we can supply. It was my first time going this year, and although they were longer days than my usual working day, it was so much fun!

We were kept so busy with getting orders and making up our goody bags – everyone absolutely loved them. I felt very privileged that I had the chance to have 1 (maybe 3) of our very popular pork pies!

**THE WORST PART OF MY JOB...** I'm not able to get many steps in so I must catch up after work.

**THE BEST PART OF MY JOB...** is that I have a variety of different things to focus on, so every day is different. I also love working with such a friendly and understanding team – it makes every day so much better

**I RELAX AFTER WORK BY...** having a hot shower and eating a delicious meal.

**MY FAVOURITE MEAL IS...** my evening meal – I think about it all day!



**ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE IS...** my Stanley cup filled with ice-cold water.

**THE LAST THING I DO EACH DAY IS...** set my alarm for the morning.

**I'M NORMALLY IN BED BY...** 10pm.

We couldn't resist asking Cheyenne some extra festive questions this December...

**Your favourite Christmas joke?** What happens if you eat a Christmas decoration? You get tinselitis!

**Your favourite Christmas song?** All I want for Christmas is you – you know it's Christmas when this starts playing!

**What will you be eating on Christmas Day?** A big Christmas dinner with all the trimmings and lots of chocolates!

**Your favourite Christmas film?** Love Actually – I watch it all year round.

**Snow lover or snow hater?** I'm a snow lover – as long as I don't have to drive in it!

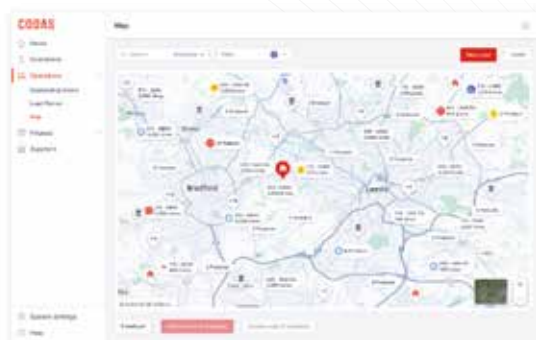


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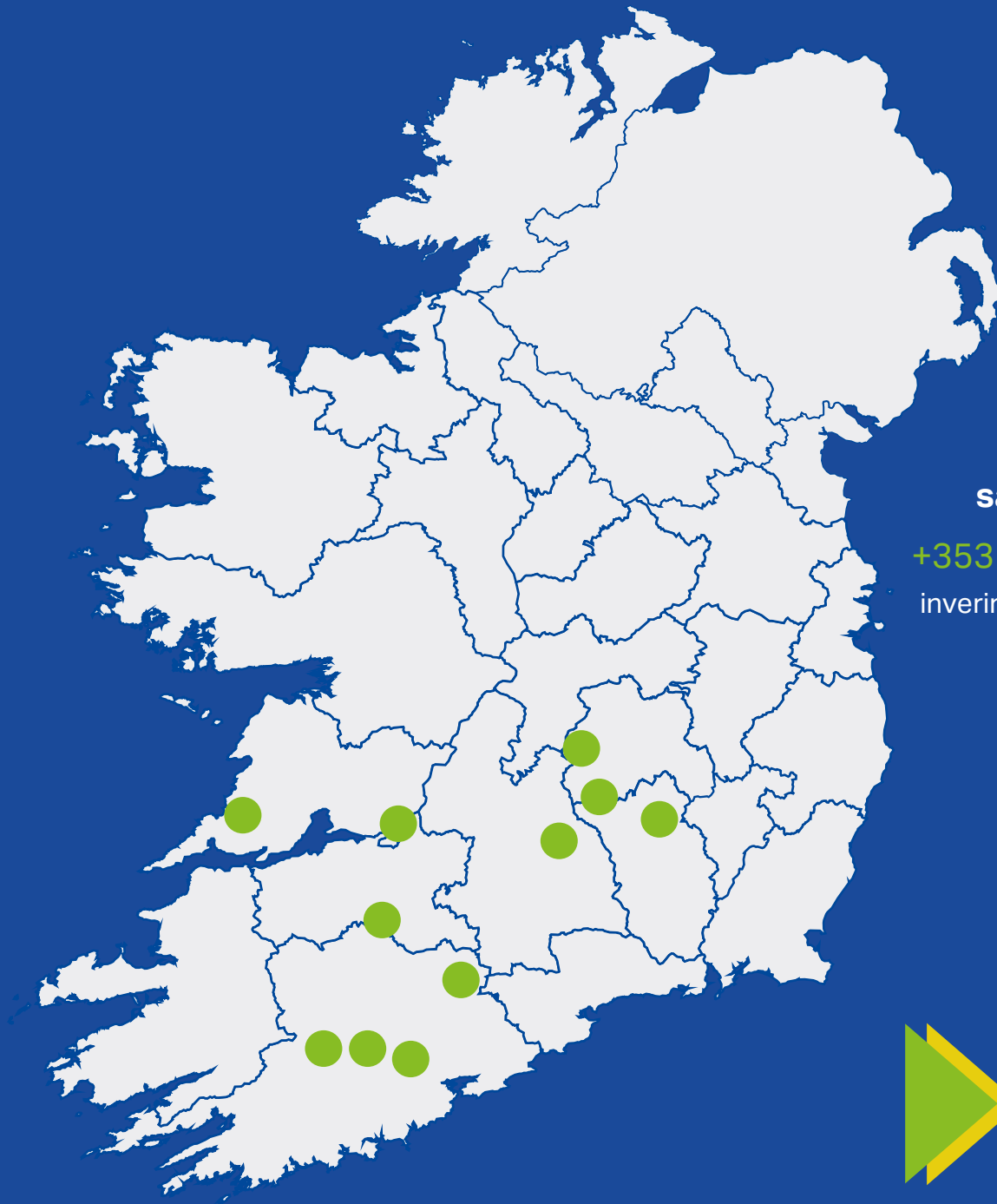
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## A Letter to Santa!

AS I SIT IN THE LOBBY OF A MANCHESTER HOTEL, I FIND MYSELF MARVELLING AT THE CHRISTMAS TREE GOING UP IN THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER. YES, I FEEL A BIT LIKE A GRUMPY OLD MAN, BUT REALLY – THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER?

Still, even I can't deny that there's something magical about the twinkling fairy lights and the scent of pine that softens the seasonal cynicism.

Reflecting on this festive edition, my thoughts turn to my new granddaughter. This year has been unpredictable and challenging, and perhaps it's time to pen a letter to Santa, who just might offer some much-needed help.

Dear Santa,

**Alongside the good cheer – bring meaningful support for rural communities facing rising living costs.**

We know your sleigh runs on magic, Santa, but down here, things are a little more complicated. The Databank in this edition shows a significant drop in UK fuel sales over the summer and early autumn, even as prices returned to more typical patterns. While milder weather has played a role, the larger issue is that ordinary people are struggling. Total domestic energy consumption in Q2 was 15% lower than the same period last year – the lowest this century.

As I write ahead of the budget, the Chancellor has signalled support on the cost of living, and there's speculation that VAT may be removed from electricity but not heating oil. This presents a tough reality for our customers, many of whom live in pre-1919 homes that are notoriously difficult to heat. These households face higher costs simply because of where they live, compounded by limited public transport and patchy electricity infrastructure. They deserve equal consideration.

In Ireland, the story's much the same. Gas and electricity benefit from a lower VAT rate. There's no justification for this disparity.

**With good tidings – bring pragmatic, cost-effective rural decarbonisation policies that rural communities can truly welcome.**

Rural communities are too often overlooked in policymaking. The previous government proposed banning boiler replacements for oil-heated homes, which would have forced households to install heat pumps, while ignoring the real challenges, such



**“THERE'S SOMETHING MAGICAL ABOUT THE TWINKLING FAIRY LIGHTS AND THE SCENT OF PINE.”**

as the enormous upfront cost (over £20,000) and the lack of guaranteed ongoing savings.

It's encouraging to see the current government remove some of these issues in their recent Carbon Delivery Plan. However, there is still a real reluctance to acknowledge that rural homes are different and that a one-size-fits-all low-carbon solution won't work or be welcomed by these communities.

Our industry has provided the Government with a practical, ready-to-implement roadmap centred around choice in rural decarbonisation. At its core is a proposal to support oil-heated households in switching to cleaner, renewable fuels. A solution successfully demonstrated in rural homes across the country and increasingly adopted in the transport sector. This approach can be executed quickly and affordably by the 20,000 skilled professionals in our sector, without necessitating the removal of existing boilers or imposing just one solution.

Above all, the Government must prioritise listening to and delivering for rural communities.

In Ireland, the government has begun this process, but it needs to go further. The new

Renewable Heat Obligation is a step forward, but current levels make investment hard to justify. A small adjustment could unlock real progress.

So, Santa, if you've got a little policy magic in your sack, now's the time to sprinkle it.

**Instead of the Figgy Pudding – bring us a smarter, more resilient energy future.**

This year has seen the closures of Grangemouth and Dalston, as well as the liquidation of Lindsey Oil Refinery and associated terminals. As an industry, we have shown remarkable resilience over recent years, successfully handling and mitigating numerous challenges, but perhaps this success has created a false sense of security. The reality is that the UK's supply situation is stretched, if not beyond its limits.

There is a clear need for a form of central oversight, akin to what exists for gas and electricity, that balances and accommodates supply constraints. We're not calling for regulation, but rather for coordination. A central hub that integrates weather forecasts, port conditions, refinery status and demand projections could provide the vital early warning necessary to address supply challenges. This is not just a stocking filler – it's a system safeguard.

**And Santa, let's not forget the dedicated people who keep the fuel flowing.**

To the drivers, depot teams, technicians, trainers and customer support staff across our industry who brave the toughest conditions to keep homes warm – these are the unsung heroes of winter. If anyone deserves a mince pie and a thank-you note, it's them!

**Please, Santa, visit the villages, the hamlets, the crofts – not just the towns.**

Lastly, a sincere thank you to Dawn, Jon, June, Katie, Caroline and Sharon for their tireless work at UKIFDA this year. You've all earned a place on the nice list.

Merry Christmas to all.  
**Ken**

# UKIFDA databank: the latest industry data updated

IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE WAY GOVERNMENT DATA IS COLLECTED AND HOW IT IS ANALYSED AND PUBLISHED.

THIS EDITION OF THE DATABANK BRINGS TOGETHER THIS NEW ANALYSIS WITH PARTICULAR CONCENTRATION ON THE DATA UP TO AND INCLUDING, AUGUST 2025 (AUGUST FIGURES ARE PROVISIONAL), BUT ALSO PROVIDES SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING DOMESTIC/NON-DOMESTIC SPLITS TO THE END OF JUNE 2025. 2019 CONTINUES TO BE TREATED AS THE BENCHMARK YEAR AHEAD OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE INVASION OF UKRAINE.

WHERE COMMENTS ARE MADE REGARDING COMPARATIVE DIFFERENCES, THEY ARE UKIFDA COMMENTS BORNE FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH THIRD PARTIES. PRIOR YEAR DATA HAS BEEN UPDATED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND MAY, THEREFORE, DIFFER FROM PREVIOUS UKIFDA REPORTS.

## 1. Overall commentary on energy consumption

Total final energy consumption (excluding non-energy use) was 2.6 per cent lower compared to the second quarter of 2024. Domestic consumption fell by 15 per cent to the lowest level recorded for the second quarter this century, due in part, to record warm temperatures. Other final users (mainly from the service sector) consumption fell by 4.5 per cent, industrial consumption fell by 4.4 per cent, whilst transport consumption rose by 3.9 per cent.

In the three months to August 2025, total deliveries of petroleum products were down by 1.5 per cent (200 thousand tonnes) on the same period in 2024. This decrease was largely driven by decline in demand for butane and propane (Liquid Petroleum Gas or LPG), burning oil, road diesel and gas oil, all seeing decreases of 100 thousand tonnes or more. These decreases were counterbalanced by an increase of 6.5 per cent in deliveries of petrol.

