

Fuel Oil News

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March 2026

PREVIEW: UKIFDA EXPO & CONFERENCE 2026

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Start moving. Build momentum. Shape outcomes.

Our countdown to the industry's major event begins in earnest. And it begins at a time when the industry is riding an important wave of progress.

Despite a short response window, the government consultation to explore alternative clean heating solutions attracted more than 16,000 submissions supporting the introduction of a renewable liquid heating fuel blend. An outstanding response that would not have been possible without years of industry preparation.

When my son was weighing up his future choices a few years ago, I told him how vehicles are far easier to steer once moving. Rather than wait for a 'Eureka' moment, I encouraged him to start his journey. After a few forks in the road along the way, one appeared that he was prepared and ready to reach for – now he is set to begin an apprenticeship that feels exactly right.

This industry didn't start preparing its response when the consultation launched. It has been preparing for years.

When government initiated its single-solution approach to domestic heat decarbonisation in 2021, this industry, with a customer relationship unrivalled in the energy sector, heard the concerns.

Years of collaboration between distributors, customers and industry bodies followed, developing a workable alternative – a practical clean heating pathway that delivers for decarbonisation goals and rural homeowners alike.

What began as a campaign grew into a movement, laying the groundwork for the long-awaited consultation. As a result, in just 12 weeks, well-informed rural communities added their voices to an industry calling for an immediate, practical and affordable route to domestic heat decarbonisation.

The coordinated industry effort resulted in one of the strongest public responses ever seen.

A powerful momentum has been built. Liverpool is where it turns into lasting change.

The UKIFDA EXPO & Conference is our opportunity to come together to ensure that the needs and realities of rural homes are fully reflected in future policy decisions.

I look forward to seeing you there!



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Fuel Oil News

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

4-7 INDUSTRY NEWS

8 NEWS ANALYSIS

9 DISTRIBUTOR DIARIES

11 TOP 10 NI AND ROI DISTRIBUTORS

Tanker fleets: Expanding or contracting?

12 PEOPLE MOVES

15 A DAY IN THE LIFE

Cutting through red tape to win awards.

17 INDUSTRY VOICE

Thoughts on future mobility fuelling.

18 & 19 INDUSTRY VOICE

Is training critical to industry success?

20 & 21 INDUSTRY FOCUS

How apprenticeships deliver business resilience.

7 KEN'S CORNER

Come together – right now.

25-29 DOWNSTREAM

Full preview for UKIFDA EXPO & CONFERENCE 2026

30 & 31 DELIVERING INSIGHT

The depot manager role – disappearing or evolving?

32 PORTLAND REPORT

Venezuela: Why the market doesn't share Trump's enthusiasm.

34 NEWS ANALYSIS

Distribution and logistics: 2026 outlook.

36 & 37 INDUSTRY INSIGHT

HSE visits – what to expect?

38 PRICING PAGE

39 IN PROFILE

An oil logistics specialist with a truck to be proud of.

On the cover

Inver Energy's newly launched Fuel Pod – a modular refuelling solution configured around customer needs. Overcoming the challenge of establishing reliable on-site supply in locations where a permanent underground installation is not viable, this flexible solution is featured on page 13.



In this issue

We discuss the value of training on pages 18 & 19 and consider effective apprenticeship programmes on pages 20 & 21. The impact of sector developments on the depot manager role is analysed on pages 8, 30 & 31, while UKIFDA EXPO is previewed on pages 25 - 29.



New community launches to support professionals facing their own transition dilemma

As major oil and gas companies signal rollbacks on transition commitments, an increasing number of industry professionals are asking an uncomfortable question: Should I stay or should I go?

A new support network – Life After Oil – has launched to help those who are considering that choice. The initiative brings together oil and gas professionals who believe that, with global temperatures already exceeding safe thresholds, a gradual transition is no longer enough.

The network officially launched on 11 February in Westminster during International Energy Week, with founder-members sharing the personal experiences that led them to reassess long-term sector careers.

“Prestige and salary matter far less than whether you can look your children in the eye in twenty years,” said Arjan Keizer, a former Shell executive and guest speaker at the event. “The majority of employees want their companies to lead the transition.”

Deep industry roots

At the heart of Life After Oil is Nick Smith, owner of Fuel Oil News and a fourth-generation coal and oil supplier. He has long navigated the balance between meeting today’s essential energy needs and steering



his businesses toward renewables.

“What binds our community together,” Nick said, “is a recognition that major oil companies are failing to provide a sensible contribution to the conversation about how to respond to the fossil fuel dilemma.”

While acknowledging that oil remains essential in many sectors, he argues that non-essential consumption must reduce urgently, and that industry leaders have a responsibility to shape markets, investment priorities and public narratives accordingly.

A community of experience

Life After Oil positions itself as both a community and a platform for personal transition stories.

Featured voices include Ben Duckworth, CEO of Heat Engineer and Director of Greenarc, Craggs Energy and LCM Environmental.

“It was a great conversation about the journey so far,” Ben said. “The shifts happening across heating and energy, and what the future might look like for engineers and business owners navigating change.”

Importantly, he stressed that transition does not necessarily mean departure.

“I still very much have one foot in it, and I think that’s important. The transition in our industry isn’t black and white. It’s happening in real time, and many of us are evolving alongside it rather than walking away overnight.”

MechTronic celebrates a decade of innovation

Fuel delivery system innovator MechTronic is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its flagship electronic metering system, OptiMate.

Introduced in 2016, OptiMate prioritised “the logic behind the screen”, seeking to transform fuel delivery with a smarter, safer and more efficient system.

By automating high-risk processes such as the manifold emptying during a line change, the system prevents cross-contamination – saving distributors from potential downtime, recovery costs and reputational damage.

“As we celebrate ten years of OptiMate, we aren’t just looking back at a decade of technology, but a decade of listening to our customers,” said Brad Wilkie, Managing Director at MechTronic.

“Our goal was to provide a system that acts as an asset, not a hurdle. Today, with over



1,000 systems in operation across the UK and Ireland, the success of OptiMate proves that intuitive tech is the real secret to fleet efficiency.”

Key features:

- Simplicity: Controlled by just three buttons
- Safety: Automating line and compartment changes
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- Full system support
- Nationwide support network
- Proactive maintenance
- 24hr technical support
- Comprehensive onsite training

Brad is looking forward to celebrating this business milestone and to discussing the next decade of innovation, at the upcoming industry gathering in Liverpool in April where MechTronic will be found on Stand 24: “We invite customers, past and present and long-standing partners to celebrate this milestone at the UKIFDA EXPO 2026.

Rural communities send clear message with exceptional consultation response

Industry body UKIFDA has confirmed that more than 16,000 oil-heated households submitted their response to the Government's Alternative Clean Heating Solutions Consultation through the Future Ready Fuel campaign.

The consultation closed on 10 February, with the volume of submissions being regarded as an important milestone for rural communities across the UK in their fight for greater choice in pathways to low-carbon domestic heating.

Throughout the consultation period, UKIFDA worked closely with member distributors to encourage households to engage with the process and ensure their views were represented. This coordinated industry effort has resulted in one of the strongest public responses ever seen on the future of off-grid home heating, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the needs and realities of rural homes are fully reflected in future policy decisions.

One of the most inspiring moments of the campaign came from a group of oil heated households in Kehelland, Cornwall. Setting off in the middle of the night, these residents travelled all the way to Westminster to hand in their consultation responses in person.

Submissions have come from oil-heated households and those in the industry in every corner of the UK. With responses from Cornwall and Wales, the East of England, Northern England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the widespread call for more practical and affordable low carbon heating solutions is clear.

A clear message

The scale of participation sends a clear message that rural households want practical,



affordable, low-carbon heating choices, including the option to use renewable liquid fuels, such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), as a straightforward route to decarbonisation without the high upfront costs or disruption associated with other technologies.

Ken Cronin, CEO of UKIFDA, commented: "Rural households have made their position unmistakably clear. They want clean heating solutions that are practical, affordable and achievable for the types of homes they live in, and renewable liquid fuels offer exactly that. This level of engagement shows just how important it is that government policy reflects the real-world needs of off-grid communities."

What happens now?

While the official line from the government is that they will publish the consultation response by the end of the decade, industry bodies UKIFDA and OFTEC believe the scale of engagement demands more urgency.

"Given the clear mandate provided by 16,000 supporters, we are now urging the government to publish their findings and response much sooner.

"Homes and businesses off grid deserve to have some certainty today, not in several years' time."

UKIFDA Expo Dinner to celebrate sector excellence

The UKIFDA Expo & Conference 2026 Dinner will take place in Liverpool on 15 April, bringing delegates together for an evening of celebration and industry recognition at the Exhibition Centre Liverpool.



Sponsored by Prema, with the President's Drinks Reception sponsored by Otodata, the dinner will be held on the Terrace at the Exhibition Centre Liverpool and will feature guest

speaker John Parrott MBE.

One of the most recognisable figures in British sport, John enjoyed an illustrious snooker career spanning the late 1980s and 1990s.

His mix of sporting insight, humour and behind-the-scenes storytelling promise an engaging and memorable evening to close to the first day of the Expo.

Celebrating industry excellence

A highlight of the evening will be the presentation of three key UKIFDA Awards – Depot of the Year, Driver of the Year and Young Person of the Year – recognising professionalism and outstanding contribution across the downstream liquid fuels sector.

With networking, recognition and sector pride at its heart, the UKIFDA Expo & Conference 2026 Dinner promises to be one of the standout moments of the event.

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Greenarc Fuel Cards awarded place on Crown Commercial Service framework

The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework RM6367CCS acts as the UK government's central procurement authority, establishing frameworks that pre-qualify suppliers against defined standards.

Appointment to a framework confirms that those requirements have been met, enabling public bodies to contract with suppliers without running a full standalone tender process.

Business milestone

For Burnley-based Greenarc Fuel Cards, the award marks a significant milestone. Inclusion means local authorities, NHS trusts and other public sector fleets can access its fuel card offering under compliant terms with pricing structures and due diligence already in place.

Kevin Jackson, Fuel Card Director at Greenarc Fuel Cards, said: "We're proud to be awarded a place on the CCS framework, especially as a Northern scaling business only a few years into our journey.

"This appointment recognises our focus on building strong partnerships and making fuel and fleet management simpler."

Drone technology investment will deliver cheaper, safer tank inspections.

Having invested in drone technology, waste management specialist CSG has now secured in-house accreditation to carry out certified storage tank inspections.

CSG team member Sam Richards, who has been with the business 5 years has qualified as an EEMUA 159 Storage Tank Assessor.

Until now, CSG has subcontracted the formal inspection and reporting element of tank assessments. Sam's completion of the internationally recognised standard allows the company to deliver inspection, assessment and reporting within its own confined space team, which already undertakes tank cleaning, inspection support, tankering and waste management services.

Technology investment

The development follows CSG's £100,000 investment last year in drone inspection technology, which is now being used to support both internal and external tank assessments. The drone system uses LIDAR sensors and high-definition imaging to capture detailed internal and external data, allowing tank condition and metal thickness to be mapped in three dimensions.

According to CSG, drone-based inspection significantly reduces the need for scaffolding and confined access, improving safety and lowering inspection preparation costs, particularly for large-scale assets.



WCF aligns North West operations under Allan Stobart brand

WCF Ltd has announced the merger of its two North West fuel businesses, bringing WCF Fuels North West and Allan Stobart Lubricants & Fuels together under the Allan Stobart name.

The businesses will continue to trade separately until 31 May, when they will formally combine as Allan Stobart Lubricants & Fuels.

Depot locations and delivery teams will remain in place, with tankers continuing to operate from Carnforth and Hawkshead, alongside Allan Stobart's established sites at Raughton Head, Carlisle and Hexham.

The move follows the successful amalgamation of WCF's east coast fuel operations in 2024, and forms part of the group's ongoing strategy to align its regional distribution network more closely.

While customer-facing service is expected to remain unchanged, the merger reflects wider structural shifts taking place across the UK fuel distribution sector. 2025 saw heightened consolidation as operators seek greater scale, improved operational efficiency and enhanced investment capacity in response to rising cost pressures and an evolving market.