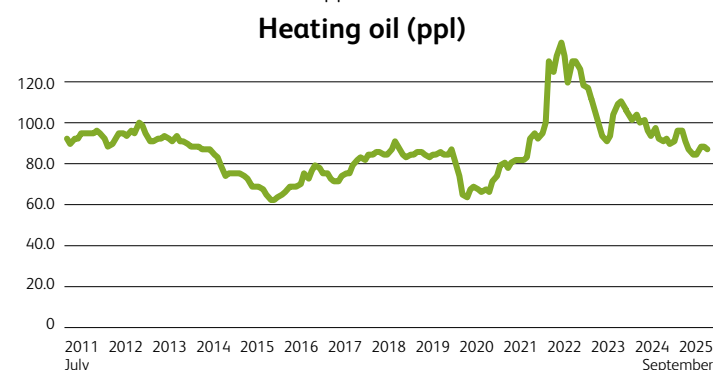
## 2. Factors Influencing Sales

### 2.1 Temperature and heating days

September 2025	June–August 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average daily temperature: 14.0°C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.2°C higher than September 2024</li> <li>0.2°C lower than the long-term mean</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average temperature: 17.6°C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.8°C higher than the same period in 2024</li> <li>Warmest June–August period recorded in the 21st century</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average number of Heating Degree Days (HDD): 1.9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average number of Heating Degree Days (HDD): 0.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0.6 lower than the same period in 2024</li> <li>Lowest HDD for this period since 2003</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 2.2 Heating oil energy prices

Heating oil prices have stabilised in recent months. The current price is within the historic band of 40-60ppl.



The price for liquid fuels between quarter 1 and quarter 2 2025, decreased 16.1 per cent and in quarter 2 2025, it was 22.2 per cent lower than the price in quarter 2 2024.

## 2.3 All petroleum prices

Comparing quarter 2 2025 with quarter 2 2024, prices paid for domestic fuels (in real terms and including VAT) increased by 2.6 per cent. With the price paid for electricity increasing by 0.5 per cent and gas increasing 7.8 per cent.

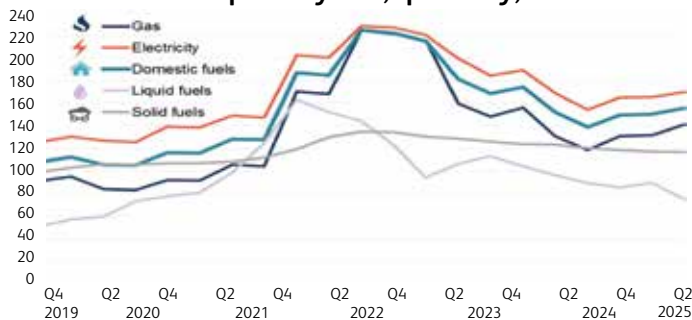
In mid-September 2025, a litre of petrol (ULSP) was on average 133.8 pence per litre. This was 1.9 per cent lower than the same period in 2024. Petrol prices reached a peak in July 2022, of 188.8 pence per litre; the most recent prices are 29 per cent lower than this peak.

The diesel (ULSD) price was 141.6 pence per litre in mid-September 2025. This was a 0.1 per cent increase from the same period in 2024, and a 28 per cent decrease from the peak of 197.4 pence per litre in July 2022.





## Real terms energy price indices in the domestic sector over the past 5 years, quarterly, UK



The data above uses OFGEM's typical gas consumption for a 4-bedroom home of 17000kWh and converts the usage into heating oil consumption and electricity consumption using an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) using various assumptions:

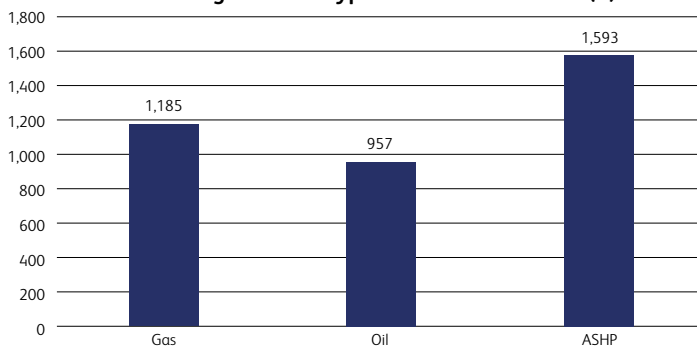
- Gas and oil boiler efficiency is assumed to be similar at 90%
- ASHP coefficient of performance of 2.8, taken from the Governments' electrification of heat project

Prices are taken from government or OFGEM sources for July 2025

- Kerosene: 57.42ppl
- Gas: 6.33p/kWh & 29.82p/day standing charge
- Electricity: 25.73p/kWh & 51.37p/day standing charge

## 3 UKIFDA Price Checker

UKIFDA Price Checker – July 2025  
Heat running cost of a typical 4 bedroom home (£)



## 4. Heating oil sales

### 4.1 Total heating oil sales to end August

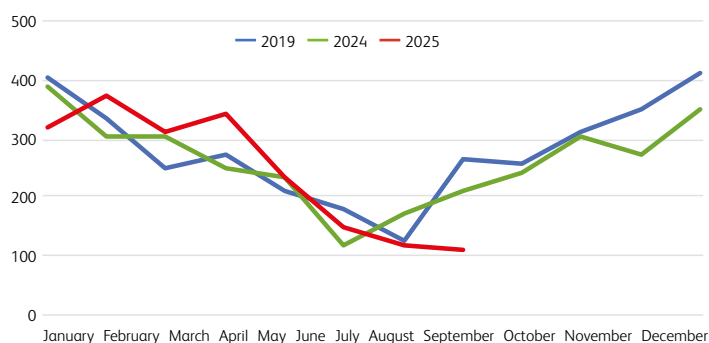
Total heating oil sales (Domestic and non-domestic) Thousand tonnes	2019	2024	2025	2025 vs 2019	2025 vs 2024
Jan-Mar	983	992	1,002	2%	1%
Mar-June	653	591	721	11%	22%
July	119	166	111	-6%	-33%
August	263	208	105	-60%	-49%
<b>Total year to date</b>	<b>2,017</b>	<b>1,956</b>	<b>1,940</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-1%</b>





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## Overall kerosene consumption 2019-2025



Total kerosene sales (domestic and non-domestic) in 2024 were the strongest since 2021, and 3% ahead of 2023, but 8% below 2019, and were partially explained by a strong summer (July to September). This position reversed in the summer of 2025, when demand fell significantly.

### 4.2 Heating oil split domestic/non-domestic to June 2025

During 2024, the government launched a new process for gathering data which included polling more distributors for information regarding the split between domestic and non-domestic heating oil consumption and creating stronger ties to HMRC data. This resulted in a change in the previously published figures back to 2009. The published data for the first half of 2025, compared to the previous years, demonstrates a relatively stable domestic percentage share.

Half year (thousand tonnes)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Domestic	1,117	1,128	1,144	731	856	847	919
Non-domestic	512	990	804	626	687	736	804
<b>Total sales</b>	<b>1,629</b>	<b>2,118</b>	<b>1,949</b>	<b>1,357</b>	<b>1,542</b>	<b>1,583</b>	<b>1,723</b>
% Domestic	69%	53%	59%	54%	55%	53%	53%

## 5. Gas oil sales

Total gas oil sales (Domestic and non-domestic) thousand tonnes	2019	2024	2025	2025 vs 2019	2025 vs 2024
Jan-Mar	1,052	490	536	-49%	9%
Mar-June	1,474	449	373	-75%	-17%
July	461	183	231	-50%	26%
August	414	280	93	-77%	-67%
<b>Total year to date</b>	<b>3,402</b>	<b>1,402</b>	<b>1,233</b>	<b>-64%</b>	<b>-12%</b>

While gas oil sales had stabilised following the red diesel tax changes, July and August 2025 saw a significant reduction in demand compared to 2024, this may be due to different weather patterns.

Half year (thousand tonnes)	2019	2024	2025
Domestic	9	8	8
Non-domestic	1,833	337	416
Transport	684	594	485
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>2,526</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>909</b>

For the half year to June 2025 there appeared to be a significant reduction in transport use of red diesel.

## 6. Road diesel sales

Total road diesel sales (Thousand tonnes)	2019	2024	2025	2025 vs 2019	2025 vs 2024
Jan-Mar	5,733	5,505	5,442	-5%	-1%
Mar-June	6,037	6,032	6,001	-1%	-1%
July	1,929	1,971	1,948	1%	-1%
August	2,031	1,866	1,808	-11%	-3%
<b>Total year to date</b>	<b>15,730</b>	<b>15,375</b>	<b>15,199</b>	<b>-3%</b>	<b>-1%</b>

Road diesel sales in the three months to August 2025, were down in line with other petroleum products. These decreases were counterbalanced by an increase of 6.5 per cent in deliveries of petrol.

## 7. Other domestic energy consumption

### 7.1 Gas

Overall gas demand decreased by 1.7 per cent in the three months to August 2025, compared to the same period in 2024. This decline was primarily driven by reduced consumption among final users, with

domestic (household) demand dropping by 19 per cent due to warmer temperatures relative to the previous year. Demand in the industrial and services sectors also decreased, by 10 and 6.6 per cent, respectively.

GWh	Domestic			Industry			Services		
	2024	2025	2025 vs 2024	2024	2025	2025 vs 2024	2024	2025	2025 vs 2024
Jan-Mar	103,414	111,109	7%	27,196	26,613	-2%	32,684	34,220	5%
Mar-June	40,374	31,041	-23%	18,216	16,527	-9%	16,732	15,487	-7%
July	6,493	4,833	-26%	5,715	5,137	-10%	3,918	3,342	-15%
August	5,939	5,474	-8%	5,584	5,034	-10%	4,063	3,874	-5%
<b>Total year to date</b>	<b>156,221</b>	<b>152,458</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>56,711</b>	<b>53,311</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>57,396</b>	<b>56,923</b>	<b>-1%</b>



## 7.2 Electricity

Total consumption from the public distribution system increased by 3.3 per cent in the three months to August 2025, compared to the same period a year ago, despite the weather being warmer over this period. The rise in industrial consumption and consumption by other users was

greater than the rise in domestic consumption. This may be due to greater use of air conditioning in offices, shops and restaurants during the hotter weather.

TWh	Industrial			Domestic			Other		
	2024	2025	2025 vs 2024	2024	2025	2025 vs 2024	2024	2025	2025 vs 2024
Jan-Mar	19.1	17.9	-6%	26.6	27.8	5%	23.8	27.0	13%
Mar-June	17.1	17.9	5%	20.4	19.1	-6%	20.5	19.5	-5%
July	6.0	6.2	3%	6.3	6.7	5%	6.7	7.4	12%
August	5.5	5.6	1%	6.3	6.8	7%	6.8	7.5	11%
<b>Total year to date</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>59.6</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>61.6</b>	<b>6%</b>

## 8. Heat pump sales

The table below shows all heat deployments made across all government schemes since the start of 2018 up to the end of June 2025.

The schemes covered include:

- Boiler Upgrade Scheme (Scheme opened in April 2022)
- Home Upgrade Grant (Scheme opened in January 2022)
- Local Authority Delivery (Scheme opened in August 2020 and closed in September 2023)

- Green Homes Grant Vouchers (Scheme opened in September 2020 and closed in March 2021)
- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (Scheme opened in August 2021)
- Energy Company Obligation (Scheme opened in January 2013)
- Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (Scheme opened in April 2014 and closed in March 2022)
- Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (Scheme opened in November 2011 and closed on March 2021)

Boiler Upgrade Scheme	Home Upgrade Grant	Local Authority Delivery	Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme	Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund	Energy Company Obligation	Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive	Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive	Total
56,130	4,436	3,065	4,960	3,254	39,810	57,914	1,642	171,211

## Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS)

The BUS was launched in England and Wales on 1 April 2022 and aims to incentivise and increase the deployment of low carbon heating technologies by providing an upfront capital grant. Grants for ASHPs were increased in October 2023 from £5,000 to £7,500.

It is the only recent scheme which shows the number of oil homes that have been converted:

Fuel type displaced to August 2025	Air Source Heat pumps:	Percentage
Gas	33,456	56%
Oil	10,355	17%
None	8,020	13%
Direct electric	5,464	9%
Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)	1,769	3%
Coal	613	1%
Other	465	1%
Unknown	30	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,172</b>	<b>100%</b>



# Prema Energy makes the case for strategic blending being key to successful navigation of the 2026 fuel market

Fleet operators and distributors are well accustomed to managing market volatility. However, the entire sector is currently facing the challenges of maintaining profitability while also answering the urgent call for decarbonisation from upstream customers. This pressure to reduce Scope 3 emissions is no longer a future concern but an immediate reality, complicated by a sustainable fuel market that is becoming more and more expensive.

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil, specifically HVO100, has long been championed as the ideal “drop-in” solution. While this high-quality FAME-free fuel drastically cuts fleet emissions, it also presents a challenging price point.

Many are now forecasting a volatile 2026, with some market reports predicting price increases of up to roughly 25p per litre on HVO100 vs Standard fossil grades – this cost increase is unsustainable for most operators.

A primary cause of this price appreciation is Germany’s recent introduction of the RED III initiative, which seeks to end the “double-counting” of carbon credits for certain biofuels. Previously, suppliers could meet GHG quotas using half the physical volume of specific sustainable fuels. With RED III and the end of carbon credit multipliers, German suppliers must now purchase significantly more physical fuel, and some market analysis suggests that HVO demand could double in 2026 to satisfy legal mandates. This demand shock is compounded by other persistent market pressures, including high global feedstock costs for grains and used cooking oils; international tariffs; and rising freight and export costs, all of which constrict supply.

Reports from Argus Media and others have noted that this surge in demand, coupled with planned refinery maintenance, is constraining supply and elevating prices to nine-month highs. We expect this volatility to continue, especially into Q1 2026. For the distributor, haulier, or manufacturer, this creates a difficult choice: either absorb a prohibitive fuel cost or fail to meet the sustainability credentials that their customers demand.

Adding to this complex environment is the market forecast of a potential reduction in diesel prices in 2026, driven by a global supply

surplus. While this may tempt some operators to revert entirely to traditional diesel fuel, the pressure to meet ESG and Scope 3 targets remains a non-negotiable component of modern supply chains.

Blending offers an ideal means to address these pressing issues. By combining lower-cost diesel with sustainable HVO or FAME components, operators can offer their customers a fuel that is both financially and environmentally sustainable. The solution lies not in abandoning emissions targets, but in adopting more strategic procurement methods.

## Beyond ‘Perfect’: The pragmatic value of blending

The market’s focus on HVO100 is understandable given its track record but overlooks other viable options. With its environmental and cost-effective benefits, custom blending is the most pragmatic tool available for operators. For example, 100% renewable fuel proves cost-prohibitive for customers, a blend of 50% or 30% presents a viable alternative. Custom blends such as HVO50, HVO30, or HVO10 offer a significant reduction in net CO2 emissions, while also achieving decarbonisation goals.

HVO and HVO blending is not the only alternative fuel option available that can reduce costs and improve sustainability. FAME (Fatty Acid Methyl Esters) blended products can offer operators a route to efficiently achieve their decarbonisation targets. While subject to standard road duty, these established biofuels provide a more compelling ratio of cost-to-carbon-saved, especially for fleets seeking a large-scale and financially manageable emissions-saving strategy.

HVO blends and FAME products offer the ideal solution to lowering costs and improving environmental impacts. For example, a 30% carbon saving applied across an entire fleet offers a more substantial aggregate environmental and business benefit than a 90% saving on a small, cost-prohibitive fraction of vehicles. Opting for such solution-oriented strategies will ensure operators’ success against the challenges ahead.



## The importance of strategic supplier selection

Navigating this complex market requires more than simple fuel procurement. A simple reseller cannot address the challenges facing the sector, and operators must strategically select a partner with deep, practical knowledge of the market. Stephen Fletcher, Managing Director of Prema Energy, explains:

“We are observing clients navigating the intersection of significant cost pressures and pressing ESG mandates... Our approach is not to advocate for a single product. It is to take a holistic view of a client’s goals – their cost-per-mile, their emissions targets, and their operational needs – and then design a custom fuel solution. In some cases, this may be pure HVO; however, the optimal solution is increasingly a bespoke blend that delivers a carefully calibrated balance of sustainability and profitability.”

Offering true flexibility is key for any potential supplier partners. Operators require a supplier that functions as importer, blender, and wholesaler, and can manufacture and supply a custom-blended HVO30 just as easily as they can source B100 or HVO100. Suppliers should have expertise in complex fuel logistics and be able to provide the infrastructure and insights for any challenge, from creating the right solutions for road transport to supporting their customers with fuel hedging. Your supplier should understand the entire energy landscape, not just one segment.

As we approach a challenging 2026, the operators who will thrive are those who move beyond the “HVO100-or-nothing” mindset. By embracing strategic blending, businesses can meet both their ESG and financial targets.

For those seeking to navigate this complex market and better understand their options – from incorporating standard blends to developing a bespoke fuel strategy – we invite you to contact Prema Energy for a consultation.

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# “It’s been a seven-year rollercoaster!”

## Jonathan Pinnock, JPS Fuels

ONE WINTER MORNING **JONATHAN PINNOCK** FOUND HIMSELF IN A RAINSTORM, LYING IN A PUDDLE BETWEEN THE AXLES OF HIS 6-WHEELER TANKER, CHANGING A BLOWN HYDRAULIC PIPE ON THE REAR STEERING AXLE. THE WEATHER WAS MISERABLE, BUT CUSTOMERS WERE RELYING ON HIM, AND THE REPAIR SIMPLY COULDN’T WAIT.

“I REMEMBER THINKING: WHAT ON EARTH AM I DOING?” HE SAYS. “BUT YOU GET ON WITH IT. PEOPLE NEEDED THEIR OIL.”

MOMENTS LIKE THIS CAPTURE WHAT THE PAST SEVEN YEARS HAVE BEEN FOR JONATHAN – A MIX OF PRESSURE, PRIDE, AND SHEER DETERMINATION. AND THEY EXPLAIN A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE GROWTH OF JPS FUELS, THE INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTOR BUSINESS HE FOUNDED IN 2018 WITH A SECOND-HAND TANKER, NO BUSINESS PLAN, AND A DETERMINATION TO DELIVER THE KIND OF SERVICE HE BELIEVED CUSTOMERS DESERVED.

**MARGARET MAJOR** CAUGHT UP WITH JONATHAN TO HEAR THE FULL STORY OF THOSE SEVEN ROLLERCOASTER YEARS.

### Family roots and early experience

Fuel runs deep in Jonathan’s family. He is proud to be a fifth-generation fuel merchant, with family ties to coal dating back to 1860. He grew up riding along with his father on deliveries, and fell in love with an industry that, as he puts it, he has worked “almost all my life in”.

Despite this heritage, he is the only one of his generation involved in fuel. His own journey began with oil tank fitting, before an accident – “I broke my foot collecting a tank” – saw him take a new direction as a driver. He worked first for Ford Fuel Oils, then Watsons, before a depot closure and his father’s terminal illness prompted him to rethink his future.

“I was 30, and having a bit of an early midlife crisis,” he says. That’s when the yellow mini-tanker appeared.

### An impulse purchase that changed everything

“I found this lovely mini-tanker up in Wales. They’re very rare, very sought-after. The truck fitter and myself went to see it on a Saturday morning. We stopped at services on the way home for an over-priced fried breakfast, and decided to buy it. Paid the deposit and handed in my notice on Monday morning.”

A month later on the 1st of August 2018, JPS Fuels officially began. He rented a small office above a printing works in Tadley,

Aldermaston, armed with industry knowledge, one tanker, and invaluable advice from Estuary Oils’ MD Andrew Mould, from whom Jonathan had bought his first tanker – support Jonathan still appreciates.

Following that advice, he focused first on building a customer base across rural West Berkshire and North Hampshire, before working on the company brand. Domestic heating oil remains the core of the business, along with some commercial customers and farmers who represent around 20% of the total business which he says is “very good for the summer when heating oil demand falls off”.

“I don’t aim to be ridiculously cheap,” he says. “I aim for great service at a fair price.”

### Building the business

The distinctive bright yellow tanker quickly became a recognisable sight, and after a busy winter in 2019. Jonathan knew he needed to grow. He purchased a second yellow tanker in August 2020, again from Estuary Oils.

At that point, JPS consisted of two drivers – including Jonathan – and one member of office staff, with Jonathan managing all the route planning and paperwork.

Today the business runs three tankers from a dry depot, lifting predominantly from Theale Terminal.



JPS also works with BoilerJuice, describing it as: “A ready-made customer base”.

With no contracted supply, JPS Fuels relies on spot sales. “It does lead to occasional issues,” Jonathan acknowledges. “If there’s an issue with where we normally pick up, we have to work hard to fill the gap.

“We were very lucky with Puma – they were a very good supplier.”

If supply does become an issue, being able to turn off availability on BoilerJuice to ensure he can fulfil the demand from his loyal customers is a flexibility Jonathan welcomes. “You can set the time window and the price, and orders come in until you turn it off.”

## Winter pressures and industry realities

Jonathan describes the winter surge in kerosene demand as driving “a dash for the cash” – a compressed period of intense pressure.

“You’re firefighting problems all winter, just keeping the lorries going.”

His hydraulic-pipe-in-the-puddle story is just one example. Larger distributors may rely on fleet management contracts, but independents don’t have the luxury of delays, he suggests.

“You can be waiting days for authorisation to fix a blown bulb. As an independent, you can just get stuff done.”

No two winters are ever the same and some have tested even Jonathan’s stamina.

“The winter before last almost broke us – margins were not worth getting out of bed for. Last winter was ideal, though: long cold spell but no big snap.”

Extreme conditions bring their own pressures, and Jonathan vividly remembers the winter storms of 2018: “The ‘Beast from the East’ was a nightmare. I ended up making emergency deliveries in awful conditions where the only real difference between heroism and stupidity is success or failure.”

## Price shocks and customer impact

The Ukraine war brought one of the toughest moments Jonathan has seen.

“It put the price up by about 30p per litre overnight. People were crying down the phone because they couldn’t afford fuel.”

Customers subsequently shifted to 500-litre orders instead of filling tanks.

## A practical, no-frills operation

“We’re a no-frills oil supplier,” he says. “We aim for five working days from order to delivery. If you order Monday, you get delivery by Saturday, at the latest.”

His approach to fleet management mirrors this pragmatism. Two years ago, Morrow Tanker Services remounted the barrel from a 2½-year-old six-wheeler he’d bought, onto a new chassis.

“I got myself a new mini-tanker with a £40,000 saving. Second-hand just makes sense.”

Cost control is vital because, in Jonathan’s view, “the market is in decline.”

Part of the decline, he believes, comes from fuel conversions, reducing domestic oil use over time, and while future fuels hold promise, he remains cautious about low carbon fuels. “The home heating market is a tiny part of daily kerosene use – most of it goes into aviation.

“The HMRC rebate changes mean HVO for commercial heating isn’t viable without major cost.”

## The driver dilemma

At 37, Jonathan considers himself “a whippersnapper,” but his workforce tells a different story.

“One driver is already 60 and the other is getting close. I’ll need two new drivers soon and I don’t know where they’ll come from.”

“The job’s changed. It used to be the best of the best. To get the right drivers now, you either need to pay very well or be a very good employer.”

Local knowledge and communication skills are essential. “You’re customer-facing, representing the company. You need the right work ethic.”

He believes that there is a strong advantage to being a small business though: “Here you are a name, not a number.”

## Technology and vulnerability

Jonathan values the tools he uses to make running a distributor business easier, naming Fuelsoft and Dreamtec among his valued system providers, particularly as someone with dyslexia, who needs processes to be as straightforward as possible.

But technology brings its own risks as Jonathan notes: “A cyber-attack would make it very hard to carry out business.”

He also appreciates another key industry provider – highlighting the “excellent updates and representation” provided by industry body UKIFDA.

## Looking ahead

Seven years after buying that yellow mini-tanker, Jonathan has built a recognisable brand, a loyal customer base and a business rooted firmly in service and reliability.

Looking ahead, he remains realistic about the challenges facing independent distributors – from tightening margins to an ageing workforce and the uncertainty around future fuels. But the drive that saw him buy a tanker on impulse in 2018 still powers JPS Fuels today. His focus is unwavering: delivering a dependable, personal service to the rural communities that rely on him.

“It’s been a rollercoaster,” he says. “But I wouldn’t change it.”

And with that resilience, it’s clear that JPS Fuels is well-placed to navigate whatever comes next.





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## We asked the following questions:

1. Sprouts – yes or no?
2. Where will you spend Christmas Day this year?
3. What's the best or worst present you ever received?
4. What is your Christmas Eve tradition?

### And our community said...

#### Alex Wolfe, Wolfe Power Club

1. Yes — they're the best part.
2. With my parents-in-law in Wiltshire.
3. Best: Tickets to see Mike + The Mechanics last year (thank you, Harriet!). Worst: A key customer calling at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve urgently needing kerosene. All sorted, but what a classic way to kick off the festive season.
4. Visiting the pubs by the river in Kingston upon Thames.