Changing dynamics

The integration will see the two operations aligned under a single brand, while depot and delivery teams continue to operate from existing bases.

Phil Murray, Chief Executive Officer of WCF, said: "Bringing together two well-established operations under the Allan Stobart brand will help us build a stronger fuel distribution business that is well positioned for the changing dynamics of our market.

"As both businesses are part of WCF, this is a natural next step that strengthens our ability to invest, grow and continue to deliver the dependable service our customers rely on every day."

Allan Stobart Lubricants & Fuels delivers domestic, agricultural and commercial fuels across Cumbria, Northumberland and southern Scotland. WCF Ltd, which is partly employee-owned, operates fuel distribution depots across Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Humberside, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Lancashire and Cumbria.

The North West integration underlines a broader industry trend: consolidation is increasingly being used not simply to expand footprint, but to strengthen operational resilience and long-term network sustainability, and is increasingly shaping operational models.

Phil Murray speaks further on this development, as well as the evolving industry, in the next issue of Fuel Oil News – out April 2nd.

How consolidation impacts depot leadership

The merger of WCF's North West fuel operations under the Allan Stobart brand is the latest example of structural consolidation reshaping the UK fuel distribution landscape.

The messaging is familiar: strengthened resilience, greater efficiency, increased investment capacity and long-term sustainability. Customer-facing service remains unchanged. Delivery teams continue. Depots operate as before.

But while continuity is rightly prioritised externally, consolidation inevitably alters operational dynamics internally.

Structural evolution

Across the sector, 2025 was marked by accelerated acquisition and investment activity. Watson Fuels secured private equity backing. NWF Fuels continued its acquisition strategy. Standard Fuel Oils expanded its regional footprint. Ownership transitions at Craggs Energy and Highland Fuels reflect a sector evolving in structure as well as scale.

As businesses integrate, duplication reduces. Procurement aligns. Fleet planning becomes regionally coordinated. Digital platforms are unified. Compliance reporting is standardised. KPIs are benchmarked across sites.

The consequence is subtle but significant: depot-level autonomy shifts.

IS CONSOLIDATION DRIVING GREATER EFFICIENCY – OR COMPRESSING DEPOT-LEVEL AUTHORITY?

This does not mean depot managers disappear. Rather, their authority increasingly sits within centralised systems and governance frameworks. Decision-making becomes data led. Oversight is shared across dashboards. Exception management replaces discretionary control.

For some groups, this is a necessary evolution to support scale and investment. For others – particularly SME distributors – it raises a strategic question about the balance between efficiency and local accountability.

Redefining leadership

Is consolidation driving greater efficiency – or compressing depot-level authority? The answer, increasingly, appears to be both.

Consolidation may strengthen resilience at group level. It may also redefine what leadership looks like at depot level.

The depot manager role is not disappearing under consolidation. It is being repositioned – from independent operational controller to accountable site leader operating within a standardised, technology-enabled network.

In this issue's *Delivering Insights* feature on pages 30 and 31, we explore in depth how the depot manager role is evolving in response to technology, cost pressures and structural change – and what that means for distributors of all sizes.

What our acquisition coverage tells us about structural change

A look back over Fuel Oil News coverage of recent acquisitions and ownership transitions across the UK fuel distribution sector highlights a number of consistent themes. While each deal is unique, common strategic drivers are emerging – and together they help explain why operational structures, including depot-level leadership, are evolving.

Scale creates resilience

Across transactions involving businesses such as Watson Fuels, NWF Fuels and Standard Fuel Oils, leadership teams consistently emphasise the importance of scale. Larger networks provide greater purchasing power, fleet flexibility, geographic reach and the ability to withstand market volatility. Scale is increasingly positioned not as ambition, but as protection.

Integration drives efficiency

While announcements often reassure customers that “day-to-day service remains unchanged”, behind the scenes integration is a core objective. Acquisitions typically bring together procurement, fleet planning, compliance oversight and back-office functions. The aim is reduced duplication, clearer reporting lines and improved margin control – all of which naturally reshape where decisions are made.

Operational decision-making is increasingly standardised across multi-site networks. This inevitably reshapes the autonomy of depot-level leadership.

Investment capacity is a strategic lever

In transactions involving private equity or strategic growth capital – such as the backing of Watson Fuels by Inspirit Capital – investment

capacity is frequently highlighted. Access to capital enables fleet renewal, digital infrastructure upgrades and operational optimisation. With that investment comes an expectation of measurable performance and structured oversight.

Evolution of leadership

As businesses grow – whether through acquisition, employee ownership or external investment – governance structures tend to formalise. KPI dashboards, centralised reporting systems and performance benchmarking become standard practice. This reflects a broader sector evolution, moving from local discretionary management toward structured, data-led oversight.

Where once depot managers exercised broad discretionary control, the role increasingly sits within a broader governance framework rather than operating as a stand-alone local authority.

Continuity at the front line, change behind the scenes

A striking commonality across recent deals is the reassurance of continuity: staff retained, brands respected, customer relationships preserved. Yet structural evolution often occurs in parallel. Centralised systems, unified platforms and standardised compliance processes increasingly sit behind familiar depot names. The visible face of the business may remain constant, but the operational architecture continues to evolve.

Taken together, these themes provide important context for understanding the changing nature of depot-level leadership. As scale, integration and governance mature across the sector, the depot manager role is inevitably influenced – not eliminated but repositioned within a more system-led framework.

THE LATEST UPDATES FROM OUR DISTRIBUTOR COMMUNITY

Watson Fuels: first national distributor to achieve FORS Bronze across all locations

The achievement of FORS Bronze accreditation across all 39 locations in England, Scotland and Wales sets a new sector benchmark for safety, efficiency and environmental responsibility.



"This milestone reflects the relentless focus, hard work and dedication of our fleet and operations teams as they deliver service excellence."



FORS accreditation recognises Watson Fuel's commitment to:

- Increased safety through measures such as enhanced driver training, vehicle safety equipment and operational procedures.
- Improved efficiency by reducing fuel consumption, minimising downtime, and optimising routes.
- Environmental protection through tighter emission controls and waste management.

The Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) is the UK's leading accreditation for fleet operations. Of the 4,700 companies accredited, **Watson Fuels** is the first national fuel distributor to secure accreditation across every site.

This dedication to safety and environmental protection aligns with Watson Fuel's commitment to delivering safe, reliable fuel solutions to domestic and commercial customers across the UK.

Customer confidence

Daniel Brain, Chief Operating Officer of Watson Fuels, said: "Achieving FORS Bronze accreditation at every site sets us apart from other distributors and is a clear endorsement of our operational excellence."

Daniel concludes: "It gives our customers confidence that when our red tankers pull up outside, their fuel will be delivered safely, responsibly and in line with industry-leading best practice."

Congratulations on a significant industry achievement!



IFC Inflow: A squat charity challenge

IFC Inflow, the Basildon-based business, is proud to be supporting Cancer Research UK with a new challenge.

Scarlett Steen, Marketing Coordinator, explained more: "A few of us at IFC Inflow have teamed up to take on the '100 Squats a Day in February' challenge' to raise money for Cancer Research UK."

"We wanted to support a cause that affects so many people and it turns a fitness challenge into something meaningful. It's been a great way to build team spirit and to push us, all while contributing to vital research and support for those impacted by cancer."

Good luck to the team at IFC Inflow!



Barton Petroleum Ltd: Howard Marriott Celebrates 20 Years

Howard Marriott, Group Transport Manager at Northamptonshire-based fuel distributor **Barton Petroleum Ltd**, recently marked 20 years with the company.

Reflecting on his career, Howard said: "Since joining

Barton, I've held three different roles – Tanker Driver, Depot Supervisor and, for the past 10 years, Group Transport Manager.

"Over the last two decades, the business has grown and evolved hugely, yet I'm proud that we've maintained the core values of a friendly, family-run company, committed to service and reliability. That ethos was evident from my very first day at Barton.

"I have so many good memories from my time at Barton Petroleum, many of them being 'Après Work' but a professional highlight for me was being presented with our Founder Member certificate for the DVSA Earned Recognition Scheme at the Commercial Vehicle Show back in 2018 when the scheme was launched."

A key figure in the business

Clive Morin, Managing Director, added: "Howard joined Barton in 2006 as a Tanker Driver and quickly demonstrated that he could have a big part to play in the future of the business.

"I am delighted that Howard has progressed to our Group Transport Manager and has become a cornerstone of our success."

The Fuel Oil News team congratulates Howard on this milestone – here's to the next 20 years!

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TOP 10

FUEL OIL DISTRIBUTORS IRELAND

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

COMPANY	NUMBER OF TANKERS
East Cork Oil	201
Corrib Oil	110*
Certa Ireland	93
Top Oil	60
Klass Oil	45
Valero Marketing	40
Tria Energy	28
Naas Oil Company Ltd	25
Sweeney Oil	24
M&J Kelleher	22
Glen Fuel Services	21
Ultima Oil	18

*Correct as of 2022

NORTHERN IRELAND

COMPANY	NUMBER OF TANKERS
LCC Oil	160
Nicholl Oils	120**
Patterson Oil	38
Bangor Fuels	35
AH Fuel Oils	25
Morrow Fuels	18
WR Kennedy & Sons	18
Thompson Fuels	11
P Ferguson & Sons	11
Tyrone Fuels	6
Strangford Fuels	5

**Correct as of 2022



East Cork Oil



Tyrone Fuels

Figures, taken on trust, were provided in February/March 2026.
Source: Fuel Oil News March 2026

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A QUARTERLY ROUND UP OF KEY INDUSTRY MOVES



Eric Brisard has joined **Greenery** as Managing Director, France. The newly created role follows the acquisition of French fuels and lubricants supplier **Armorine** in October 2025.

Adam Traeger, CEO of Greenery, said: "I am pleased to welcome Eric. He brings strong insight into the French market and the right leadership experience to oversee our operations in France."

Eric commented: "Greenery is an ambitious organisation, and this is an exciting time to join... as we continue to expand and enhance our offering in the French market."



In a further addition to the **Greenery** team, **Lynne McGuigan** has joined as Sales Manager for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Bringing a wealth of

industry experience, Lynne joins Greenery from **Petroineos**, where she spent nearly two decades working across various commercial roles and most recently managed the commercial sales team.

With Greenery's growing presence in Scotland and Northern Ireland, Lynne will be based in Scotland to support the company's continued growth, whilst building and maintaining strong relationships with customers.

Commenting on her appointment, Lynne McGuigan said: "This is an exciting time to join Greenery, as we look to expand our fuel offer in Scotland and Northern Ireland, while exploring new opportunities in these markets. I am looking forward to working with both existing and new Greenery customers to meet their fuel needs."



In line with **EET Fuels** pan-UK strategy, **Gary Khanna** has moved into the role of Regional Manager – London & the South East

saying: "This marks an important chapter both in my career and in our mission to expand and strengthen EET Fuels presence across the UK."

"I'm excited to lead our regional initiatives, build strong local partnerships,

and contribute to delivering sustainable energy solutions for the future."

Adam Dickson has moved into a new role at **Navigator Terminals**, becoming Terminal Manager.

Adam Heath has stepped up to the role of Group Financial Controller at **NWF Group PLC**.



New faces and role changes at **Watson Fuels**, as former Head of Commercial, **Craig Hallam** becomes Commercial Director, and **Rachel Stidworthy**

joins as Content & Communications Manager.

Michael Steele has become Head of Renewables for **Your NRG** to support organisations in transitioning from white diesel to lower-carbon fuel solutions.

Emily Smith has been promoted to become Commercial Manager at **New Era Energy**.



Jamie Robinson has moved to **Allan Stobart Lubricants and Fuels** to take up the position of Business Development Manager.

"Jamie brings a wealth of commercial experience across multiple industries. With a strong understanding of both sales and procurement, Jamie combines strategic insight with hands-on experience to deliver sustainable growth and long-term value for our customers."

Jamie commented: "As Business Development Manager I drive company growth by identifying new opportunities, building customer relationships, and creating strategies to increase revenue and profitability."

"The varying degree of challenges within my role is what I enjoy most."

Craig Belshaw has taken up a new role as Head of Lubricants at **Rix Petroleum**.