#### Alison Sweeney, Worldpay for Business

1. Yes.
2. Home. I'll be feeding the five thousand!
3. Best – my son Andrew born 40 minutes before Xmas Day in 1999.
4. Celebrating my eldest son's birthday.

#### Andrew Walkden, ESL Fuels

1. Yes – Crunchy.
2. Home with the family.
3. A tape measure.
4. Hot dogs and movies.

#### Bahvna Mistry, Phillips 66 Ltd

1. Yes, but they must be well-roasted with balsamic vinegar.
2. In Portugal with my family, hopefully having a nice meal and lots of wine.
3. Best: a family heirloom Worst: My husband forgetting to get me a Christmas gift last year.
4. Growing up in South Africa it was going to the beach with loads of family; Now it's what I always dreamt of – watching Christmas movies with my family with the fire lit. I love a cold Christmas.

#### Ben Firth, Mechtronic

1. Absolutely YES!
2. At home with family
3. Best: Apple iPod when I was about 12. I think I could load roughly 100 songs onto it, which back then was unthinkable!

4. Usually having a nice meal, a few drinks and getting Santa and his reindeers treats ready!

#### Carrie Marsh, Marsh Fuels

1. Sprouts, hell no! Vegetable of the devil!
2. At the folks, aware there will not be too many left!
3. Worst was a thermal heated 5 finger (single!) glove – turned out to be the best many years later after I met and married hubby Dave (our Transport Director) who finds it very handy for the BBQ and chimenea!
4. Sit back with bacon and pickle, with family, usually in front of carols or a Christmas animation on TV and an early night. We've not managed Christmas Mass at midnight since (how old are the children??) a good 15 years ago!!

#### Caroline Lombard, Greenery

1. Absolutely not, not even with bacon or chestnuts.... Nothing makes a sprout taste good!!!
2. Home, always at home. The kids refuse to leave the house for Christmas day.
3. The best gift ever is a lay in past 6am, as kids get older and aren't waiting to see what Santa has left for them. Shhh!
4. My mum always makes a fish pie and when the kids were younger we would attend the Christingle service at the local church.

#### Chris Rickwood, Tank Top

1. Yes yes yes!
2. Family Xmas at my sisters. My partner flies to Melbourne on Xmas day!
3. It sounds ungrateful, but I was 13 and wanted a scientific calculator. All my friends had Casios, mine was Boots – the antithesis of cool. I tried to scratch off the branding – a bad idea...
4. Quiet before the storm.

#### Claire Foster, Mabanaf

1. Of course – for throwing and for eating.
2. At a hotel – traveling for the holidays this year! Decided nobody needed to be the quote 'host'.
3. Worst was 3 sets of Pick-up-Stix. The gift isn't bad; just not the best when given by 3 gifters in the same year!
4. Chocolate orange and a small present at midnight!

#### David Blevings, NIOIL

1. Definite no!
2. Home with my family.
3. Worst present – socks! Again....
4. Church service 1130 – 12 – nice way to ease into the festive season.

#### Dawn Shakespeare, UKIFDA

1. Absolutely yes. Stir fried not boiled, with plenty of seasoning.
2. Home. The family always come to me and end up staying for the majority of Xmas, lots of food, fun and the odd drink or three in the garden bar.
3. Worst – a cordless electric knife, not only do I have a rule of no kitchen appliances for xmas, it didn't even come with the battery charger that allowed it to be cordless!
4. Light meal, bottle of wine and curl up to watch a good old fashioned Xmas film, favourite is a 'It's a Wonderful Life'.

#### Duncan Lambert, Rix Petroleum

1. Definitely NO – the Devil's food.
2. Always at home, so I can sleep after too much food.
3. The best presents are my Grandchildren coming to us for Christmas.
4. We always go Italian the night before.

#### Emma Allinson, Mechtronic

1. I will reluctantly have one – although I don't hide them on

my boys' plates like my Mum used to!

2. At home with family.
3. I was given a necklace with my husband's and boys' names on it, and I have worn it ever since. I love it!
4. Watch a Christmas film, track Santa, and choose treats for him. As the Elves are going home with Santa that evening, my boys get to cuddle and play with them through the day. I love seeing their faces light up when they can finally have a cuddle with them!

#### Emma Osborn, Halso Fuels UK

1. Always. I'm basically 40% chlorophyll at this point!
2. My parents house with my wonderful 15-year-old son, watching my mother cook while sipping Champagne! Oooops!
3. Worst was a book on dieting – it was not on my list!
4. My son is nearly 16, so it is not quite the same as when he was little, but I still leave a mince pie out for Santa and a carrot for Rudolph. I like to have some picky bits to eat, some wine, fresh pyjamas and watch Love Actually.

#### Erick Baron, Otodata

1. Yes.
2. Home with family.
3. The worst was a Christmas fruit basket and no chocolate!
4. A "White Elephant" gift exchange with the whole family – sisters, parents, nieces, and nephews. Lots of fun.

#### Ethan Halfpenny, Harlequin

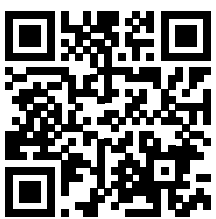
1. Absolutely yes! No doubt
2. At home, then a short stint in the pub in the evening!
3. A packet of cable ties. I'll let you decide if that's best or worst!
4. Head to the pub, one occasion where everyone is home and out at the same time!



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## Fiona Bellairs, Magnus Monitors

1. Yes – fine sliced and pan fried in garlic and butter.
2. Canada with family.
3. What's the best or worst present you ever received? Bayliss & Harding or Dove gift set!!
4. Midnight Mass with my mum.

## Gavin Milligan, Strangford Fuels

1. Yes, to sprouts.
2. Home. Hopefully exhausted after a busy December.
3. Best present was a season ticket to Celtic Park. Some might argue that's the worst!
4. Turning my phone on silent mode for a couple of days.

## Geoff Henderson, Phillips 66

1. Definitely yes, as no Christmas dinner is complete without a few sprouts.
2. Home. We like to keep it low key and relaxed. Then straight off skiing for New Year to enjoy a proper white Christmas!
3. Spending It at the pub with family and friends – the atmosphere is amazing, the festive cheer is flowing, and it's the best excuse to finish wrapping before the first pint!

## Gwyn Lewis, Elminox

1. YES of course!
2. Home with family.
3. Best present was hearing my granddaughter passed her grade 8 piano.
4. Watching The Griswolds Family Christmas or Wonderful Life.

## Helen Needham, Callow Oils

1. Yes definitely!
2. Home but hotel would be nice.
3. Best present was my daughter Holly, born on Christmas Day.
4. Tot of Whisky with James in the Office before we shut the doors and head home for Christmas.

## Howard Marriott, Barton Petroleum

1. Absolutely Yes!!
2. At home with the family. It is our 2nd Grandson Arthur's 1st Xmas.
3. Worst was a box of initialled handkerchiefs from an elderly Auntie when I was a child. Unfortunately, I told her what I

thought of them and got a good telling off!!

4. Meeting up with the same bunch of friends for the last 20 odd years for a few drinks.

## Jacque Davies, Hytek

1. Absolutely yes, I am growing them in the garden... love them every which way!
2. With my lovely mum-in-law, we lost dad-in-law in June, so a massive family get together in South Wales to celebrate his life.
3. Worst was a regifted one from my sister I'd given her the year before. I now buy her something I really like, just in case!
4. Visit all eleven grandchildren across Essex delivering parcels, food and bottles. Home, a walk to our local, then PJs and snacks.

## James Spencer, Portland

1. 1,000 % yes. Love them.
2. Hosting my parents at home.
3. Not so much the worst as the one I never received. I must have asked Santa for Domino Rally about 8 years in a row. Never got it. Still rankles.
4. York Market at 6.30am sharp to pick up Christmas Day food.

## Joanne Swift, Mabanaf

1. Yes.
2. At home with the family.
3. An iron...
4. All going to friends, then coming home and getting into our Christmas PJs watching Elf.

## John Reynolds, Reynolds Training

1. Absolutely yes, the more the merrier.
2. Flying to Canada, to see family.
3. Best: Time with family.
4. Sherry and mince pie for Santa and a carrot for the reindeer.

## Ken Cronin, UKIFDA

1. Yes especially on pizza.
2. Home – all the family arriving as usual.
3. The best was being told I was going to be a granddad for the first time.
4. Going to the pub at lunch time with my adult kids and pretending to be sober on the way home and not having a hangover the next day.

## Kiran Shaw, IFC Inflow

1. Yes, everyone should suffer them at least once a year.
2. At home with family.
3. My worst was a pair of repurposed socks from a wealthy Uncle that he hadn't even bothered to re-wrap!  
Best was a weekend for two including a 7-course taster meal at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons.
4. Finish work at lunchtime, stick on 'driving home for Christmas' on repeat until I get home, then have steak and chips with the family and Christmas Carols from Kings college on in the background.

## Lauren Cordelle, CTS

1. Yes.
2. Home.
3. Worst: Cat food, courtesy of CTS Secret Santa – it's a longstanding office joke now!
4. Growing up it was going to the cinema, every year without fail. Nowadays I spend it running round like a headless chicken, getting the house and presents sorted for Christmas day – oh to be a child again!

## Leanne Hardy, Par Petroleum

1. Mixed in the Hardy house, it's a yes from me but a firm no for Stuart.
2. We're at home. There'll be chaos through to Boxing Day, as we celebrate my daughter's and my Mum's birthdays on 26th.
3. My mother-in-law once bought me a cheese grater, but then we did need one.
4. We try to keep Christmas Eve as light as possible workwise. Once we've seen the drivers off and wished them a Merry Christmas, we head home to prepare lunch. After that, it's off to church, then champagne for the grown-ups while the kids decide which snacks to leave out for Santa and his reindeer.

## Luke Nolan, Nolan Oils

1. Yes.
2. In-law's house, Lee On Solent.
3. Best: Motorbike from Dad, Worst: Nolan Oils work uniform, also from Dad!
4. Milk, carrot and cookies out for Father Christmas with the kids, and getting rid of the bloody elf on the shelf for another year!

## Matt Ryan, Compass Fuels

1. Absolutely Not! Awful things.
2. This year I am at my girlfriend's family and may head to my sister's house in the evening for drinks and karaoke / games.
3. Best was my first Bike as a kid. Worst: Garlic mayonnaise and pitta breads.
4. We usually go to the cinema or a show with the family, then off to the pub for some beers and a meal then home for an early night, ready for the big day.

## Matthew Crockett, Craggs Energy

1. Definitely a yes but spruce them up with toasted almonds, glaze in butter with a bacon crunch.
2. Hosting. Have attempted travels out only once, but it didn't have the same magic, so will be prepping and looking after all the guests, wine flowing, and a spread I hope they enjoy.
3. Worst. Ohhhh that is cruel! It is the thought that counts. (Well so they say). Best is not the gifts, but the people around me on the day that makes me happy. People say I am hard to buy for but the thoughts they put into make them personal to me. Love anything to do with cooking.
4. I love working Christmas eve, never knowing if it will be chaos, busy or slow, but as work closes, I normally get a nice quiet drive back, on lovely, peaceful roads with the Christmas songs on. home for a Christmas Eve spread and a sherry, and await the chaos in the morning!

## Mike Hancock, Avioxx

1. Always yes. It would not feel the same without them.
2. With family. Each year a different household host. We have a large family, so plenty of us around the table makes it great fun.
3. The one that stayed with me was a Greyhound bus ticket my dad gave me for a full tour of the United States. It felt like the trip of a lifetime at that age.
4. A quiet evening at home. We bring out a small rotating nativity scene that has been in the family for years and seeing it turn in the candlelight always marks the start of Christmas.

## Neil Turnbull, Sentinam

1. Yes please!
2. We've always travelled to our parents' homes in recent years, but this year, we are at home for the 1st time! Cannot wait!
3. I can only say the best as I don't think I've ever received a bad one! From about 7 years old to 16 years old, every year without fail, a mitre delta football!
4. A nice walk out, a few drinks and a takeaway meal.

## Neil Wallis, ETCC Associates

1. Yes.
2. At home.
3. A large set of spanners – I'm hopeless at DIY, and these have been unused for years!
4. A late-night walk to see the Christmas lights, followed by a late drink at a country pub.