Lawrence O'Hara has been promoted to Regional Manager at **Johnston Oils**.

Craggs Energy announced two promotions, with **Beth Boddy** taking up a role as Northern Sales Manager, and **Ollie McEwan** becoming Commercial Team Leader, saying: "Beth has been a valued member of the team for several years now."

"Moving into the Northern Sales



Manager role at **Craggs Energy** is a natural progression both for the business and for Beth's career, and we're excited to see her bring her knowledge, experience and enthusiasm into this new chapter.

"Ollie has been a key part of the **Craggs Energy** team for the past two years in the role of Commercial Sales Executive. His contribution to both the team and the wider business has been exceptional. In his new role as Commercial Team Leader, Ollie will be able to further apply his strengths to support, guide and develop the commercial team."



Sarah Cowan has become Transport Planner at **Moorland Fuels** and **Matthew Gledhill** shared his move to **Tank Topper** as National Sales Team Leader.



Daisy Jones has joined **Lynx Fuels** taking up a role as Sales Manager.



John Keeley shared his enthusiasm for his new role as **Prince Energy** as Regional Business Development Executive.



David Millard joined **Clugston Distribution Services Limited** in November 2025 as Managing Director

David commented: "I'm excited to be joining **Clugston Distribution** as the company continues to build on its strong

foundations. The business has a proud heritage and a talented team.

"I look forward to working together to deliver sustainable growth, innovation, and exceptional service for our customers."

Inver Fuel Pod: A refuelling solution tailored to fleets and commercial users

INVER ENERGY HAS LAUNCHED THE INVER FUEL POD, A MODULAR REFUELLING SOLUTION DESIGNED TO BE CONFIGURED AROUND INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMER NEEDS.

Built as an above ground, self-contained system, the Inver Fuel Pod is suited to fleet operators and commercial users that need reliable on-site supply. The Inver Fuel Pod can be installed quickly, scaled to demand and relocated if operational needs change. It is designed for remote or hard to access locations, as well as temporary projects or at sites where a permanent underground installation is not viable.

Live operation in Clonmel

The first Inver Fuel Pod was commissioned in December 2025, and is now operating 24/7 in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Ireland. It supplies diesel, AdBlue, Marked Gas Oil and HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil), designed to accommodate HGVs, vans and private vehicles. The installation demonstrates how the Inver Fuel Pod modular unit can support multiple users, with a secure fuel card and self-service payment options.

Expanding the fuel offering

As part of the Greenergy Group, an established supplier and distributor of transport fuels, the Inver Fuel Pod proposition is supported by a robust, international supply chain, offering customers product optionality combined with supply security.

HVO, also known as renewable diesel, is a key element of the Inver Fuel Pod offer in Ireland, supporting businesses to reduce their carbon emissions without disrupting their day-to-day operations.

Tailored to business needs

The Inver Fuel Pod is delivered as a fully integrated, portable unit, with Inver providing a turnkey service covering installation, commissioning and ongoing maintenance.



John O’Leary, Managing Director at Inver Energy, said: “The Inver Fuel Pod complements Inver’s existing supply offer, giving customers an additional option to secure reliable on-site supply. Its modular design means each unit can be configured to suit the requirements of a specific site, from vehicle mix and product selection, to access controls and payment options. Inver can support customers new to on-site refuelling, those looking to optimise existing operations, and businesses managing multiple sites or projects, who want a flexible solution that can adapt and help future proof their fuel supply.”

Visit Greenergy’s stand 14 at UKIFDA Expo & Conference to learn more about the Inver Fuel Pod and discuss how flexible on-site refuelling could support your operations. Alternatively, contact us at inverinfo@greenergy.com.



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A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Mike Heaton

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 **MIKE HEATON**, HEAD OF ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AT CERTAS ENERGY, TO DISCOVER HOW MIKE SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.



My alarm goes off at...

05.20am.

The first thing I do is...

make my bed (old military habit) and grab a strong coffee.

I prepare for the day ahead by...

doing a workout at the gym 3-4 days a week (weights, boxing, run, etc.) to clear my head, then a quick protein shake and look ahead for the day, checking my schedule, priorities and timings, then head to the office or site.

I can't leave the house without...

saying 'good morning' to my wife and dog.

My typical day...

Every day is different for me, as no two days are ever the same. I am currently working on various large projects, to include new Truckstop acquisitions, so as you can imagine this takes a lot of time, travelling and meetings, together with preparing investment papers and capex papers for approval.

I am also working closely with our Engineering Team to redevelop the bunker estate (HGV Refuelling stations) of which we currently have 27 large ones. Therefore, given that over 5,000 HGVs refuel at these sites each day, managing the estate can be a task in itself, to achieve as near to 100% uptime as possible.

In addition to this, I have regular supplier meetings across the UK and sometimes Europe, and of course in-house and team meetings at our Warrington HQ.

I always like to visit the Hollies Truckstop each week, to check in with the team and Dave Weaver, who is the Truckstop Manager. Whilst on site, I like to engage with our loyal customer base of HGV drivers too, checking how they are, and if the Truckstop has met their expectations and high standards.



Omega Bunker Launch

The driver community is not shy in coming forward and letting you know if something isn't right, but that said, most of the time drivers are very complimentary and have had a good stay.

I believe that in addition to the great facilities at the site, including the restaurant, bar, retail shop, gaming area, launderette, hotel, Truckwash, fuel bunker and the large parking area attracting 220 HGVs each night, it is the staff that make their visits enjoyable.

The drivers order their food and drink from the vast menu at the counter and leave their name, before they sit down and relax. A short time later there is a cry out of 'Pete, James, Steve' or similar, as the staff whisk out the food to the awaiting drivers table with a smile on their face. Sometimes, this is the first time that the driver has spoken with anybody for 7-8 hours that day.

The staff are often heard singing joyfully from the kitchen area, as they prepare the meals from a new state of the art kitchen. I have also stayed over at The Hollies on a few occasions, and it is great to see like-minded drivers exchanging a few tales and stories in the evening, over a pint in the small bar, or in the warmer summer months sat outside on the patio area or benches.

Drivers often report that they feel safe at the Hollies Truckstop, which has, for the third consecutive year, achieved the ParkMark Freight Award, the highest UK standard for a safe and secure Truckstop, in addition to TAPA accreditation (Europe's highest standard).

The site achieved this by demonstrating to the Police and British Parking Associated (BPA) low or zero crime at the site, investment in ANPR and CCTV cameras, LED floodlights, security fencing, exit barriers, and Security Officers with body cameras. We also went a step further, following feedback, and now have a defib unit and a blood pressure monitoring device at the site.

How does the energy transition impact your day-to-day role?

Certas Energy, as a company, has invested heavily in the energy transition over the past two years, with the acquisition of various renewable companies to include Green Biofuels (GBF), the largest distributor of HVO in UK, Centreco (largest UK solar installer), Hafad, Freedom Heat Pumps and Next Energy.

I have successfully introduced Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to the bunker estate, currently offering the product at 17 out of 27 sites. We have plans to develop this further, so eventually the whole bunker estate will offer HVO, as a drop in alternative to diesel.

In addition to HVO, I am currently working with a few suppliers to introduce e-HGV chargers at Truckstops. Again, this offers a new fuel alternative to traditional liquid fuels and even HVO.

I have also installed solar panels at the Hollies Truckstop, which generates approximately 10% green energy of the total energy used at the site. Again, I have an ambition to roll this out at any new Truckstops that we acquire.

When we sourced and scoped out a new industrial kitchen design for the Hollies Truckstop, I ensured that it was energy efficient, again further reducing the carbon produced at the site.

I try to keep up to date with the energy transition landscape, because although we are a traditional fuels company, we need to and will keep up with the market demand and investments.

My most memorable work moment...

winning twice at the APEA Awards, being a runner up, for the past three consecutive years, for Health and Safety at The Hollies Truckstop and also for the Environmental Protection and Sustainability Award at Tyseley Bunker and the Port of Southampton.

The worst part of my job...

is cutting through the red tape and time delays when bringing new projects and acquisitions to fruition, be that capital expenditure restrictions, planning delays, managing landlord and owner expectations, or supplier timescales.

The best part of my job...

is building a healthy pipeline of Truckstop acquisitions and progressing them through to delivery.

This initially involves meeting site owners, who may want to sell up, building relationships with property developers and real estate companies who often have off-market, in addition to on-market plots of land for various developments, together with real estate investors who acquire freeholds for long term leases.

Letting landowners, developers and the industry know of our intentions to buy or lease, is vital in the process, through word of mouth, cold calling, industry events, marketing and social media.

I relax after work by...

walking our Cockapoo, called Dexter. It is difficult in the dark winter



months, however, in the lighter evenings and weekends we often take longer walks and even stop off for an occasional pint on the way home.

I like to socialise with friends and family at weekends which would normally include food and wine and the barbecue getting fired up in the summer months, of course.

My favourite meal is...

I love a Sunday roast (beef or chicken) with all the trimmings.

Although I can't take credit for cooking it (my wife does that), I do help with peeling and preparing vegetables and choosing the wine!

The last thing I do each day is...

brush my teeth and say goodnight to my wife and dog.

I'm normally in bed by...

21.30 in the week (early to bed/ early to rise). Anytime at the weekends.

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Thoughts for the day: Future-fuelling for vehicles



AFTER SHARING HIS TYPICAL DAY WITH US, MIKE HAS SHARED HIS THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF VEHICLE FUELLING, THE PACE OF EV ADOPTION, AND THE EVOLVING ROLE OF HYDROGEN.

In your view, which parts of the UK mobility system are most at risk of being left behind in the transition, and what could be done to address this?

I believe small fleets are most at risk. This is mainly due to the low margins haulage and logistics companies are making and this especially applies to small fleets.

Changing fuel type costs money, no matter what that new product is. Although HVO is a low carbon drop in alternative to diesel, therefore, no equipment upgrades, it is 10-20% more expensive.

Currently e-HGV charging is still in its infancy stage in the UK, with a handful of electric trucks on the road and limited charging stations. The government has funded several electrification schemes to install charging stations and offer grants to purchase electric trucks, however, much more needs to be done if this is to be the long-term preferred option.

One of the largest issues I have found in the e-HGV transition, is grid connection and costs associated with it. As an example, when looking to install e-HGV chargers at The Hollies Truckstop, costs were estimated to be between £1m-£2m to bring in the connection which made it unviable. This needs to be addressed and supported by government.

Government has, so far, refused to offer tax incentives for any future fuels, so this additional must be borne by the haulier, or passed on to their customers. Government needs to address this, if it is to reach its low emission targets by offering price parity for using sustainable fuels, or worthwhile credits to the haulier.

Larger fleets using HVO, have often done so to secure contracts, bids and tenders where the haulier is expected to be sustainable as part of the Scope 3 emissions. Therefore, companies are selecting logistic partners who can provide low-carbon data and sustainable fuels to support this.

Do you expect the energy transition to change where and how people refuel in the UK?

I believe that traditional forecourts will

still exist in the short to medium term future, especially for cars and vans, and there is strong evidence to support this, in that investors are still purchasing forecourts at peak multiples.

Although many forecourts do offer EV charge points, the ones that do best are purpose built destinations, with a selection of facilities for drivers to use as they wait, to include restaurants, retail, leisure and good quality washrooms.

For the HGV sector, dedicated HGV refuelling stations and bunkers will remain for medium to long term, with high-speed nozzles offering traditional and renewable future liquid fuels. These are best located at Truckstops, allowing a 'one stop shop' for the haulage industry to refuel the vehicle and the driver at the same time.

Truckstops can also futureproof the destination, by installing both fast chargers and slower overnight charge points for electric trucks, where vehicles can be trickle charged overnight in the parking bays, which will help with power demands and constraints.

What does the UK's future vehicle-fuelling mix look like in 10-15 years? Do you believe liquid fuels, EV charging and hydrogen will coexist or compete?

The UK will embrace a variety of future refuelling solutions, with the most sustainable, viable, proven and sought after winning the race. Cars and vans will be forced to transition to hybrid and then full electric. I don't believe hydrogen will play a part in this sector, although other future liquid, gas and solid fuels may.