## Paul Craddock, Bedford Fuels

1. Yes. I am a big fan of Brussels.
2. My In-laws who live next door.
3. Worst was an Arsenal Clock (I am a Manchester United Season Ticket holder). Apparently a batch got mixed up at the factory and I am guessing a load of Arsenal fans got United Clocks in return!??
4. Work until lunchtime, Nativity service at the local church, then family meal.

## Paul Durham, FAST

1. Yes – but cooked properly, not boiled to death. I spend my working life talking about clean,

efficient combustion, so I can't really endorse anything that leads to uncontrolled emissions after lunch.

2. At home with the family. Christmas Day is the one day I'm not thinking about cold-flow performance or supply chains – just what's in the oven.
3. Best: a decent pair of noise-cancelling headphones. Worst: A scented candle called "New Diesel." I still don't know what they were thinking.
4. Tie up the last few emails, make sure everyone has what they need for the break, then the laptop goes off and stays off. After that it's food, a drink, a Christmas film... and I usually fall asleep before the ending.

## Peter Davidson, TSA

1. No!
2. Home.
3. The best recently, is a little Lego love heart keyring; it's the small things that mean the most.
4. My wife insists on opening one present, and spends ages inspecting all before choosing!

## Phil Murray, WCF

1. Yes, but with crispy bacon too!
2. There's no place like home!
3. My son was born on Christmas Eve, 11 days before his due date, and we brought him home on Christmas Day. Best present I can remember!
4. Christmas movie night (usually Elf, Home Alone or Die Hard!)

## Rory Beath, Rix Petroleum

1. Sprouts are my favourite veg so it's a deffo Yes!
2. Home as always – see next answer.
3. That would have to be (sounds cheesy I know), our son. After being told we wouldn't be able to have children, Alex was born on Christmas day 2000.
4. Spending it with our Polish family (Brothers partner), eating lots of fish and strange fruit soup washed down with Vodka.

## Rory Clarke, Rix Petroleum

1. Yes. Sprouts are not just for Christmas.
2. Visiting my Mother and Sister –



that avoids all the cooking!

3. A night in London Zoo (you could hear the lions nearby!).
4. Opening presents. Something we inherited from my father growing up in Europe.

## Rupert Turner, Phillips 66 Ltd

1. Yes absolutely, as many as I can get! There's no sprout about it!
2. Home, as is the norm. Am never invited anywhere!
3. A mankini. Depending on your viewpoint, it could fall into either category!
4. An early night in with the latest edition of FON!

## Simon Van Lonkhuysen, Tec

1. Absolutely not, eeeeeeeeeeeew!
2. We always spend the morning visiting family, then all sit down for Christmas dinner in the evening at home.
3. Worst was a cherry blossom tree – Don't ask.
4. Meet friends in our neighbour's house, mulled wine and treats then go to midnight Mass.

## Simon Whibberly, EA Projects

1. Yes please – sautéed with bacon.
2. At home with the family.
3. Best: The Palitoy X Wing Fighter and Landspeeder models from the Star Wars films from my parents in 1978. Worst: A burgundy shirt and tie from a relative – also 1978.
4. Walk over the moors in the morning, a couple of pints at lunchtime, frantic run around shops in afternoon for that one present I habitually forget.

## Tammy Coates, SBZ Corporation

1. No thanks — they can stay in someone else's bowl!
2. Driving home to Wales with the dog to spend it with family. Can't beat a proper family Christmas!
3. The funniest was when my mum and sister didn't communicate — and I ended up with two chopping boards and two sets

of knives!

4. Walking the dogs on the beach, prepping food, and doing a bit of last-minute baking. Then, lighting the fire, having cheesy Christmas music on, and leaving Mum to last-minute wrapping, while heading down the local for a few drinks with old friends.

## Thomas Reissmann, FoxInsights

1. Definitely yes!
2. Home with the family.
3. Best: I always like books. Worst: probably everything that has "gift for the sake of giving" written all over it – scented candles for example.
4. Eating Raclette with the family – a proper kick-off for a week loaded with good food all day every day.

## Tom Ower, Compass Environmental

1. Yes! The more the merrier!
2. At my bosses'/parents' house with the first grandchild of the family. No drinking as we'll be on call!
3. As we've got a big family – nearing 40, one Christmas I recreated 'Guess Who' using pictures of everyone and that comes out at every family gathering!
4. Last minute wrapping of course!

## Tony Devlin, Unite

1. Yes.
2. Home.
3. Best: Raleigh Chopper and I haven't had a bad present!
4. Dinner with my family.

## Zoe Blackhall, BoilerJuice

1. Nooo, no, no – Yucky!
2. At home, there's no better place.
3. I'm grateful for any gift, even the new steam mop my other half believed I would love.
4. Collect the food shop in the morning (you can never have too many Quality Streets), then baking for Santa with my girls, with Christmas songs blaring. Snuggle up in matching jammies, pop on a Christmas film and enjoy a fancy hot chocolate... just as my littlest announces she hopes for something NOT on her list!



WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING TO HELP YOU IMPROVE YOUR BOTTOM LINE, SO HERE'S A SPECIAL FOL FESTIVE SAVING: NO NEED TO SPEND YOUR MONEY ON CRACKERS THIS YEAR. NO ONE, APART FROM UNCLE CHARLIE, WEARS THE HAT FOR LONG, AND THE PLASTIC TRINKETS NEVER MAKE IT PAST BOXING DAY, BUT THE ONE THING WE ALL LOVE (ESPECIALLY AFTER A SHERRY OR TWO) IS THE CRACKER JOKE. NOW YOU CAN ENJOY ALL THE FESTIVE FUN YOU NEED RIGHT HERE! WE'VE ROUNDED UP THE BEST ONES FROM OUR FUEL OIL NEWS COMMUNITY TO KEEP YOU SMILING (OR GROANING!) ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE TURKEY DINNER. PULL UP A CHAIR AND PREPARE FOR THE PUNCHLINES...

What's every elf's favourite type of music? Wrap!

**Emma Allinson, Mechtronic**

What's the best gift to give a fuel company? A little tank-you from Otodata!

**Erick Baron, Otodata**

What's black 'n' white and eats like a horse? A zebra.

**Fiona Bellairs, Magnus Monitors**

What do you call an elf who works in heating oil? A fuel-tide helper.

**Zoe Blackhall, BoilerJuice**

Which athlete is the warmest in winter? A long jumper!

**David Blevings, NIOIL**

What is Santa's favourite music? Wrap!

**Rory Clarke, Rix Petroleum**

Why did the dog sit next to the fire on Christmas Day? He wanted to be a hot dog!

**Tammy Coates, SBZ Corporation**

What do you call a deer with no eyes? No idea!

**Lauren Cordelle, CTS**

How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizzas? Deep pan, crisp and even!

**Matthew Crockett, Craggs Energy**

What do you call a blind reindeer? No idea.

**Paul Craddock, Bedford Fuels**

Why do people point to their wrist when asking for the time, but don't point to their bum when they ask where the bathroom is?

**Ken Cronin, UKIFDA**



I got a Christmas card full of rice in the post today. I think it was from my Uncle Ben.

**Peter Davidson, Tank Storage Association**

What did Father Christmas do when he went speed dating? He pulled a cracker!

**Jacquie Davies, Hytek**

How can you tell when a highland cow is going on holiday? It's got a wee calf.

**Tony Devlin, Unite**

Why did the fuel additive get invited to Christmas dinner? Because it made everything run more smoothly.

**Paul Durham, FAST**

Why did the Christmas tree have to give up knitting? It kept losing its needles!

**Ben Firth, Mechtronic**

What do you call an elf wearing headphones? Whatever you want, he can't hear you.

**Ethan Halfpenny, Harlequin**

Why did the turkey join the band? Because it had the drumsticks.

**Mike Hancock, Avioxx**

What do you call an old snowman? Water.

**Leanne Hardy, Par Petroleum**

Why did the scarecrow win an award at Christmas? Because he was outstanding in his field.

**Geoff Henderson, Phillips 66 Limited**

What's brown and sticky? A Stick!

**Duncan Lambert, Rix Petroleum**

Have you heard about Rocket the brown-nosed reindeer? He can run as fast as Rudolph, but he just can't stop as fast!

**Caroline Lombard, Greenery**

Why is Parliament like ancient Bethlehem? It takes a miracle to find three wise men there.

**Howard Marriott, Barton Petroleum**

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas? A mince spy.

**Gavin Milligan, Strangford Fuels**

Why do reindeer like Beyonce so much? She sleighs.

**Bahvna Mistry, Phillips 66 Ltd**

What did the drummer name his two daughters? Anna 1, Anna 2...

**Phil Murray, WCF**

Who never eats Christmas Dinner? The turkey as it's stuffed!

**Helen Needham, Callow Oils**

What do elves post on social media? Elf-ies.

**Emma Osborn, Halso Fuels UK**

Why wouldn't Ebenezer Scrooge eat at the pasta restaurant? It cost a pretty penne!

**Tom Ower, Compass Environmental**

What does Santa Claus have when he gets stuck in the chimney? Claustrophobia.

**Thomas Reissmann, FoxInsights**

Why did the red nosed reindeer help the old lady across the road? Because it would have been Rudolph him not to!

**John Reynolds, Reynolds Training Services**

What did one hat say to the other? You wait here. I'll go on a head.

**Chris Rickwood, Tank Top**



What do you call Santa when he stops moving? Santa Pause.

**Matt Ryan, Compass Fuels**

What do you get if you eat a Xmas decoration? Tinsilitis.

**Dawn Shakespeare, UKIFDA**

What happened to the man who stole an advent calendar? He got 24 days!

**James Spencer, Portland**

What do you call a deer with no eyes? No idea.

**Alison Sweeney, Worldpay for Business**

Why did Santa have to go to the hospital? Because of his poor elf.

**Joanne Swift, Mabanaft**

Why was the snowman looking through the carrots? He was picking his nose!

**Neil Turnbull, Sentinam**

When is a turkey dinner bad for your health? When you're the turkey!

**Rupert Turner, Phillips 66 Ltd**

What do you call a reindeer that can't see? No eye deer!

**Simon Van Lonkhuysen, Tec**

What's a heating oil distributor's favourite Christmas song? Baby, it's cold outside!

**Neil Wallis, ETCC Associates**

What do you call Santa when he takes a break? Santa Pause!

**Andrew Walkden, ESL Fuels**

What's the rudest texture? Bumpiness.

**Simon Whibberly, EA Projects**

Why did the turkey join the band? Because it had the drumsticks.

**Alex Wolfe,**



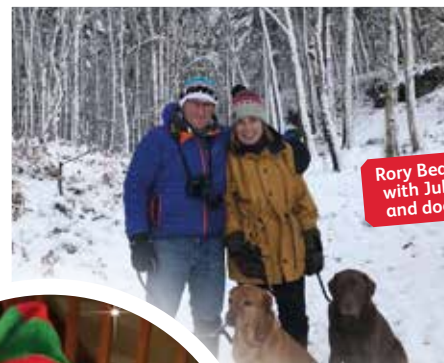


# COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS GALLERY

## A festive photo round up from our community

Alongside their answers to our five festive questions, we invited the Fuel Oil News community to share a favourite Christmas photo – moments that capture the spirit, humour, and heart of the season. Here, we've gathered those cherished snapshots into a special Christmas gallery. Enjoy this visual celebration from across our industry.

Thank you to everyone who shared a little festive magic with us!



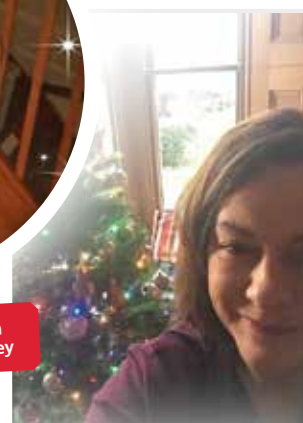
Rory Beath  
with Julie  
and dogs



IFC Inflow



Jacquie  
Davies



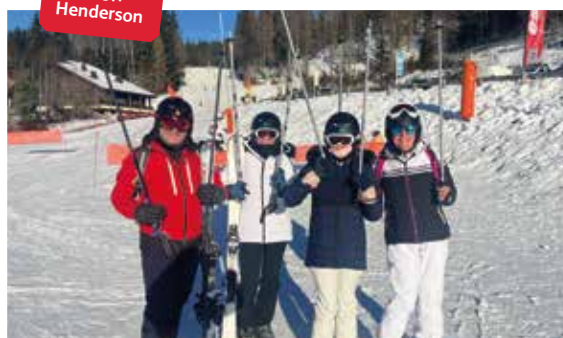
Alison  
Sweeney

Tammy  
Coates with  
Ember



Alex  
Wolfe

Geoff  
Henderson



Zoe Blackhall  
and family



Thomas  
Reissmann



Rory Clarke



Duncan  
Lambert Elf  
strikes again!







Par  
Petroleum



Fiona  
Bellairs



Matt Ryan



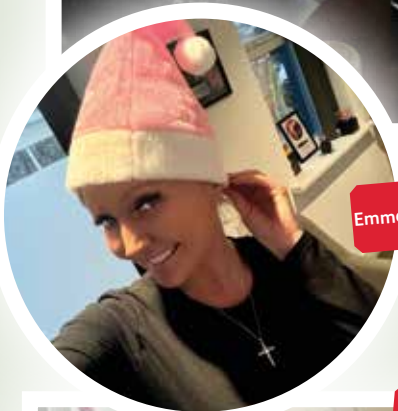
Andrew  
Walkden



Ethan  
Halfpenny



David  
Blevings



Emma Osborn



Em Allinson  
with Kyra



Neil  
Sentinam



Ben  
Firth



Dawn  
Shakespeare



Bhavna  
Mistry





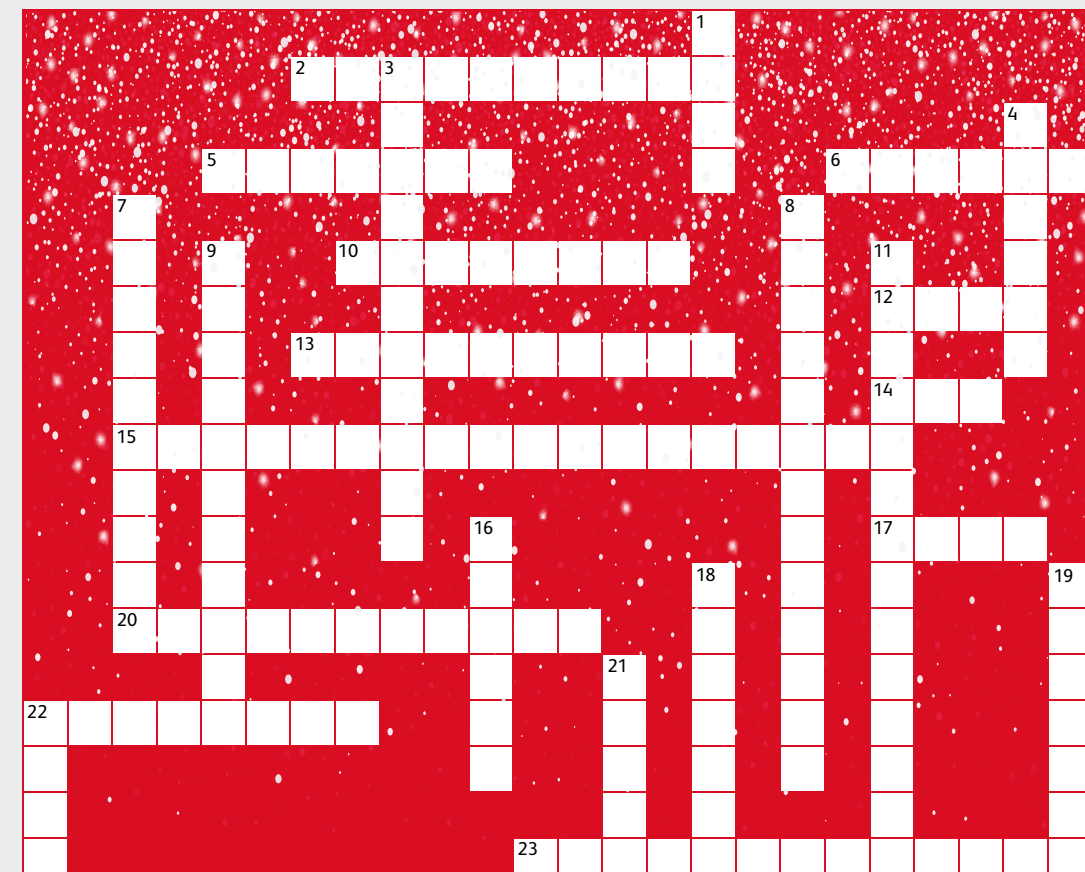
# PORTLAND CHRISTMAS SPECIAL: A BUMPER FESTIVE CROSSWORD

THIS MONTH, INSTEAD OF OUR USUAL DEEP-DIVE INDUSTRY ANALYSIS, THE CLEVER CHAPS AT PORTLAND HAVE TURNED THEIR TALENTS TO THAT EQUALLY ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINE: CROSSWORDERY. IN THIS SEASONAL SPECIAL, WE PRESENT A CUNNING CRYPTIC CROSSWORD FILLED WITH INDUSTRY NODS, SUBTLE TWISTS ON FESTIVE SAYINGS AND JUST ENOUGH CHRISTMAS SPIRIT TO GET YOUR GREY CELLS HUMMING. GRAB A PEN AND SEE HOW YOU DO WITHOUT SNEAKING A LOOK AT THE ANSWERS ON PAGE 36.

**REMEMBER – SANTA IS ALWAYS WATCHING**

## ACROSS

- 2 "It's a ..... Life". Gasoline inspired Christmas Classic starring Jimmy Stewart (10)  
5 Misunderstood cousin of Santa. Not good with kids (7)  
6 Elvis Christmas song needs something extra at the start (6)  
10 Hang this Compulsory Obligation above the fire place (8)  
12 Santa's final chortle or a reinforced rubber fuel pipe at the petrol station? (4)  
13 Super sweet crude oil that also goes on the Christmas Tree (5,5)  
14 Trading Exchange and Clearing House is very cold (3)  
15 Name for the Marketing Department – (all year round – not just at Christmas) (8,3,7)  
17 Christmas Old Spice fragrance and world's richest social retard (4)  
20 Glass shattering roof-landings for the reindeers on these



- energy generators (5,6)  
22 The Wise Men following more than 3 celestial bodies in their quest for Leaded Petrol (4,4)  
23 Assignment of title without physical delivery. Or a handover in the Elf Present Dept. during wrapping (5,8)

## DOWN

- 1 Largest Possible Christmas Cake with a deadweight (DWT) in excess of 320,000 currants (4)  
3 Petrochemical themed Bethlehem stable scene (11)

- 4 See 5 Across. He keeps his "presents" here, whilst also fuelling the occasional ship (6)  
7 Pessimistic white-furred traders in the Arctic Circle believe the market will fall (5,5)  
8 Desirable fuel characteristic when the diesel flows freely in cold weather, but no chance of seeing Santa's sleigh in the sky (3,5,5)  
9 Optimistic festive traders believe the market will rise (6,5)  
11 Brandy butter goes best with the Seasonal Russian Dictator (9,5)  
16 Unsuccessful referendum by 5 Across to take Christmas out of the rest of December (6)  
18 Head of Reindeer Diversity at North Pole (7)  
19 Festive Table Decoration breaks the carbon bonds and churns out more diesel (7)  
21 "Hark the Herald Angels..." (has the President let one go?) (5)  
22 Pipeline Engineers rejoice in this Dean Martin Christmas Song; "Let it ...." (4)

## Avoid expensive emergency deliveries with remote tank monitoring

- ✓ Prevent empty runs through transparency
- ✓ Increase customer satisfaction
- ✓ Save money from optimised logistics

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Delivering Insight is your monthly business-critical briefing for SME distributors, designed to give you clear, actionable guidance to help you work smarter and more profitably. While larger distribution groups may have in-house HR teams, fleet managers, compliance officers and analysts, many SME FODs operate without those resources. Delivering Insight is your virtual support team – a growing knowledge base that builds into a valuable reference library, helping you make informed decisions that safeguard your business today and strengthen it for the future.

This month we focus on online marketplaces, exploring the facts, unpicking misconceptions, and sharing insights. We also speak with an online marketplace, BoilerJuice, to directly address the questions and concerns most frequently raised in our conversations with distributors.

## Online fuel marketplaces: Menace or opportunity?

ONLINE MARKETPLACES ARE RESHAPING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS FOR **PRICE TRANSPARENCY, SPEED, AND CONVENIENCE**. WHILE SOME FODS FEAR MARGIN EROSION AND COMMODITISATION, OTHERS SEE POTENTIAL FOR **ACCESS TO NEW CUSTOMERS, LOWER ACQUISITION COSTS, AND STREAMLINED ORDER CAPTURE**. THIS ARTICLE WILL EXPLORE THE FACTS, UNPICK MISCONCEPTIONS, AND WEIGH THE PROS AND CONS, SO SME FODS CAN MAKE INFORMED STRATEGIC CHOICES.

### What are online fuel marketplaces – and how do they work?

Online fuel marketplaces are digital platforms that connect fuel buyers (domestic or commercial) with multiple distributors.

Streamlining the traditional fuel procurement process, these platforms enable customers to enter requirements such as their location, fuel type and quantity, and receive instant price comparisons.

The marketplaces typically manage quoting, order capture and payment. **Importantly, the physical delivery always remains the responsibility of the fuel distributor.**

Major UK and Irish platforms include:

- **BoilerJuice:** The UK's largest independent heating oil marketplace, hosting around 200 suppliers and having processed over 1 million orders since 2004.
- **ValueOils:** A leading independent Northern Ireland price-comparison platform.
- **HomeFuels Direct:** National online heating-oil retailer with instant quotes and loyalty schemes.
- **YAGRO Marketplace:** Serving agricultural/commercial users through a blind-auction bid process.

Commission models differ widely, and many are not publicly available. Some platforms charge customers directly via a service charge, others add margin into the displayed customer price, while some charge suppliers "a fraction of a percentage" on successful bids.

### The opportunity: volume, reach and efficiency

#### 1. Volume gain and market reach

For many FODs, the biggest benefit is **incremental volume through expanded**

**visibility.** Marketplaces connect suppliers to customers who may never have been aware of their brand – particularly digital-first domestic buyers and those outside traditional catchment areas.

Platforms are free to join, meaning **customer acquisition costs can be significantly lower** compared to PPC campaigns, comparison sites or traditional marketing.

BoilerJuice highlights this advantage directly: "We provide a way to compete that's low-cost from a marketing perspective; no big PPC or search term bills."

#### 2. Lower administrative burden

Automated order capture, consolidated customer onboarding and service, and platform-handled payments reduce distributor admin.

For SMEs with limited office resource, this can free up time during peak periods.

#### 3. Filling delivery gaps

Marketplaces are often used to fill quiet periods, offload surplus stock, or consolidate deliveries in new locations.

This is particularly useful for smaller FODs seeking to improve routeing density, free up working capital held in stock or take advantage of improved margins for urgent orders.

BoilerJuice notes that many partners use the platform to: "Consolidate deliveries, reduce miles per drop, increase average order size and optimise different delivery windows... significantly improving profitability."

#### 4. Flexible, selective use

Most platforms allow suppliers to join with no registration fee and no minimum order

commitments and withdraw at any time.

This keeps control with the distributor: the platform becomes a tactical option rather than a binding channel and allows the distributor to prioritise direct sales methods when preferred,

### The risks: margin compression, competition and lost relationships

#### 1. Margin pressure

Fuel margins are already tight. Platform-imposed commissions, fixed service charges, or pricing bands can chip away at profitability – especially if distributors feel forced to price aggressively to remain visible.

Even when distributors are not charged fees with costs passed to consumers through service charges or other hidden costs, higher end-prices may deter customers from purchasing.

#### 2. Loss of price ownership

Some marketplaces impose price ranges. With minimum and maximum price points, pricing becomes dictated by the platform reducing distributor control over pricing structure.

#### 3. Intense price competition

Transparent, on-screen price comparisons mean FODs cannot rely on service differentiation alone. The pressure to compete on price alone can lead to decreased margin despite increased sales volume.

Smaller distributors may struggle to match the pricing power of large, multi-depot players with lower cost bases leading to potential domination by larger distributors, especially as SMEs may not be in a position to respond as swiftly as larger players to urgent delivery requests.

### 3. Loss of customer ownership

A key operational concern is that **customer data is owned by the marketplace**, not the distributor.

This limits a supplier's ability to:

- build loyalty
- offer bespoke discounts
- offer relevant value-add services
- offer future discounts
- follow up on orders or resolve service issues directly
- differentiate through brand experience

This is not merely a commercial issue but a long-term strategic one for SMEs.