The HGV sector will take longer on this transition journey, with diesel and renewable diesel remaining the main fuel source for many years to come. Although I believe that e-HGV will gain some momentum in the next 5-10 years, this will be delayed due to investment and power constraints in addition to battery weight and range.

It seems sensible that Battery Electric vehicles (BEV) will be used for short journeys and last mile delivery, as depot recharging can

support this, then medium to long journeys with HVO/ renewable diesel and a smaller percentage using public charge points in Truckstops.

With regards to hydrogen, again this is currently being trialled, with the Hydrogen Fuel Cell allowing faster refuelling and a better range. The main challenge is with regards to the cost of producing 'green' hydrogen and an almost non-existent infrastructure.

Which constraints do you think will shape future fuelling infrastructure as much as or more than technology?

The transition of future liquid fuels (e.g. diesel to HVO) is quite straight forward, as far as estate development is concerned. Certas uses above ground Multiserve tanks, so a compartment within the tank, can and has been used for the new product.

Simple labelling of this new product at the point of dispensing is also upgraded, as is the product on a traditional fuel card or digital fuel card (FuelTapp).

EV and e-HGV is a lot more complex, firstly the large cost of bringing the power into the site and then the location (safe zone) and build out cost of the equipment. Dedicated bays are required for rapid charging and slower chargers can be installed in existing HGV overnight parking bays.

Again, hydrogen would require its own infrastructure and dedicated area, with either product piped in from a main hub, or transported by vehicle. Verification of true green hydrogen production would need to be proven, as would demand in both infrastructure and new vehicle purchase due to large costs.

Hydrogen is described by some as 'the fuel of the future'. In your view, is that future mainly about passenger vehicles, heavy transport, or even non-road uses?

I believe that hydrogen has a place in the future, but not for road transport.

It could be used as a clean fuel type for hard to electrify sectors, such as heavy industries, residential heating, or shipping.

Training: Is it critical to industry success?



BARTON PETROLEUM LTD, THE INDEPENDENT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE-BASED FUEL DISTRIBUTOR, HAS RECENTLY APPOINTED A GROUP TRAINING MANAGER TO SUPPORT THE BUSINESS.

CLAUDIA WEEKS, COMMUNITY CONTENT LEAD FOR FUEL OIL NEWS, CAUGHT UP WITH **SIMON WAINWRIGHT**, GROUP TRAINING MANAGER, TO DISCUSS HIS ROLE AT BARTON, AND EXPLORE WHY TRAINING IS SO CRITICAL TO SUCCESS IN THE FUEL DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRY.

You've spent 15 years in the British Army and 15 years in the civilian fuel industry – how has your military experience shaped your approach to training and safety in fuel transport?

Joining the Army at 16 instilled in me the importance of teamwork, discipline, and following tried-and-tested procedures – especially where safety is critical.

It also taught me to stay adaptable and respond calmly when plans change. That mindset has carried through into my work in fuel transport, where strict compliance and clear communication are essential to maintaining safety standards.

As a Group Training Manager specialising in ADR, PDP and CPC, what do you see as the biggest challenges drivers face when transporting dangerous goods today?

One of the biggest challenges for drivers is the way risks vary depending on location.

In rural areas, the challenges may be due to remote deliveries, difficult access, or weather-related issues – making adaptability and good training essential.

In urban environments, challenges may include route restrictions for dangerous goods, access limitations, and parking constraints when waiting to enter sites.

Strong ADR, PDP and CPC training helps drivers anticipate these risks and operate safely in very different environments.

ADR regulations can feel complex and daunting to some drivers. How do you ensure your training makes these requirements practical, relevant, and easy to apply on the road?

As an ADR instructor, my focus is on building confidence as well as competence. I make the regulations practical by delivering sessions as open discussions rather than just classroom

teaching, encouraging drivers to share real-life experiences so we can learn from them.

I also adapt my approach to the individual, offering extra support where needed. When drivers feel comfortable and engaged, they're far more likely to understand and apply the regulations safely on the road.

I strongly believe that if everyone is relaxed on the course learning can be fun as well as educational.

You deliver training across multiple ADR classes and tank packages. Are there any areas where you commonly see knowledge gaps or misunderstandings within the industry?

One common issue I see, particularly on five-year refresher courses, is that drivers can feel they're just going through the motions. However, it often becomes clear that knowledge outside their day-to-day work hasn't been used – and has faded over time.

My role is to refresh that understanding, bring the full ADR framework back to the forefront, and ensure their knowledge is current and applied correctly.

Practical training is a key part of delivery. How important is hands-on experience compared to classroom-based learning, and how do you balance the two?

We can teach theory to practically anyone in the classroom, but being hands-on is the place where we will learn in depth.

As human beings we learn by mistakes, candidates will learn the basics, but experience has taught me that they have learned the most by doing the job in the field.

With safety at the heart of fuel distribution, how does your IOSH health and safety qualification influence the way you design and deliver training programmes?

In every part of this industry, we all have



a duty to look after our own safety and the safety of everyone around us. I encourage all candidates both new and existing employees not to be afraid to challenge anything that they feel is unsafe.

Involve and listen to everyone with new ideas, sometimes the simplest ideas can make the biggest impact.

The fuel delivery sector continues to evolve, from regulatory updates to new technologies. How do you ensure training keeps pace with industry change?

My own training is ongoing, to ensure I stay up to date with regulation changes, new technology and future proposals for the industry.

Being involved in meetings – not just at a company level but groups like the Flare meetings help everyone, from all companies, to talk about issues, discuss changes for the future and how we are all adapting.

Having trained both new entrants and highly experienced drivers, what differences do you see in how each group engages with ADR and safety training?

Both initial and refresher courses are often



strange for the first hour or so. With first time courses it's all about relaxing the candidates, helping them calm their nerves.

Experienced candidates will always learn new things, bringing this into play early will show them that the industry evolves and we all need to change.

From your perspective, what role does high-quality training play in improving not just compliance, but overall operational standards across a fuel delivery business?

Training will hopefully reduce the number of safety issues and encourage the industry to continue being a safe environment.

Sharing these procedure changes with all in the fuel industry has been successful but we still have work to do.

Looking ahead, what skills or competencies do you believe will become increasingly important for drivers transporting dangerous goods as the energy transition continues?

As the energy sector evolves, drivers will need greater adaptability and technical knowledge. Weather, changing regulations, and shifts in customer demand mean they must be able to adjust routes, manage different fuels safely, and respond to new delivery patterns.

Skills like situational awareness, risk management, and familiarity with security procedures are becoming increasingly important to ensure safe, efficient, and compliant deliveries in a rapidly changing environment.

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Apprenticeships in action: Building skills for a changing energy sector

AS THE ENERGY TRANSITION GATHERS PACE, MUCH OF THE FOCUS FALLS ON FUELS, TECHNOLOGIES AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS. LESS ATTENTION IS PAID TO THE PEOPLE WHO WILL BE EXPECTED TO DELIVER THE CHANGE.

For fuel distributors, apprenticeships are emerging as a quietly critical part of the people aspect. At Certas Energy, they are being used not as a short-term recruitment tool, but as a long-term investment in capability, resilience and culture.

Ahead of this year's National Apprenticeship Week, Margaret Major, Managing Editor for Fuel Oil News, spoke to **Lisa Weir**, Apprentice and Development Specialist at Certas Energy, who is heading up the company's apprenticeship programme, to understand what's working, what's been learned, and what other distributors can take from the experience.

Lisa has spent most of her career designing, delivering and running apprenticeship programmes across multiple sectors. When she joined Certas Energy in mid-2024, as its first dedicated Apprentice and Development Specialist, she brought with her a deep, practical understanding of what makes apprenticeships succeed – and what causes them to fail.

That experience shapes Certas' approach today. Apprenticeships, Lisa stresses, are not to be "bolted on", nor a way to plug short-term gaps. "If they become a tick-box exercise," she says, "you've already lost the value."

When she talks about apprenticeships, it's with a deep belief in the benefits they bring to both business and apprentice.

Apprenticeships at Certas – at a glance

In 2025, Certas' apprenticeship programme doubled in size. The business currently has 39 apprentices on programme, spanning 17 different disciplines, with 11 enrolled in Electrical Installation & Maintenance.

During 2025, 13 colleagues successfully completed their apprenticeships, underlining the programme's role in both development and progression.

Why apprenticeships – and why now?

For Lisa, the case for apprenticeships is rooted in the way the energy sector itself is changing.



Lisa Weir

"The decision to invest isn't driven by one single factor," she says. "As the energy sector evolves, the skills needed to operate safely, competitively and efficiently are changing rapidly.

"It's not just about technical competence. It's about adaptability, digital capability, customer understanding, emotional intelligence – all the things that allow people to operate confidently in a fast-moving environment."

At Certas, apprenticeships sit within a wider skills and capability strategy rather than alongside it. They are designed to support long-term workforce planning and retention, not just gap-filling. That philosophy is reflected in the decision to create a role dedicated to apprenticeships and development – signalling that this is a strategic investment in a programme built deliberately and sustainably.

More than a tick box

One of Lisa's strongest messages is that apprenticeships only work when businesses are clear about why they are doing them.

"You have to understand your 'why' first," she says. "What are you trying to achieve? What skills gap are you addressing? And can you actually support the apprentice properly?"

At Certas, that has meant resisting the temptation to scale too quickly. Instead, programmes have been introduced gradually, in areas where they genuinely add value, and designed in close collaboration with a small number of carefully chosen training providers.

"It's not off-the-shelf," Lisa explains. "For our core programmes, we work with providers to build curricula that reflect our business, our timing, and the skills we actually need. That takes work – but that's where the value comes from."

Developing people already in the business

While apprenticeships are often associated with new entrants, much of Certas' current programme focuses on upskilling existing colleagues.

"That's really important," Lisa says. "Apprenticeships aren't just about bringing people in – they're about developing the people you already have."

For Certas, apprentices are currently embedded across customer service, sales, digital, IT, and finance as well as in the renewables business, including electrical, solar and plumbing.

Many are experienced employees using apprenticeships as structured development pathways rather than starting points.

"When managers see people growing in confidence, communication and problem-solving, they see the return quite quickly," Lisa notes.

The quick return also helps to reinforce buy-in from managers, delivering a triangulated approach – apprentice, line manager, provider – that is central to success.

Managers remain closely involved, understanding what apprentices are learning and how it can be applied in role. Without that engagement, apprenticeships risk becoming a tick-box exercise rather than a development pathway.

That sense of development and variety is echoed by apprentices themselves.

Tom Putterill describes how the programme has broadened both his skills and confidence:

"I feel like I've developed a lot since starting and I've gained a lot of confidence. I've met a



Tom Putterill

lot of new people, and I feel like I'm learning more every day."

He adds that the variety of work has been key to that growth:

"The thing I enjoy the most about my apprenticeship is not every day is the same. Some days I can be out on site, other days I can be in meetings, some days I can just be doing admin in the office, but its all part of my development".

From learning to real contribution

One of the most underestimated aspects of apprenticeships, Lisa believes, is how quickly they can start to influence day-to-day operations – particularly through soft skills.

"Most standards start with developing the individual," she explains. "You see improvements in confidence, time management and emotional intelligence quite early on."

Many apprenticeships also require learners to work on real business challenges, analysing issues within their own teams and proposing improvements. "That real-world learning is where it really lands," Lisa says. "It's not theory for theory's sake – it's applied."

The result, she adds, is that apprentices often become positive agents within teams, contributing ideas, questioning established practices and building confidence to challenge constructively.

That confidence gain is a recurring theme among apprentices.

Gemma Johnson, who has completed her apprenticeship, reflects on the impact it had on her day-to-day work:

"I really really enjoyed my time in my apprenticeship. What I have loved most is the confidence its given me, not just in the way I speak to customers but in the way I present myself to my peers."

She also highlights how quickly the benefits become visible:

"If I was to give any advice to people who are thinking about doing an apprenticeship I would say, it's a lot of work, but it really pays off, and you can see how it pays off really quickly. Be confident and just go for it!"

Adaptability as a core skill

As fuel distribution continues to evolve, Lisa sees adaptability as one of the most critical skills apprenticeships can deliver.

"People aren't being trained for one fixed job anymore," she says. "They're being prepared for change."