### 4. Operational and service demands

Marketplaces may require:

- tighter delivery windows
- specific routeing
- fast customer communication
- strict cancellation or refund processes

Smaller FODs may find these requirements challenging, especially during peak winter periods, and with some marketplaces imposing penalties for missed deliveries or service failures, this can add to operational costs.

### 5. Brand dilution

With limited brand visibility and lack of direct engagement, customers may remember the platform, not the supplier. This risks commoditising the market and weakening the role of local reputation.

### Industry principles: what "good" marketplace participation looks like

From the analysis and FON's discussions with the sector, several important considerations must be emphasised:

- **The end customer belongs to the distributor** and should be treated no differently from any other customer. Even if orders come via a marketplace, service obligations remain the same.
- **Marketplaces provide a platform to connect distributors with customers; they are not, themselves, "the customer".**
- Distributors who are members of UKIFDA are bound by the **trade association's Code of Practice**, reflecting consumer legislation.
- Marketplaces themselves should also adhere to all marketing legislation – including the requirement not to mislead consumers on pricing, market pressures, service standards etc.
- Distributors must only bid for what they can realistically deliver and not overextend their capability.
- Platforms should operate consistent principles:

- For example: If a distributor rejects a delivery for safety reasons, the customer should not be made available again until issues are resolved.

**Marketplaces provide a valuable service, but it only works if everyone is clear on their role and responsibilities and the end customer is treated the same as one secured through direct sales.**

### BoilerJuice: Addressing industry concerns

BoilerJuice is the UK's most prominent fuel marketplace, and we spoke with Zoe Blackhall, Chief Supply and Operations Director, to address the questions most commonly raised in our conversations with the distributor community.

### Spotlight: A closer look at the UK's largest online fuel marketplace

As the UK's most established online heating-oil marketplace, BoilerJuice offers a useful lens through which to understand both the opportunities and concerns surrounding platform-based models. To help inform this article, BoilerJuice provided detailed responses about their role, how suppliers use the platform, common misconceptions, and the innovations they are bringing to the market. Their contributions help clarify how online marketplaces see their place within the wider distribution ecosystem.

### BoilerJuice's role in the market: "A complement, not a replacement"

BoilerJuice emphasises repeatedly that they do not view online marketplaces as a substitute for traditional distributor–customer relationships. Instead, they position themselves as a **complementary channel** that helps distributors connect with a "wider, digitally engaged customer base".

They argue that consumer expectations have shifted rapidly toward instant pricing, online ordering and convenience – and that for some distributors, especially smaller operators, meeting these expectations independently can be resource-intensive.

BoilerJuice states: "Online marketplaces are increasingly becoming a valuable complement within the fuel distribution ecosystem. Rather than replacing traditional relationships, they work alongside them to help distributors connect with a wider, digitally engaged customer base."

They suggest that technology and efficiency are key to supporting distributors in "meeting evolving customer expectations at lower cost while maintaining focus on their core business".

They also highlight their growing investment in **AI-driven tools** intended to help distributors "diversify offerings, reduce cost-to-serve, and enhance customer experience."

### Which distributors benefit most?

BoilerJuice believes that distributors who treat the marketplace as part of a deliberate strategy tend to see the strongest results. Their view is that the platform delivers more than just orders: it also offers efficiencies that can protect or enhance margins when used correctly.

"Distributors who embrace BoilerJuice as part of their existing business strategy often see strong returns... optimising delivery schedules, building routeing density, reaching new markets and unlocking efficiencies that offset margin pressure."

They emphasise that benefits are not limited to large national players. Many smaller independents use BoilerJuice to:

- reach customers outside their traditional radius
- trial new areas or delivery options without major marketing spend
- increase drop density in less busy weeks
- fill tankers more efficiently

The platform maintains that its supplier model is highly flexible, allowing each individual distributor to tailor participation to their objectives.

### Addressing the margin question

A recurring industry concern is the risk of margin erosion when operating in a price-comparison environment.

BoilerJuice acknowledges the concern but argues that focusing only on displayed prices overlooks the total economics.

"Competition will always exist, but we provide a way to compete that's low-cost from a marketing perspective. We also manage the customer service and card processing costs, reducing overhead for distributors."

By taking on **customer service, payments**, and some **operational admin**, they argue that distributors can reduce cost-to-serve – which partially offsets competitive pricing pressure.

They also stress that price is not the only lever suppliers can use on the platform. BoilerJuice highlights that many suppliers increase profitability by optimising:

- variable delivery windows
- tanker size options
- routeing and schedule consolidation
- average order size

As they note, "distributors know their business and know the market" and balancing efficient, flexibility, service and margin is "no easy feat".



The distributors who perform best often combine competitive pricing with operational excellence.

### What are the biggest misconceptions?

BoilerJuice cites two primary myths they frequently encounter:

#### Misconception 1: “BoilerJuice is entirely price-driven.”

Their response rejects this characterisation: “One common misconception is that BoilerJuice is purely a price-driven model. In reality, our focus is on creating value... convenience, trust, and operational efficiency.”

They point to tools that allow suppliers to maintain healthy margins through operational optimisation rather than solely through price competition.

#### Misconception 2: “Suppliers have no influence over customer experience.”

BoilerJuice stresses that the delivery experience is owned entirely by the distributor – and the platform rewards high service standards.

“Timely deliveries and clear communication through our Order Management portal are key areas where distributors can differentiate themselves and we ensure this is rewarded through our bi-annual rebate.”

The platform sees itself as managing the digital front-end, while the supplier controls the element the customer ultimately remembers: the delivery.

### How suppliers can use online marketplaces effectively.

BoilerJuice suggests that FODs achieve the best commercial outcomes when they:

- begin with a conversation to clarify goals
- configure coverage, tanker sizes, and delivery options deliberately
- engage actively with platform tools
- take advantage of monthly reviews
- use the platform for volume fill-in rather than wholesale dependency

Their guidance is simple:

“The more a distributor engages with us, the more benefits they seem to enjoy.”

They also emphasise that smaller businesses are not disadvantaged compared with larger distributors. Their model offers:

- equal visibility
- consistent tools across all suppliers
- no requirement for large marketing budgets

BoilerJuice strongly contests the idea of market dominance or supplier bias emphasising its provision of a “level playing field”.

### Customer insight and data: How distributors can use it

While customer identity sits with the platform, BoilerJuice does supply partners with **data-led insights** that can improve planning and operational efficiency.

They highlight their efforts to offer distributors:

- postcode-level demand patterns
- seasonal buying insights
- order timing trends
- anticipated demand surges
- tools for adapting coverage and pricing

This is a growing focus for the company:

“This is a key development area for us in the coming years as we aim to bring these insights faster and more granular.”

### Looking ahead: Innovation and future supplier tools

BoilerJuice outlined an ambitious roadmap aligned with supplier feedback. Upcoming and recently launched innovations include:

- enhanced KYC processes for business orders
- major upgrades to the Order Management Portal
- a fully configurable, self-serve Supplier Portal launching next summer
- support for additional fuel types
- expanded delivery options
- varied tanker sizes
- live demand insights
- notification centres
- new volume-management tools
- a new pricing initiative offering suppliers influence over platform marketing

The overarching theme is flexibility and efficiency – giving suppliers more control over how they participate.

### BoilerJuice's final advice to FODs

BoilerJuice encourages hesitant distributors to explore marketplace use without committing heavily.

“Exploring an online marketplace can be a low-risk way to grow your business – it costs nothing to explore.”

They position themselves not as a threat but as a strategic, collaborative partner helping distributors adapt to changing customer habits, reduce marketing spend, and access a large, engaged customer base at minimal up-front cost.

### Summary: Menace or opportunity?

Online fuel marketplaces offer:

- access to new customers
- reduced administrative burden
- improved routeing density

- opportunities to fill delivery gaps
- lower customer acquisition costs

...but come with risks:

- margin pressure
- heightened competition
- loss of customer data and loyalty
- operational demands
- brand dilution

For some SMEs, these platforms can be a viable, profitable lead-generation tool.

For others, especially those already operating at full capacity or relying heavily on brand reputation, indiscriminate use may undermine differentiation.

### Recommendations for SME FODs

#### 1. Adopt a blended approach

Combine direct sales (for margin and relationships) with selective marketplace use balancing margin retention with market reach.

#### 2. Trial participation in a controlled way

Choose a geography or customer type where delivery is efficient, improving your ability to compete.

#### 3. Track margin and customer acquisition cost rigorously

Over a 3-6 month period, compare:

- base price
- commission/service charges
- delivery cost
- admin time saved
- acquisition cost vs. direct channels

#### 4. Protect your brand and relationships

Maintain direct customers and enhance the appeal of conversion by marketplace customers by offering:

- loyalty incentives
- service enhancements
- value-added options

#### 5. Only bid for jobs you can reliably fulfil

Safety, service quality and customer treatment must remain consistent across all channels.

### FINAL THOUGHT

Marketplaces are neither a guaranteed menace nor a guaranteed opportunity.

They are a tool – powerful if used deliberately, risky if used reactively.

By understanding the way they operate, evaluating true cost-to-serve, and keeping tight control over customer experience, SME distributors can harness marketplaces to strengthen, rather than weaken, their competitive position.

# Working smarter together: How a strategic partnership with Otodata is delivering value to Barton Petroleum's customers

Now in its 53rd year, Wellingborough-based Barton Petroleum is a trusted supplier of kerosene, diesel and other liquid fuels across the UK. Continually embracing innovation to drive efficiency, service excellence, and long-term growth, the third-generation family-run business has partnered with Otodata – a global leader in remote tank monitoring – as it looks to bring smarter fuel management to its domestic and commercial customers.

"We do things the right way" says Angelo Coletta, Barton's Group Sales Manager. "That means investing in solutions that deliver real value."

Previous efforts to identify the right monitoring solution proved challenging for Barton Petroleum, as available options didn't fully deliver the company's hoped for results. With Otodata, Barton Petroleum feels it has finally found a partner that meets expectations.

"We've worked with several telemetry partners," says Lawrence Burton, Director of Business at Barton. "Otodata stands out – the product is robust, the battery life is excellent, and there's a strong network of trained engineers."

"We're confident this is the tank monitoring solution partner we'll rely on for the long term."

## A global footprint, a local focus

Headquartered in Montreal, Canada, Otodata has built a reputation for delivering cost-effective, high-ROI monitoring solutions across multiple continents. With millions of devices deployed worldwide, last year's expansion into the UK marked a strategic milestone in the company's global growth plan.

"Launching in the UK in September 2024, was a natural next step," explains Lee Martin, Otodata's UK Country Manager. "I've worked in this industry for over a decade, and I've seen



the challenges firsthand. Our goal is to help companies like Barton Petroleum by providing them with better metrics, better products, and better service."

Lee, currently Otodata's sole representative in the UK, brings deep industry knowledge and a collaborative mindset. "We're not just selling monitors," he says. "We're solving problems."

"We follow the process all the way through, and we're here when our partners need us."

## Building trust, one tank at a time

Barton Petroleum moves over 150 million litres of fuel annually and sees telemetry as a key driver of future growth. Servicing a mix of mainly kerosene and diesel tanks, the company has ambition to monitor 60–70% of their kerosene stock.

"When we take on a customer, it's important for us to be there when they need us," says Angelo. "Otodata helps us do that more efficiently."

The partnership began with an initial trial phase that quickly gained traction, leading to rapid expansion. "We want as many monitors out there as possible," says Lawrence. "They pay for themselves – first by giving customers confidence that we're looking after them, and then by delivering cost savings at scale."

Lee adds, "It's a no-brainer. If we can offer enhanced service, efficiency, and peace of mind, everyone wins."

## Bringing a clear vision

The UK telemetry market is a growing and rapidly changing one. Increasing demand for monitoring solutions has encouraged innovation, expanded the range of available products, and attracted a variety of new entrants. With so many options, it's natural for companies to approach long-term decisions thoughtfully. Barton Petroleum's experience reflects this wider sense of careful consideration within the industry.

"We've been wanting to commit fully for some time," Lawrence shares. "After trialling several providers in the market, we're confident now with Otodata to roll them out at scale."

Otodata's entry into the UK brings a fresh perspective supported by global experience, strong engineering expertise, and a commitment to long-term partnerships. "We're the biggest telemetry provider globally, but we're also focused on becoming the most trusted provider of telemetry services in the UK," says Lee. "We're speaking to – and in some cases already working with – key players across the industry. We're here to stay."