Digital literacy, systems thinking and continuous learning are embedded across programmes, alongside technical skills. Cross-business cohorts also help apprentices understand different parts of Certas' operations, broadening perspective and supporting retention.

"People want to see opportunity," Lisa explains. "They want to know where they can grow next. If learning stops, that's when people move on."

That emphasis on adaptability is particularly important for colleagues returning to structured learning after time away from education.

**“APPRENTICESHIPS
AREN'T A CHEAP WAY
TO FILL A GAP. THEY'RE
AN INVESTMENT – AND
WHEN YOU GET THEM
RIGHT, THEY PAY BACK
IN WAYS YOU DIDN'T
EXPECT.”**

Emma Hughes admits she was initially apprehensive:

"I was a bit nervous about starting (my apprenticeship) last February because I've not been in school for quite a while. It's been a journey – but overall it has been a really good experience."



Gemma Johnson



Emma Hughes

She points to the support around her as a critical factor:

"There's always something you can learn, and you've always got that support when you need it. Someone will always come back to you with the guidance and reassurance you need."

Lessons for the wider distributor community

While Certas operates at national scale, Lisa is clear that apprenticeships are not only for large businesses.

"The principles are the same, whatever your size," she says. "Understand your why, choose the right programme for the right role, and commit the time to support it."

Recent funding changes have reduced barriers for SMEs, but Lisa cautions against viewing apprenticeships as cheap labour. "If you don't listen, support and develop people, they won't stay. But if you do it properly, they become your future pipeline."

Keeping the levy grounded

Certas has taken a measured approach to levy utilisation, prioritising programme quality over rapid spend. Where possible, unused levy has been gifted to organisations delivering social or skills impact, reinforcing the importance of using funding with purpose.

A long-term view

For Lisa, apprenticeships are ultimately about resilience – for individuals, businesses and the sector as a whole.

"When you get them right, you're not just filling a role," she says. "You're building capability, confidence and adaptability."

The experiences of Certas' apprentices suggest that when programmes are built with intent, support and purpose, they deliver benefits that extend far beyond the classroom.

As the energy landscape continues to shift, that long-term thinking may prove just as critical as any investment in infrastructure or technology.



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“What do we want? HVO! When do we want it? Now!”

It may sound like something you would hear on the football terraces, and with EXPO taking us to one of football's great cities in a few weeks, it feels fitting. If I could persuade every Liverpool and Everton supporter to take up the chant on a Saturday afternoon, I would. But the voices making this chant, that echoed through Westminster recently, were not football fans. They were our own customers, and they were making themselves heard.

Writing this so far ahead of it landing on doormats has its challenges. By the time you read it, we may have a different Prime Minister and Energy Minister...or we may not.

A thank you worth repeating

What I do know is that I need to say **thank you**. Every single person who responded to the consultation on alternative heating technologies played their part. Together, we delivered more than 16,000 positive responses to the industry's proposals to introduce a renewable liquid heating fuel blend.

Words like “unprecedented” and “flabbergasted” come to mind. It shows what can be achieved when our industry pulls in the same direction. From suppliers to distributors to technicians to trade bodies and our customers, we have shown unity and sent a clear message to the Government. We want Renewable Liquid Fuels, and we want them now.

Kehelland leads the way

If anyone in the Government needs any more pointers, the villagers of Kehelland provided them, loud and clear, in January. They stood outside the Energy Department, which involved a demanding twenty-hour round trip from

Cornwall, speaking up for the four million consumers who rely on our industry to heat their homes. Their commitment deserves our admiration and our thanks.

A sector steady in unsteady times

Some of the challenges facing the energy sector stem from the simple fact that we have had four (maybe five, now) Prime Ministers in five years and five (possibly six) Secretaries of State. I'm sure you'll agree that no company could operate like this, and it certainly would not produce clear messaging. We have demonstrated what clarity looks like, and we should not be ignored.

The political drama of recent months will no doubt continue until the next round of elections, especially those that will elect the next parliaments in Scotland and Wales. I was particularly pleased to see such strong support from both nations in the consultation responses. It sends a clear message to whoever takes office in Cardiff and Edinburgh. Rural communities expect to be heard.

Ireland shows what is possible

Ireland has already shown what can be achieved. The Irish Government listened to the detailed and consistent messaging from the Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating, of which UKIFDA is proud to be part. They answered all the questions in the UK consultation and developed the response “to tackle the decarbonisation of rural heat in a technology-neutral way, which includes the use of Renewable Liquid Fuels”.

Ireland faces the same risk of missing its targets as the UK, along with the added

pressure of potential penalties from the European Union that would ultimately fall to taxpayers. The Renewable Heat Obligation is not perfect, and we are working to improve it, but it is a strong start.

Looking ahead to Liverpool

As we head to Liverpool for EXPO, I feel a real sense of purpose about what needs to be done across the UK and Ireland. I am looking forward to speaking with as many of you as possible. We need to build on this momentum and unity and honour every response submitted.

I am delighted by the number of exhibitors that have booked space, especially in what has been a challenging time for businesses across the UK. The conference programme is equally inspiring, with sessions covering police stops, driver training, future fuels and market analysis.

I am especially pleased that the head of the new Future of Fuels team at the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero will deliver a keynote on his department's remit, followed by a roundtable with leading fuel suppliers.

After the success of the first Wolfe Power Club podcast in Leeds 2025, I am also pleased to see Alex return with a distinctly political flavour, just weeks before the local elections.

Our industry's greatest strength

Our industry stands apart because of its people. One of the things I enjoy most is the awards presentations during the two days of this year's Expo & Conference. Celebrating achievement, innovation, success or simply hard work matters. It is our version of “You'll Never Walk Alone.”

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ROUNDUP: CONFERENCE 2026



UKIFDA EXPO & CONFERENCE 2026 – TWO-DAY SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Day 1 Highlights – Wednesday 15 April

Industry insights, operational best practice, sector awards and an evening dinner with guest speaker John Parrott MBE.

Day 1 opens the 2026 EXPO & Conference with a full exhibition and a broad conference programme.

The day begins with a keynote introduction by P66 before moving into a range of sessions centred on operational excellence, driver support and the sector's evolving cybersecurity needs.

The Customer Service and Green award presentations add a celebratory moment, followed by an update on wider market developments to round off the daytime agenda.

The evening centres on networking and recognition, with the President's Drinks Reception leading into the UKIFDA Dinner & Awards, where Depot of the Year, Driver of the Year and Young Person of the Year will be announced, and John Parrott MBE joins as the guest speaker.

Day 2 Highlights – Thursday 16 April

Policy, future fuels and international market perspectives are the conference topics for day two, as the sector looks ahead to its next chapter.

Day 2 continues with the exhibition and a forward-looking conference programme focused on the policy landscape and the sector's future direction.

The morning features a UK political update and a keynote exploring the Government's evolving approach to energy and heat.

The Innovation Award will be presented during the day, recognising a project that is helping to shape the industry's future.

A live podcast adds an interactive element before the afternoon turns to broader market outlooks and international perspectives.

The exhibition closes later in the day, drawing the 2026 event to a close.

UKIFDA EXPO & CONFERENCE 2026

JOIN THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING VOICES AND SHAPE THE FUTURE OF LIQUID FUELS

The UKIFDA Expo & Conference returns to the Exhibition Centre Liverpool on 15-16 April 2026, sponsored by Phillips 66, with a sector-driven theme: Shaping the Future of Liquid Fuels.

As the UK's leading event for the liquid fuel distribution industry, the 2026 programme will highlight the sector's vital role in supporting rural homes, farms, businesses and wider local communities – particularly as infrastructure evolves and low-carbon solutions gain traction.

With the energy transition accelerating, the 2026 theme underlines the importance of strategic collaboration across the supply chain. The event brings together distributors, suppliers and policymakers to explore the future of off-grid energy, sustainability and technology in fuel distribution.

If you have not yet registered for this unmissable industry event, please scan the QR code or contact Dawn Shakespeare: ds@ukifda.org

We look forward to seeing you there!



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Industry Awards 2026

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2026 Award Categories



Driver of the Year – sponsored by OAMPS

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Innovation Award – sponsored by Fuel Oil News

Honouring new ideas, technologies or approaches that move the industry forward.



Green Award – sponsored by Oilshield

Recognising meaningful progress in environmental responsibility and sustainable practice.



Young Person of the Year – sponsored by Just Tankers

Highlighting rising talent making a strong early impact in the sector.



Customer Service Award – sponsored by Worldpay

Acknowledging organisations and individuals that consistently deliver exceptional customer experience.



Depot of the Year – sponsored by Pen Underwriting

Recognising outstanding depot performance, operational standards and team excellence.

Pen Underwriting, sponsor of the Depot of the Year Award, shared its support for the recognition these awards provide:

“At Pen Underwriting, we are proud to sponsor the Depot of the Year Award at the UKIFDA Awards 2026. Recognising and celebrating excellence within the fuel distribution sector is vital to driving innovation and raising standards across our industry.

“We look forward to seeing the outstanding achievements of this year’s nominees and celebrating their contributions to the sector at the UKIFDA Expo & Conference.”

The winners will be announced across the two days of the event and at the UKIFDA Dinner, bringing the industry together to recognise the dedication, professionalism and progress that continue to shape the sector.

2026 Event sponsors

UKIFDA APPRECIATES THE SUPPORT OF ALL THE SPONSORS OF THIS YEAR’S ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY EVENT.

Ken Cronin, UKIFDA CEO said: “UKIFDA extends sincere thanks to all partners for their continued support and commitment to the industry’s shared progress.

“With strong sponsorship backing and an exciting awards programme ahead, UKIFDA EXPO & Conference 2026 promises to be an unmissable highlight in the industry calendar, bringing together expertise, innovation and collaboration as we ‘Shape the Future of Liquid Fuels’, together.”



Headline sponsor

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



Dinner

This highly-regarded industry event is sponsored by leading renewable fuel supplier Prema Energy – a company proudly supporting the industry’s transition to low-carbon liquid energy solutions.



Café Area

A specialist provider to the industry, AIM Recruit brings its vibrant energy to the Café Area.



President’s Drinks Reception

Tank monitoring technology specialist Otodata is sponsoring the Drinks Reception, the lively precursor to the ever-popular dinner.



Outside space

Taking pride of place outside the centre will be fuel tanker dealer Just Tankers, sponsor of the Outside Space.



Coffee Bike

Road tanker manufacturer Lakeland Tankers is sponsoring the much-appreciated Coffee Bike..

Awards sponsors





ROUNDUP: EXHIBITORS 2026

THE UKIFDA EXPO & CONFERENCE RETURNS TO THE EXHIBITION CENTRE LIVERPOOL ON 15-16 APRIL 2026, WITH A SECTOR-DRIVEN THEME: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LIQUID FUELS.

THE 2026 THEME UNDERLINES THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC COLLABORATION ACROSS THE SUPPLY CHAIN.

A KEY ELEMENT OF THE EVENT, THE LIVELY EXHIBITION FLOOR SHOWCASES CUTTING-EDGE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR VISITING INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS AND DECISION MAKERS TO ENGAGE WITH SECTOR SUPPLIERS TO EXPLORE LATEST INNOVATION AND SOLUTIONS.

SEE THE APRIL ISSUE OF FUEL OIL NEWS FOR MORE INSIGHT INTO THE FULL LIST OF EXPO 2026 EXHIBITORS.

EXHIBITOR LIST

Adler & Allan	Fuelsoft	OilShield
Ajak Energy	Greenergy	Ortec
Ajax Solutions	Harlequin	Otodata
Alfons Haar	Hazchem	P66
Alpeco	IFC	PEIMF
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Delivering Insight is your monthly business-critical briefing. Designed to give SME distributors clear, actionable guidance to work smarter and more profitably. Although 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 for your business, helping you make informed decisions that safeguard your business today and strengthen it for the future. This month, with distribution networks consolidating, we're asking the question:

Depot manager role: Shrinking or simply evolving?

The role of the fuel depot manager has long been a cornerstone of operational success, combining responsibilities for safety, inventory control, driver dispatch, customer service, and local leadership. Yet, for many FODs, this traditional role appears to be evolving. Technology, cost pressures, and centralisation are prompting many distributors to rethink the depot manager position.