Barton Petroleum describes its decision to partner with Otodata as "more than a cost-reduction exercise," viewing it instead as "a strategic move toward operational excellence."

"We're building something," says Lawrence. "And with Otodata, we're building it right."

## PORTLAND CHRISTMAS SPECIAL: BUMPER FESTIVE CROSSWORD ANSWERS

### ACROSS

- |               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 2 Wonderfuel  | 14 Ice                |
| 5 Krampus     | 15 Bullshitallseasons |
| 6 AdBlue      | 17 Musk               |
| 10 Stocking   | 20 Solarpanels        |
| 12 Hose       | 22 Fourstar           |
| 13 Fairylight | 23 Papertransfer      |

### DOWN

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1 ULCC          | 11 Christmasputin |
| 3 Naphthivity   | 16 Crexit         |
| 4 Bunker        | 18 Prancer        |
| 7 Polarbears    | 19 Cracker        |
| 8 Lowcloudpoint | 21 Trump          |
| 9 Jinglebulls   | 22 Flow           |





# INDUSTRY INSIGHT

## HVO is a critical bridge in the transport industry's race to net zero

THE CARBON BUDGET AND GROWTH DELIVERY PLAN PUBLISHED BACK IN OCTOBER, HIGHLIGHTED THE GROWING PRESSURE TO DECARBONISE FOR FLEET OPERATORS AND COMMERCIAL FUEL USERS.

HERE, **SAM ALLEN**, RENEWABLE FUELS EXPERT AT CERTAS ENERGY, EXPLAINS WHY HE BELIEVES HYDROTREATED VEGETABLE OIL (HVO) WILL BE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT TO DELIVER RAPID PROGRESS IN FLEET DECARBONISATION.

All sectors in the United Kingdom are required by law to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Whilst technologies such as electrification and hydrogen will undoubtedly shape the long-term future, there are several barriers for businesses that may want to adopt these solutions today, for example insufficient nationwide charging infrastructure and high upfront costs.

That's why Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) has been such a crucial part of the transition story and will continue to be for the next decade.

As a drop-in renewable alternative diesel offering up to 90% carbon savings versus standard diesel across the product lifecycle, HVO provides an immediate, practical way to cut emissions across existing fleets without engine modifications or costly new infrastructure.

For sectors like haulage, construction, and off-road operations – where vehicle replacement cycles are long and electrification is currently unrealistic for some of the reasons aforementioned – HVO delivers measurable results immediately.

This renewable alternative to standard diesel is a short-to-medium-term solution that will be a critical bridge for the UK's race to net zero by supporting businesses in meeting their sustainability targets, while the country continues to invest in electrification, hydrogen, and other solutions.

### Ensuring a credible supply

The credibility of the HVO supply chain depends on transparency, as well as the integrity of its feedstocks.

When HVO is sourced in a responsible way and produced using verified waste and residue sources, it can offer substantial greenhouse gas savings in comparison to standard diesel.

The continued switch to HVO in the transport industry needs to be a credible one,

and suppliers can play a central role by keeping trust, transparency, and traceability at the heart of this transition.

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) sets a clear legal baseline for sustainability, defining acceptable feedstocks and minimum greenhouse gas saving thresholds.

There are also voluntary certification schemes that play a vital role. For example, the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC) is a global, independent initiative and leading certification system supporting fully traceable supply chains.

Additionally, the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme (RFAS) provides Renewable Fuel Declarations (RFDs), giving fleets transparent data on origin, feedstock, and emissions savings.

However, the duty to uphold sustainability standards extends beyond just regulators and auditors. It also requires honest partnerships between fleets and suppliers.

Those who insist on ISCC certified HVO with RFAS declarations, safeguard their organisations against inadvertent greenwashing and ensure that their emission reductions are fully substantiated.

### Expanding supply across industries

The growing demand and adoption of renewable diesel (HVO) across transport, aviation, construction and heating has resulted in huge, immediate carbon reductions. However, what we are seeing now is a wider range of industries trialling and adopting HVO, for example; maritime and events.

One reason for this might be that the benefits associated with switching to HVO are not exclusive to any one industry. These benefits include the ability to seamlessly blend with standard diesel, the long shelf-life, the low cold filter plugging point (to -30°C), and the multiple buying options available for

companies. Along with the option for businesses to hire HVO tanks, reducing the upfront costs associated with switching from standard diesel to HVO, this has resulted in a continued rise in interest and adoption of the fuel.

At the same time, while the existing supply of HVO meets the demand for the next decade, the renewable fuel industry is rapidly expanding its feedstock base beyond used cooking oil, thus significantly increasing overall supply capacity to meet future demand.

With ongoing investment and technological progress, renewable fuel production has the potential to scale sufficiently to meet growing demand across multiple sectors.

As an industry, we should be focused on continuing to increase the overall pool of sustainable feedstocks and refining capacity so that aviation, transport, and other sectors can all benefit from low-carbon fuel options as they evolve.

### Driving awareness and adoption

The transport industry needs a bridge for its transition to net zero. While alternative solutions, such as electric and hydrogen, are continually being developed for broader adoption, there is a growing need for interim solutions like HVO.

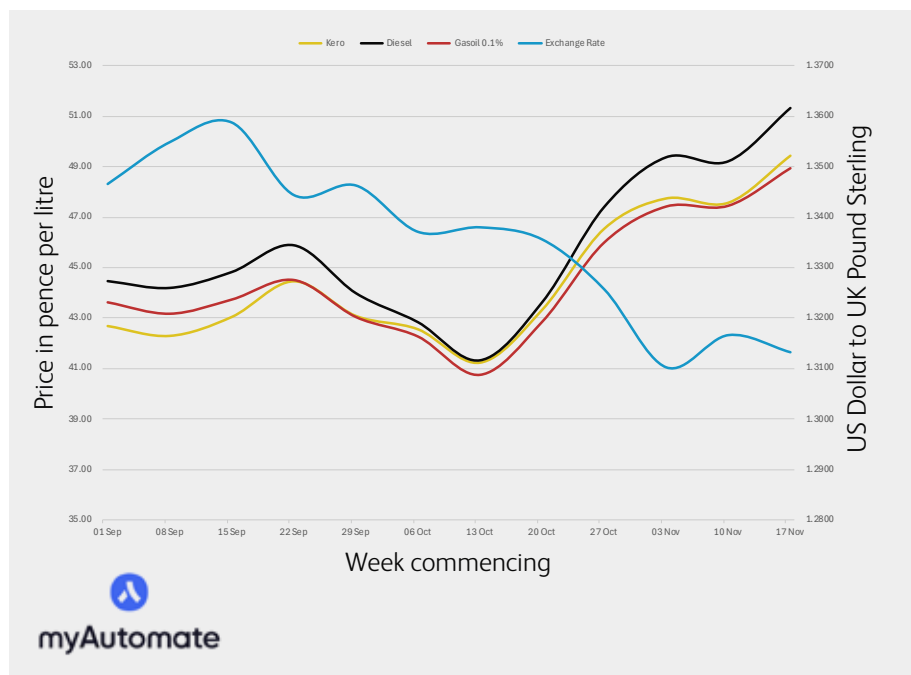
Maximising its impact relies on increased awareness, education and information to challenge misconceptions associated with HVO. We will continue to invest in our nationwide distribution network and in providing flexible purchasing options for our customers, ensuring the switch is as simple as possible.

Used responsibly and sourced sustainably through a trusted supplier, HVO can deliver a meaningful carbon reduction of up to 90% across the product lifecycle in comparison to standard diesel, helping us stay on track to meet this decade's urgent climate goals while paving the way towards a fully zero-emission future.

## Wholesale Price Movements: 23rd October 2025 – 19th November 2025

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	46.71	47.92	46.32
Average daily change	0.94	1.12	0.94
Current duty	0.00	52.95	10.18
Total	46.71	100.87	56.50

All prices in pence per litre



Highest price <b>50.41</b> Tue 18 Nov 25	Biggest up day <b>+2.60</b> Thu 23 Oct 25
------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------

Kerosene	
Lowest price <b>41.16</b> Mon 20 Oct 25	Biggest down day <b>-1.50</b> Tue 28 Oct 25

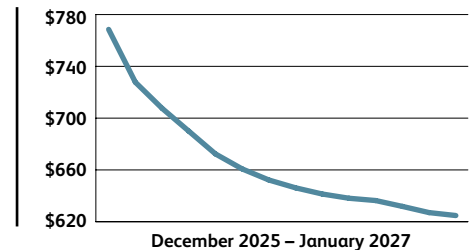
Highest price <b>52.21</b> Wed 19 Nov 25	Biggest up day <b>+3.33</b> Thu 23 Oct 25
------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------

Diesel	
Lowest price <b>41.16</b> Mon 20 Oct 25	Biggest down day <b>-2.20</b> Wed 12 Nov 25

Highest price <b>49.73</b> Tue 18 Nov 25	Biggest up day <b>+3.17</b> Thu 23 Oct 25
------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------

Gasoil 0.1%	
Lowest price <b>40.63</b> Mon 20 Oct 25	Biggest down day <b>-2.69</b> Wed 12 Nov 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	49.69	60.35	105.44	56.65	64.48	109.57
North East	48.64	58.98	104.52	58.31	62.83	107.55
North West	50.21	61.58	106.91	56.90	65.18	109.62
Midlands	48.71	59.51	104.98	55.24	63.30	108.27
South East	48.81	59.47	104.96	62.29	66.08	107.82
South West	49.16	59.31	104.80	57.86	63.09	107.41
N. Ireland	49.27	60.68	n/a	55.70	65.33	n/a
Republic Of Ireland	63.03	66.11	106.38	68.90	70.02	109.75
Portland	47.02	57.03	101.67			

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 DECEMBER'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 **RICHARD DONOVAN**, GENERAL MANAGER, ESL FUELS.

## "LET'S MAKE IT WORK FOR BOTH."

**RICHARD DONOVAN**

### Sum up your working life in 25 words or fewer.

8 years in finance at Innospec, working across Europe and the USA, followed by 10 exciting years at ESL Fuels, in a diverse leadership role.

### Describe yourself in 3 words.

Logical. Competitive. Open-minded.

### What were your childhood / early ambitions?

To be successful in the world of business.

### If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

The ability to pause or slow time – I'd like more of it.

### What's your best Christmas cracker joke?

How do you find Will Smith in the snow? Look for the fresh prints.

### Your top tips for business success?

Keep innovating and nurture relationships across the business.

### The best advice you've ever received?

Lead by example.

### What's the last photo you took on your phone?

I coach my son's Under-9s team, so it's a customary full-time photo.

### What's your favourite Christmas song?

Last Christmas, but not before December.

### If you could have dinner with any person, living or dead, who and why?

Will Ferrell because that would be the most fun.

### The best thing about your job?

The people I work with, internally and externally.

### The quality that you most admire?

Kindness.

### What will you be eating on Christmas Day? (Turkey, Chicken, Beef, Chocolate?!)

A lot of pigs in blankets.

### What are you most likely to say?

"Let's make it work for both."

### What are you least likely to say?

"Change is bad."

### Describe your perfect day.

A day of sport... tennis, football, badminton, footgolf, padel, finishing with snooker and a few beers.

### Your favourite sports team?

Crewe Alexandra.

### If you could be any fictional character, who and why?

Maverick in Top Gun – he's cool and the best at what he does.

### What's your favourite thing that is associated with Christmas? (A food, activity, tradition etc.)

Watching my boys, Max and Zac, open their presents.

### Share your greatest personal achievement.

It's a team achievement, but professionally it would be the growth we've achieved at ESL Fuels.

### Share your pet hate or biggest irritant.

Arrogance.

### What would your Mastermind specialist subject be?

The Premier League.

### What's your favourite Christmas film?

I have two – Home Alone and Elf.

### If you were PM what would be the first law you'd pass?

I'd work with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reshape tax policy.

### If you had a time machine, would you go to the future or the past?

The future – to see new technologies and pick up a sports almanac.

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

There are a lot of places I'd like to see, so a world tour.

### If you were Editor of Fuel Oil News magazine, what's your first article?

I'll leave that to the experts!

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

A Swiss Army Knife, a ferro rod and a (Wilson) ball.

### Are you a snow lover or a snow hater?

I love it in the mountains, dislike it on the roads.

### Something about you people would be surprised by?

I'm related to Barack Obama – we share the same Irish ancestors.



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