For SME FODs, understanding these shifts is essential for making informed decisions about staffing, organisational structure, and investment priorities. This article explores how the depot manager role is evolving, the factors driving these changes, and the strategic implications for companies navigating the balance between operational efficiency, risk management, and customer engagement.

Decision-making is migrating upward into systems and central offices, while accountability remains locally visible.

Depot Manager Role – Traditional vs Modern

Then: Operational control sat locally. The depot manager was the key decision maker

Now: Systems make many of the decisions.

The depot manager interprets / intervenes

The role of a depot manager differs greatly from company to company depending on business size and structure. However, depot managers have typically been responsible for day-to-day operations including:

- Safety compliance
- Site maintenance
- Fleet management
- Delivery planning
- Customer service
- Stock control

A changing role

From this traditional, operationally focussed model, the role is evolving into a strategic, technology-driven leadership role with a strong

customer focus.

It is a shift **away** from operational oversight **towards** broader management and leadership tasks:

Centralisation of core responsibilities

The drive for distribution efficiency is seeing traditional responsibilities reallocated to central offices, regional hubs, or automation.

Regionalised:

Routing and Fleet Management

BP (April 2025): *'Managing a fleet has never been more complex. Fleet managers who once focused primarily on vehicle acquisition, maintenance schedules and fuel consumption now find themselves juggling an array of additional responsibilities. Fleet managers have become part property manager, part HR expert, and part data analyst.'*

Centralised:

Inventory, Tank Monitoring, Compliance, Customer Service and Customer relationship management (CRM)

Traditionally: The depot manager role was highly hands-on, with direct responsibility for logistics, customers, stock, and sites.

Today: These same operations are system-driven and centrally controlled.

The real shift is not about removing depot managers. It is about redistributing authority.

Decision-making is migrating upward into systems and central offices, while accountability remains locally visible. This tension is redefining the role.

What is driving this change?

Nationwide expansion

A need to compete with larger players is seeing regional distributors expand through acquisition or partnerships to offer nationwide deliveries

- FODs may adopt a nationwide growth strategy to supply to a broader customer base, increasing the number of depots and expanding the delivery fleet

Rather than simply closing depots, many FODs are expanding, consolidating and coordinating depot networks regionally and nationally. This supports large contracts and multi-site customers while enabling operational efficiencies.

Mergers and acquisitions

Sector consolidation is increasing as the industry evolves with recent examples including:

- NWF Group acquired Northern Energy (2025)
- Standard Fuel Oils acquired Solo Petroleum (2025)
- YourNRG acquired WebOil (2025)
- WCF Fuels – multiple acquisitions of family-owned businesses and internal mergers

As businesses scale through acquisition, standardisation becomes essential. Systems must align, reporting must be consistent and performance must be benchmarked across sites. In that environment, depot managers operate within group frameworks rather than as independent site leaders.

This is directly impacting the traditional depot structure as:

- Larger groups standardise systems across sites
- Acquired depots often lose autonomy
- Post-merger integration and multi-site coordination demand central control

Tightening labour market

The UK logistics and distribution sector is experiencing a tightening labour market.

A 2025 report from Logistics UK indicates a 15% drop in the number of managers in transport and distribution in Q1 2025 compared with the same period in 2024. Although 'depot manager' falls under this category, the category is broad and not specific to the fuel oil industry.

Similarly, the Fleet Services Summit 2024 indicated an increased use of automation and

technology to tackle labour shortages caused by such things as Brexit or the pandemic.

Fewer experienced managers in the pipeline means businesses must either invest in developing broader digital capability – or restructure the role entirely.

However, while technology reduces manual workload and improves productivity, humans are still essential for decision-making, exception handling, and maintaining service levels, with automation freeing them to focus on higher-value tasks.

Cost control and margin pressure

Fuel volatility combined with rising insurance premiums, maintenance costs and wages are placing additional strain on businesses often operating on margins below 3%.

Technology

One of the most significant change drivers in recent years is technology. FODs are increasingly replacing paper-based workflows and manual processes with real-time, connected digital systems that improve performance, compliance, and visibility across multiple sites.

Automation:

- Tank gauging and telemetry – real-time inventory, leak detection, reconciliation
- Automated dispatch and routing – fewer manual scheduling decisions
- Digital BOLs, invoices, and compliance logs – less paperwork checking

Many traditional depot responsibilities are now delivered through integrated CRM, routing, telematics and compliance platforms.

Unmanned depots:

Technological advancements have enabled unmanned or minimally staffed sites, with 24/7 access. This improves efficiency and reduces labour costs.

However, depot managers are still essential to verify data, handle exceptions, make operational decisions, and manage customer relationships, ensuring technology works effectively in real-world fuel distribution.

e.g.:

- CCTV: reduces on-site supervision but doesn't replace safety leadership
- Route optimisation: cuts local dispatch decision-making; humans still handle exceptions

Compliance and audit requirements

Regulatory oversight continues to intensify, with existing regulations evolving and new ones introduced.

DGSA audits, ADR updates, driver training documentation requirements and oil storage regulations all demand rigorous, auditable record-keeping. Increasingly, this is delivered through digital compliance systems rather than paper-based processes.

Failure to meet requirements could result in

significant business consequences. As a result, safety and compliance are becoming more systematised – but accountability still sits locally.

Cultural leadership: Operational intelligence vs human intelligence

While technology is advancing rapidly and able to deliver many of the traditional depot manager tasks, it is important to consider the aspects that technology cannot replace.

Depot managers hold insight that systems cannot replicate – personal knowledge of drivers, long-standing customer relationships, real-time incident judgement and team morale leadership.

“Systems can optimise routes. They cannot replace judgement.”

Conclusion and recommendations

Summary

As indicated by the number of job listings across the UK fuel distribution sector, the depot manager role remains a core industry position. The responsibilities may be changing, but the role is retained rather than removed.

Shifting responsibilities

Operational tasks are increasingly centralised or automated, while retained roles prioritise strategic customer engagement, data interpretation and team leadership. Key drivers redefining the role

- Technology adoption, labour shortages, margin/cost pressures, nationwide expansion, and evolving regulatory requirements
- Technology is the most influential driver of change

Implications for SME FODs

- Depot managers may require retraining or repurposing
 - With fleet oversight, inventory management, scheduling, and compliance increasingly automated, managers need skills in digital monitoring, training on various software, etc.
- Centralised models may be efficient but risk service gaps or culture loss
 - Limiting on-site presence, team cohesion, etc.
- In small, family-run companies, removing or centralising depot managers can weaken customer trust, reduce responsiveness, and make clients feel disconnected, despite gains in operational efficiency.
- Hybrid roles offer a balanced approach
- SME FODs may combine operational supervision with customer engagement and administrative tasks, allowing depots to remain lean while maintaining accountability, service levels, and client relationships.
- Technology investment is essential – but must be proportionate and purposeful
- Automation reduces manual work and improves efficiency, but adequate investment is required to maintain safety, accuracy, and operational control.

“The depot manager role is not disappearing. It is being redefined.”

Recommended actions

SME FODs should consider redefining the depot manager role rather than eliminating it, aligning it with their resources, strategic goals, size, and finances:

- Smaller FODs may retain a more hands-on manager to oversee operations, while still adopting digital tools to reduce manual tasks.
- Larger FODs may centralise routine functions, using automation and remote monitoring, and shift managers toward strategic oversight and customer management.

Checklist:

- Review the current depot manager responsibilities and job description and analyse the time consumption of tasks.
- Assess which functions could be centralised or automated and how (estimating time constraints, cost, training, overall feasibility).
- Explore cross-training depot staff for multi-role capabilities: tasks can be centralised and overseen by multiple members of staff.
- Ensuring cover and reducing disruption from absences.
- Cost efficiency, maximising small teams.
- Define (or redefine) the future depot manager role based on your strategic goals: efficiency vs local service.
- Define the role clearly to ensure smooth operations.

KPI Modelling

FODs are advised to:

- Model the cost-benefit of removing or redefining role of depot-level management.
- Compare the annual cost of depot manager vs cost savings of implementing centralised functions and technological investment.
- Model the response time and customer satisfaction impact with and without depot-level leadership.

“The financial case for removing depot-level leadership is rarely clear cut.”

For example:

If a depot manager costs £55-65k pa, and a digital platform £40k pa but requires training / oversight, the financial case is not clear cut.

Taking into account the potential impact on local customer engagement and agility as well, potentially, on staff morale means the decision is multi-faceted, requiring careful consideration.

The depot manager role is not disappearing. It is being redefined.

For some FODs it will shrink into system oversight. For others it will expand into strategic customer management and team leadership.

The risk lies not in change – but in allowing the role to drift without deliberate redesign.



PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

FEBRUARY
IN VIEW

VENEZUELA: WHY THE MARKET DOESN'T SHARE TRUMP'S ENTHUSIASM.

Way back in 2013, we wrote a report about Venezuela and its collapsing oil industry. In that report we wrote about how a once mighty industry had been brought to its knees by cronyism and anti-American politics. The assets of private US oil companies had been forcibly taken over by the corrupt state oil company PDVSA and production had plummeted. In the 1970s Venezuela had been an oil behemoth, producing almost 4m barrels per day (bpd), but by the time that the dictator Hugo Chavez had died (2013), that figure had halved.

“THE DECISION TO GET RID OF MADURO WAS AS MUCH ABOUT GETTING ACCESS TO VENEZUELAN OIL AS IT WAS ABOUT NARCOTICS.”

Fast forward to 2026, and Venezuela is in the news again, with President Trump deciding to capture Chavez's successor (Nicolas Maduro) and bring him to the USA to face charges of drug trafficking. Unlike previous US Presidents, who have uncomfortably denied the oil-based *raison d'être* behind much of US foreign policy, Trump predictably had no qualms on this front. He was happy to point out that the decision to get rid of Maduro was as much about getting access to Venezuelan oil as it was about narcotics.

The problem here of course, is that no amount of Trump bullsh1t (things will be the biggest, greatest, richest, shiniest etc.) can mend overnight an industry that is so completely in tatters. Back in 2013, our report was decrying the fact that Venezuelan production had dropped by circa 50% in a period when global oil demand was consistently rising. But guess what, under Maduro's rule, things got worse. Much, much worse in fact. For the last 12 years, the country has experienced annual (and sometimes monthly!) triple digit inflation, and the local

currency (Bolívar) is now worth 7% of what it was in 2014. In the 10 years up to 2024, living standards (in what was once South America's richest country) plummeted by 74%, the fifth largest fall in modern economic history and the kind of drop that would more usually be associated with countries suffering from war or catastrophic famine. Untold numbers of Venezuelan businesses closed down, daily power cuts became the norm, and shops often didn't even have the most basic goods to sell. Perhaps most damaging of all, it is estimated that 7.7m Venezuelans left the country – almost 25% of the entire population.

In the midst of all this chaos stood the once mighty oil industry; still the lifeblood of the ailing economy because of its ability to bring in desperately needed foreign \$ reserves (97% of export earnings come from oil). However, as the economy self-destructed, so did the oil industry and it simply became another part of Venezuela's collapsing infrastructure. Starved of foreign investment and technical expertise and then hit by US sanctions in 2019, oil production in Venezuela hit a low of 750k bpd in 2025. Forget being an oil behemoth. Venezuela had become barely the 5th largest producer in Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Guyana all produce more).

That the oil in Venezuela exists and is plentiful is not in doubt. Indeed, the country still has the largest crude reserves in the world (about 20% of proven reserves), with approximately 350 years of oil under the ground. But what is in doubt is the ability of the industry to extract and sell even a smidgeon of these vast reserves any time soon. Quite simply, the industry has been so hollowed out, that even if the rate of oil extraction can be increased, it will be years before the product can be efficiently moved (pipelines), stored (tanks) and exported (export jetties).

For their part, the US oil industry has hardly been quick to embrace the new situation in Venezuela. ExxonMobil have declared the country “uninvestable”, which is perhaps an understandable position considering their assets have been

appropriated by the Venezuelan Government on two separate occasions in the last 50 years! And the rest of the industry will no doubt be waiting until legal, contractual and tax arrangements are in place, before progressing any investment programmes. The only positive noises have come from Chevron who, for various reasons, were able to maintain operations in Venezuela throughout the Maduro years. They have committed to a 50% increase in their current production levels of 240k bpd.

“THE REVIVAL OF VENEZUELA'S OIL INDUSTRY, AFTER 30 YEARS OF NEGLECT, WILL BE A SLOW AND PIECEMEAL PROCESS.”

President Trump has been quick to praise Chevron's “smart reaction”, but an extra 120K bpd on top of the existing 750k bpd, is a far cry from the 4m bpd of yesteryear. In the same manner, Trump's announcement that 30-50m barrels of oil would go “straight to the USA from Venezuela” (“to the benefit of both countries”) sounds impressive until you realise that this basically equates to around 2 days of US consumption. The harsh reality is that even with the President's proposed \$100bn reconstruction fund (as ever, no details have been provided!), the revival of Venezuela's oil industry, after 30 years of neglect, will be a slow and piecemeal process. So don't expect the oil market to pay too much attention for a while...

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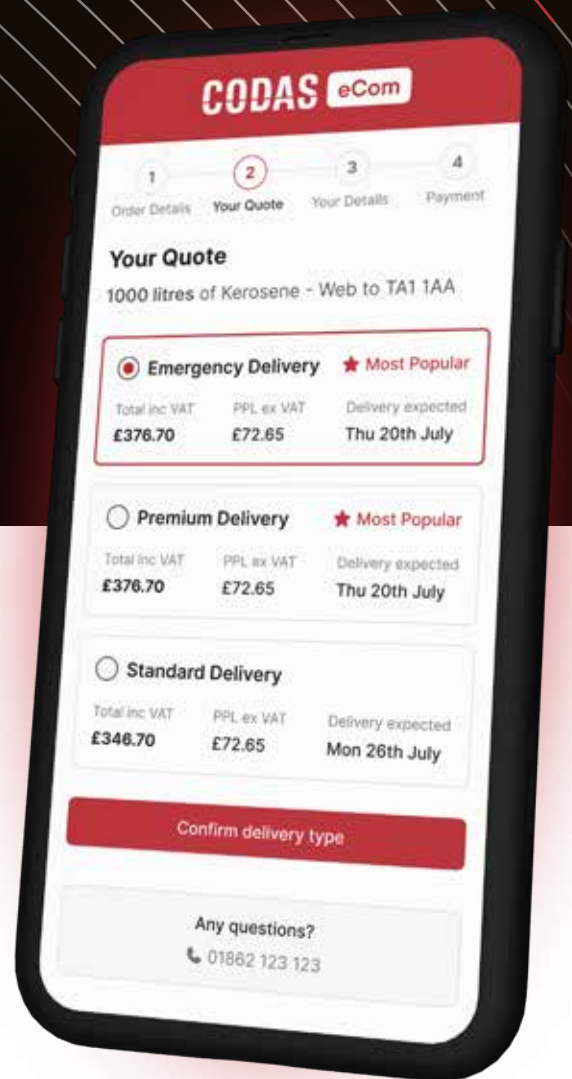
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Logistics Outlook 2026

FROM MAPPING TO MOMENTUM: WILL THE UK IDENTIFY ITS CRITICAL FREIGHT CORRIDORS?



In November 2024, Logistics UK published *The UK Logistics Network*, a landmark attempt to map the country's most critical freight corridors across road, rail, maritime and air.

Twelve months on, its Progress Tracker suggests momentum has been limited. Of the ten recommendations made in the original report, only one – the establishment of the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) – has seen what the organisation describes as “substantial progress”.

The conclusion is stark: while the case for formally identifying a National Logistics Network has strengthened, delivery has yet to follow.

A system built on a small number of corridors

The original report sets out a clear structural reality: the UK's supply chains are highly interconnected, but heavily dependent on a relatively small number of key routes

The evolution of these corridors reflects long-term economic patterns – linking:

- Major ports and international gateways
- The South East, Midlands and Northern conurbations
- Cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales
- Distribution hubs clustered along motorway and rail spines

This is not a loose web of infrastructure; it is a concentrated system. When congestion or disruption affects one of these corridors, the impact is magnified across multiple sectors.

The report argues that only by identifying this network formally – rather than addressing individual schemes in isolation – can government and industry align investment with economic ambition.

Road: growth without capacity

Road remains the dominant freight mode, carrying 81% of domestic freight by tonnage.

Almost one third of traffic on major roads is logistics-related, rising to 47% on the busiest

sections of the Strategic Road Network.

Between 2015 and 2024, the annual cost of congestion on the SRN imposed on HGVs rose by £936 million

Average speeds have declined, while delays – particularly around Birmingham, Manchester and London – continue to intensify. The report highlights ten years of uneven freight growth, with significant increases along core corridors such as the M1, M6, M25 and A14.

Severe delay “hotspots” cluster at major motorway junctions, underlining how infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with economic concentration.

The report makes clear that this is not a short-term fluctuation. Congestion levels have returned to – and in many cases exceeded – pre-pandemic patterns.

Rail: growth ambitions meet structural bottlenecks

Rail freight is positioned as central to decarbonisation strategy, producing up to 76% less CO² per tonne kilometre than road.

The government's target to increase rail freight by 75% by 2050 is ambitious but achievable, according to the report – provided capacity constraints are addressed.

High-volume routes account for just 2% of network length yet carry 15% of rail freight tonne kilometres.

Bottlenecks persist on the West Coast Main Line and the Felixstowe-Nuneaton corridor, while the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham increases pressure on shared lines.

The report calls for electrification infill, junction upgrades (including Ely), and corridor-level planning rather than mode-by-mode intervention.

Ports: concentrated gateways

The mapping of principal ports highlights how specialised the UK system has become.

Container flows concentrate at Felixstowe, Southampton and Liverpool
RoRo traffic at Dover and Holyhead

Dry bulk at Immingham, Hull, Tees and Bristol.

Each port's growth trajectory carries implications for inland connectivity. Road access constraints around Dover, Felixstowe and the Thames Gateway are particularly visible, while rail capacity from east coast ports to the Midlands remains constrained.

The report stresses that infrastructure planning must reflect commodity flows and port specialisation – not simply geography.

Decarbonisation and infrastructure alignment

A recurring theme throughout the report is the need to align transport planning with energy and net zero strategy.

The logistics sector faces simultaneous pressures:

- Managing rising demand
- Addressing ageing infrastructure
- Investing in zero-emission tailpipe technologies
- Improving resilience to extreme weather

Without clarity on which corridors are nationally critical, investment in charging, refuelling and low-carbon freight solutions risks becoming fragmented.

The report calls for cross-government coordination between the Department for Transport and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to ensure infrastructure deployment matches freight reality.

Competitiveness under pressure

International benchmarking adds urgency. The UK has fallen from 4th in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index in 2014 to joint 19th in the most recent ranking.

Oxford Economics modelling cited in the report suggests that with the right strategic investments, logistics-led productivity improvements could boost the economy by up to £8 billion per year by 2030.

The argument is straightforward: logistics efficiency and economic performance are intertwined.

The recommendations: a strategic shift

The ten recommendations set out in the report revolve around three core shifts:

1. Formal identification of the UK Logistics Network
2. A 30-year, cross-government infrastructure strategy
3. Corridor-level investment planning aligned with decarbonisation

They also call for swift delivery of major schemes already in the pipeline – including the Lower Thames Crossing – and accelerated rail capacity and electrification upgrades.

The Progress Tracker suggests that while some strategic frameworks have been introduced, corridor identification and delivery remain incomplete.

Sector relevance: infrastructure, cost and the energy transition

For suppliers and distributors of transport and heating fuels, the implications are practical and immediate.

Liquid fuel distribution is inherently corridor dependent. Tanker fleets rely on predictable access to ports, refineries, storage terminals, inland depots and customer sites. The same routes identified in this report – the M1/M6

spine, the A14 to east coast ports, the M25 orbital, the M62 across the Pennines, cross-border links into Scotland and Wales – are the arteries through which product moves daily.

Three structural considerations stand out:

1. Congestion is a margin issue.

The reported £936 million annual increase in congestion costs imposed on HGVs over the past decade is not absorbed in isolation.

For fuel distributors operating high-value assets with tight delivery windows, delays translate into reduced vehicle turns, higher fuel consumption, driver overtime, increased wear and diminished fleet productivity. Reliability on core corridors is not simply a logistics metric – it is a commercial one.

2. Port connectivity shapes supply resilience.

As commodity flows concentrate through specialised ports, inland connectivity becomes critical. For liquid fuels and blending components – including renewable products – efficient links from import gateways to inland terminals underpin both availability and price stability. Constraints on access routes such

as the A14, M20 or M62 ripple quickly into downstream markets.

3. Transition requires infrastructure certainty.

The report's emphasis on aligning transport and energy infrastructure is particularly pertinent. The freight sector is navigating multiple transition pathways – from zero tailpipe emission vehicles to increased rail use and alternative liquid fuels. Each pathway depends on infrastructure located where freight actually flows. Without clarity on which corridors will be prioritised, investment risks fragmentation.

Ultimately, the identification of a formal UK Logistics Network is not simply a transport planning exercise. For the liquid fuels sector, it intersects with cost control, supply security and decarbonisation strategy.

The fuel distribution community underpins both domestic energy supply and the wider movement of goods. Ensuring that the corridors on which it depends are clearly identified, protected and enhanced is therefore central not only to logistics performance, but to broader economic resilience.



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What to expect if the HSE turn up at your fuel depot

THE INDUSTRY HAS SEEN INCREASED HSE ACTIVITY, WITH MORE OPERATORS EXPERIENCING UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS OR INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS. SOME SITES – PARTICULARLY THOSE OUTSIDE COMAH – CAN FIND THEMSELVES UNPREPARED WHEN INSPECTORS ARRIVE.

FOR FUEL DISTRIBUTORS, THE STAKES ARE HIGH. THE STORAGE, HANDLING AND DISTRIBUTION OF FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS SITS WITHIN A STRICT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK, AND EVEN WELL-RUN OPERATIONS CAN FALL SHORT IF SYSTEMS ARE OUT OF DATE, POORLY EVIDENCED OR INCONSISTENTLY APPLIED. FOR SOME DEPOTS, AN HSE VISIT MAY BE THE FIRST EXTERNAL INSPECTION THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED.

DRAWING ON HER OWN INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE, **VIKI HAYMAN**, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF HAZKIT LTD, SHARES PRACTICAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO BE PREPARED FOR A VISIT FROM THE HSE.

Why it matters for fuel oil distributors

HSE inspections are not routine paperwork exercises. They are formal compliance checks that can result in enforcement notices, prosecution and, in serious cases, operational shutdowns.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, HSE inspectors have extensive powers. They can enter premises without notice, examine equipment, take samples, interview staff and require immediate access to safety documentation.

Improvement notices: time to act

Improvement notices are issued when inspectors identify ongoing breaches of health and safety law. These notices specify what must be addressed and set a deadline — often between 21 days and several months.

While appeals are possible, they are often costly, time-consuming and should not be relied upon as a strategy. Most businesses are better served by demonstrating prompt and effective compliance.

Prohibition notices: stop immediately

Where inspectors believe an activity could result in serious injury or loss of life, they may serve a prohibition notice. This takes immediate effect and stops the activity in question until the risk is adequately controlled.

For fuel distributors, this could mean:

- suspension of tanker loading or unloading
- restrictions on vehicle movements
- closure of specific depot areas

The financial and reputational consequences can be severe, with fines reaching hundreds of thousands of pounds and potential criminal

liability for directors in the most serious cases.

Common failures – and how to avoid them

Missing or inadequate DSEAR assessments

Operating without a current, site-specific DSEAR assessment remains a frequent failing. General risk assessments do not cover explosive atmosphere risks.

IF HSE INSPECTATORS TURN UP TOMORROW, ARE YOU READY?

Many fuel depots operate safely day-to-day but may struggle during inspections due to systems that are out of date, poorly evidenced or inconsistently applied.

HSE inspectors can arrive without notice and expect immediate access to:

- DSEAR assessments
- risk assessments and maintenance records
- training and competency evidence
- emergency procedures and spill response arrangements

Common enforcement triggers include:

- expired or generic documentation
- weak permit-to-work systems
- gaps in training records
- emergency plans that haven't been tested

A simple rule of thumb:

If you can't quickly show it, inspectors may assume it isn't happening.

Routine internal checks and clear ownership of compliance can be the difference between a straightforward inspection and formal enforcement action.

DSEAR assessments should consider explosive atmospheres such as:

- loading gantries and tanker operational areas
- bulk storage tanks and pipework
- vapour release points
- gullies and interceptors

Viki's tip: Display hazardous area classification drawings in a visible location – not buried in a filing cabinet.

Outdated or generic documentation

Risk assessments and procedures must reflect current operations. Unreviewed documents produced years ago or copied from templates are easily identified by inspectors and undermine credibility.

Emergency arrangements that exist only on paper

Inspectors expect evidence that emergency procedures work in practice. Common failings include:

- inadequate fire detection or fire separation
- blocked or poorly signed escape routes
- outdated emergency contact details
- insufficient spill response equipment

Drills, training records and equipment checks are essential.

Training and competency gaps

Distributors must be able to evidence appropriate training and competence, including:

- ADR certification and refresher training
- dangerous goods awareness for office staff
- internal training signed off by a competent person

Having training is not enough – it must be recorded, current and demonstrable.

Workplace transport risks

Poor segregation between vehicles and pedestrians, limited visibility at loading points, defective reversing alarms and the absence of a site traffic management plan remain common causes of enforcement action and incidents.

Maintenance and equipment failures

Overdue statutory inspections, unsuitable equipment and the absence of preventive maintenance schedules for safety-critical systems frequently result in enforcement notices.

Weak permit-to-work systems

Hot work, confined space entry and maintenance activities are often poorly

controlled. A robust permit-to-work system should clearly define responsibilities, integrate risk assessments and ensure effective isolation procedures.

Contractor management is critical. Inspectors will look for:

- contractor selection criteria
- induction procedures
- competency checks
- supervision arrangements

Viki's tip: Retain completed permit-to-work forms on site for at least 30 days, then archive for at least 3 years, to evidence that the system is being used in practice.

Preparing for an HSE visit: a step-by-step guide

1. Designate a response lead

Appoint one person to manage all interaction with inspectors. This individual should:

- have authority to act on behalf of the business
- understand site operations and safety systems
- be familiar with regulatory obligations
- manage information requests consistently

Viki's tip: Brief your response lead on what not to say. Phrases like "we always do it this way" aren't helpful. Stick to facts and avoid speculative or defensive statements.

2. Audit key documentation

Ensure all safety documentation is current, site-specific and accessible, including:

- DSEAR assessments
- risk assessments
- training records
- maintenance logs
- emergency procedures
- statutory inspection certificates
- health and safety policy

3. Verify training and competence

Confirm that all staff qualifications and refresher training are in date, including:

- ADR
- Dangerous goods awareness training
- Internal competency assessments.

4. Test emergency systems

- Check emergency contact numbers
- Test evacuation arrangements
- Inspect spill kits and restock where needed
- Confirm coordination with external services.

Viki's tip: Test emergency contact numbers by calling them! Nothing undermines credibility faster than disconnected numbers or contacts who no longer work for the business.

5. Review physical controls

Walk the site with fresh eyes. Review:

- traffic management
- loading and unloading arrangements
- maintenance systems
- contractor controls
- permit-to-work procedures

As you walk the site, ask: "What could realistically go wrong here?"

6. Organise your evidence

Simple, well-structured filing systems – digital or physical – often outperform complex software when inspectors request documents quickly.

SME-specific considerations

Smaller fuel distributors face unique challenges. Operating with limited resources results in multiple responsibilities, which can place pressure on safety systems.

- **Competent person support:** Where in-house expertise is limited, engaging external specialists with fuel sector experience can be a worthwhile investment.
- **Phased improvements:** Where significant upgrades are required, develop phased plans with clear timelines. Record progress and keep all documents readily available for inspection.
- **Practical systems:** Inspectors do not expect gold-plated solutions – they expect systems that are appropriate, understood and consistently applied. Keep systems manageable and easy to maintain.
- **Collaboration:** Industry bodies such as UKIFDA can provide access to shared training and specialist advice.

Key message

HSE inspections are not one-off events. They are part of an ongoing expectation that risks are actively managed, controls are maintained and people are properly trained.

Document everything, train everyone and review regularly.

HSE INSPECTION READINESS – QUICK CHECK

Governance and responsibility

- Named HSE inspection response lead
- Authority and briefing confirmed
- Clear escalation process documented

Risk assessment and control

- Current, site-specific DSEAR assessment
- Hazardous area drawings available and up to date
- Document regular compliance readiness site walks
- Risk assessments reviewed following any site changes
- Consider industry accreditation to demonstrate compliance commitment

Training and competence

- ADR certificates current (including refreshers)

- Dangerous goods awareness for office staff
- Internal training signed off by a competent person
- Training records complete and accessible
- Implement programmes to address identified training gaps

Emergency preparedness

- Emergency procedures reviewed
- Fire detection and alarms tested
- Spill response equipment available and appropriate
- Emergency contact list verified and tested
- Evidence of drills and staff familiarity

Workplace transport

- Site traffic management plan in place
- Pedestrian and vehicle segregation adequate
- Reversing aids and visibility controls maintained

Maintenance and equipment

- Statutory inspections in date
- Preventive maintenance schedule documented
- Safety-critical equipment suitable and certified

Permit-to-work and contractors

- Permit-to-work system in use
- Completed permits retained
- Contractor induction and competency checks recorded

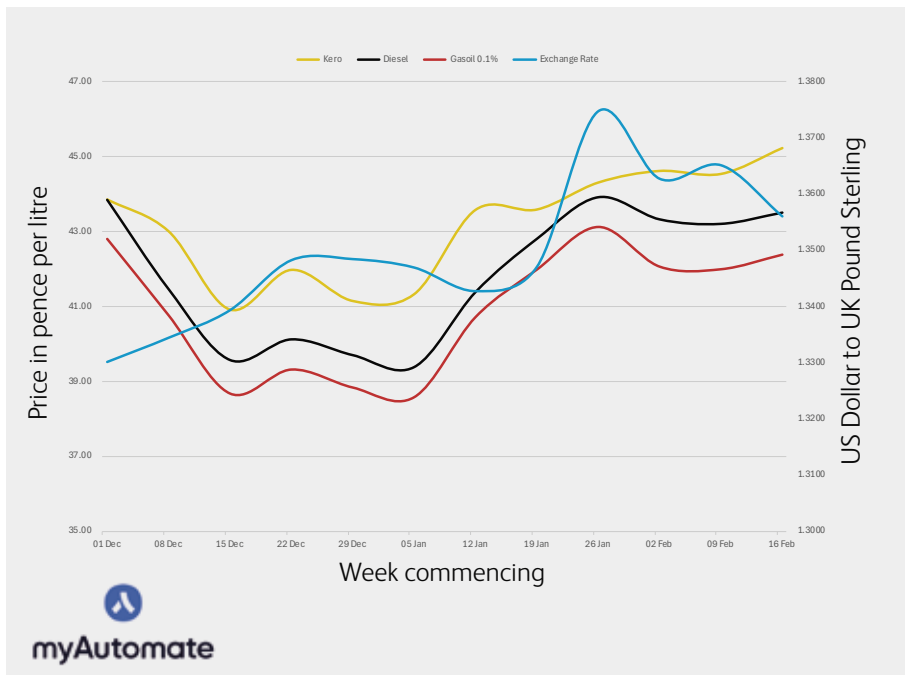
Documentation and evidence

- Key documents easily accessible
- Filing system logical and current
- Evidence demonstrates systems are used, not just written

Wholesale Price Movements: 22nd January 2026 – 18th February 2026

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	44.39	43.33	42.31
Average daily change	0.82	0.77	0.82
Current duty	0.00	52.95	10.18
Total	0.00	96.28	52.49

All prices in pence per litre

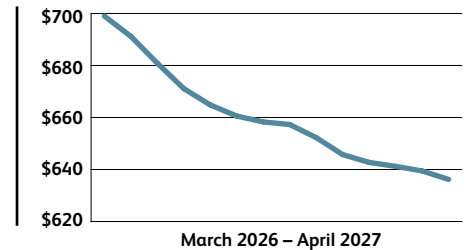


Kerosene	
Highest price 46.56 Fri 30 Jan 26	Biggest up day +1.54 Fri 30 Jan 26
Lowest price 42.80 Mon 26 Jan 26	Biggest down day -2.82 Mon 2 Feb 26

Diesel	
Highest price 46.25 Fri 30 Jan 26	Biggest up day +1.68 Fri 30 Jan 26
Lowest price 41.79 Mon 19 Jan 26	Biggest down day -3.29 Mon 2 Feb 26

Gasoil 0.1%	
Highest price 45.37 Fri 30 Jan 26	Biggest up day +1.55 Fri 30 Jan 26
Lowest price 40.97 Mon 19 Jan 26	Biggest down day -3.68 Mon 2 Feb 26

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	47.80	56.20	100.27	54.49	60.05	104.20
North East	46.75	54.83	99.35	56.05	58.41	102.23
North West	48.32	57.43	101.74	54.76	60.79	104.32
Midlands	46.82	55.36	99.81	53.10	58.89	102.94
South East	46.92	55.32	99.79	59.88	61.47	102.51
South West	47.27	55.16	99.63	55.64	58.68	102.11
N. Ireland	47.38	56.53	n/a	53.56	60.86	n/a
Republic Of Ireland	61.14	61.96	101.21	66.83	65.62	104.42
Portland	45.13	52.88	96.50			

The price totem figures are indicative figures compiled from the Portland base rate using calculated regional variances. Buying prices are ex-rack. Selling prices are for 1000 litres of kero, 2500 litres of gas oil and 5000 litres of ULSD (Derv in ROI). Prices in ROI are in €. Wholesale prices are supplied by Portland Analytics Ltd, dedicated providers of fuel price information from refinery to pump. For more information and access to prices, visit www.portlandpricing.co.uk

WELCOME TO MARCH'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 **EAMON GILDERNEW** OF TYRONE FUELS – OWNER OF THE WINNING TRUCK IN THE FUEL OIL NEWS TANKER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2025.

“HARD WORK IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS.” EAMON GILDERNEW

Sum up your working life in 25 words or fewer.

I joined the family business in 1996, when I was 18 years old, and never looked back – building on what my father and mother had started in 1988.

Describe yourself in 3 words.

Reliable. Focused. Committed.

What were your childhood / early ambitions?

To join the family business and become a lorry driver.

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

Multi Location – the ability to be in three places at once during the winter season.

The best advice you've ever received?

Look after your customers and they will look after you.

Your top tips for business success?

Have strong knowledge of your market. Never say “no”. Hard work is the key to success.

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

A picture of my new lorry on a rural lane in Armagh.

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

Nelson Mandela – to hear his story.

You can only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what is it?

Fillet steak with chips.

The best thing about your job?

Being on the road every day, as every mile brings a new story.

The quality that you most admire?

Common sense.

What are you most likely to say?

“No bother.”



What are you least likely to say?

“I let it run out.”

Describe your perfect day.

An early start with busy phones, all our lorries out on the road and happy customers.

Your favourite sports team?

Aghaloo O'Neills GFC (the local Gaelic team we sponsor).

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

John McClane (Die Hard), because of his ability to resolve every situation.

Share your greatest personal achievement.

Being the owner of the Fuel Oil News “Tanker of the Year”.

Share your pet hate or biggest irritant.

Lazy people / spongers.

What would your Mastermind specialist subject be?

Oil logistics in Tyrone and Armagh.

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

Support for small, family-run businesses that keep rural communities going.

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

The past – to appreciate how much the business has grown in 38 years.

What is number 1 on your bucket list?

A family holiday in the sun.

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

“Break Even” highlighting the importance of profits and helping to understand the impact of business costs over selling prices.

What 3 things would you take to a desert island?

A phone with signal. My family. Brandy and ice.

Something about you people would be surprised by?

The poor quality of my cookin.

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