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May 2026



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INSIGHT: TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

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From the margins to the mainstream

It was a huge pleasure to see so many come together at last month's excellent, and vital, annual industry gathering. Those prevented from attending by recent circumstances were missed.

In a sector facing relentless pressures, the willingness to invest time in meeting, sharing ideas and strengthening relationships says much about the resilience and professionalism that define this industry as well as the quality of event delivered by the impressive UKIFDA team.

Pressures remain, but other recent events suggest another shift – the off-grid sector no longer on the periphery of national energy debate.

The industry has long campaigned for greater recognition of the sector's unique challenges, but off-grid households could be forgiven for otherwise feeling like the forgotten corner of UK energy policy – last to support in times of price volatility and an afterthought in transition plans. In both political circles and broader media, understanding of the sector and its market mechanisms has frequently been limited.

Now, within just weeks, Westminster has debated heating oil affordability, increased heat pump grants for oil-heated homes, and faced renewed questions over domestic production and energy security.

Heating oil has moved into the political spotlight. While some policymakers focus on affordability today and others on electrification tomorrow, consumers simply want practical and affordable ways to heat their homes.

The debate is no longer whether government notices those living off-grid. It clearly does. The real question now is whether the solutions proposed reflect the real-world needs of the homes and communities affected.



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On the cover

Fuel quality, fleet investment and industry leadership come together at UKIFDA EXPO 2026 as WCF Group takes delivery of MechTronic's milestone 1,000th OptiMate unit, with WCF CEO and outgoing UKIFDA President Phil Murray among those marking the occasion.



Commission intervention raises fresh questions over Ireland's Renewable Heat Obligation design

Ireland's proposed Renewable Heat Obligation (RHO) has faced a significant setback after the European Commission issued a detailed opinion challenging elements of the scheme – a move that could force revisions to one of the country's flagship heat decarbonisation policies.

The intervention centres on proposals to include incentives, or multipliers, for domestically produced biomethane within the RHO framework. Following its scrutiny of the draft legislation, the Commission concluded the scheme cannot proceed in its current form with those measures included.

For the liquid fuels sector, the development is particularly relevant. The RHO is expected to play a central role in determining how renewable liquid fuels, such as HVO, can contribute to decarbonising Ireland's large off-grid heating market.

Philip Hannon, Chief executive of The Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating (TAZCH), believes the Government's intention to publish the bill before the summer recess may now

be in doubt, and suggested the Commission's decision should trigger a more fundamental rethink of the scheme.

"This news from the Commission must surely cast doubts on the bill and how it is constructed," he said.

TAZCH has consistently argued that the currently proposed obligation rates of 1.5% and 3% are too low to stimulate meaningful additional renewable liquid fuel blending in the heating market and risk creating compliance costs for suppliers and consumers without delivering proportionate carbon savings.

The group also renewed calls for a dedicated liquid fuels pathway within the wider framework, suggesting that a single blended approach may fail to reflect the practical realities of Ireland's heating market.

Mr Hannon argued that in order for the 700,000 homes currently using kerosene to benefit from the RHO, a minimum introductory obligation rate of 5% must be introduced: "The Government will have to rethink its proposals on biomethane as part of the RHO but should also take the opportunity to rethink

obligation rates if it wants the key piece of environmental legislation to succeed. Included in this, should be consideration for a separate scheme for liquid fuels."

What happens next?

A detailed opinion from the Commission does not necessarily end the legislation, but it typically requires the notifying state to respond, and may delay implementation.

For Irish distributors and suppliers serving oil-heated homes, the final shape of the RHO could directly influence future product demand, blending requirements, customer pricing and investment decisions.

If obligation rates remain modest, market change may be gradual. If rates are strengthened, or if a dedicated renewable liquid fuel mechanism emerges, suppliers may face faster transition timelines but also clearer commercial opportunities.

Either way, the Commission's intervention appears to have turned the focus back to how effective and workable the RHO will be in practice.

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Heating oil in Westminster: what the latest Commons debate means for rural consumers

A Westminster Hall debate on the cost of heating oil has underlined growing political concern over affordability, rural inequality and consumer protection for households that rely on delivered fuels. For the liquid fuel sector, it may signal support for customers today, but mounting policy pressure to reduce future reliance.

The debate on government support brought together MPs from rural and off-grid constituencies across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all raising concerns over sharp recent price rises and the impact on off-grid households.

For the industry, the debate offered a clear picture of how heating oil is being discussed in Westminster in 2026: not simply as a fuel source, but as an affordability issue, a rural fairness issue, and an energy transition issue.

Off-grid homes are no longer politically invisible

The debate was opened by Steff Aquarone, Lib Dem for North Norfolk, who highlighted that around half of his constituency is not connected to the gas grid, with many homes relying on heating oil or LPG.

He told MPs: “We seem to be punished or penalised for rurality.” – a phrase likely to resonate well beyond Norfolk. Across many rural parts of the UK, households already face higher transport costs, weaker public services and older housing stock. The recent surge in heating oil prices has sharpened the sense that off-grid consumers face additional disadvantages still.

A two-tier energy support system?

Several MPs argued that households using

heating oil are disadvantaged compared with mains-gas and electricity customers, who benefit from Ofgem-regulated markets and visible price-cap mechanisms.

Aquarone said: “That feels completely inconsistent and unjust” and argued that “Heating oil customers need to stop being seen as an afterthought in energy policy.”

Calls were made for measures including a temporary VAT cut on heating oil and the exploration of a price cap or stronger consumer protections.

Whether such proposals are practical or desirable is open to debate. Heating oil markets are structurally different from utility billing models, with wholesale costs, storage and logistics and seasonal demand patterns all playing a role.

Market scrutiny

Earlier parliamentary answers confirmed ministers had written to distributors reminding them of commitments under the UKIFDA Code of Practice, while the Competition and Markets Authority was reviewing evidence of potential unfair practices and anti-competitive behaviour following the March price spike.

That does not imply wrongdoing across the sector. But for distributors, it does mean that reputation, communication and transparent pricing matter more than ever when markets are volatile.

Support now, reduce later

Perhaps the most striking theme is the tension now emerging at the heart of policy.

On one hand, ministers are recognising that millions of households still depend on heating

oil and need support when prices surge.

On the other, the same government has simultaneously increased Boiler Upgrade Scheme grants for oil- and LPG-heated homes to £9,000, clearly signalling a desire to accelerate movement away from delivered fossil heating fuels.

In short: help households now, reduce dependence later. That twin-track approach is likely to define policy over the next few years.

As Steff Aquarone continued: “We will not win the argument on renewable energy by making struggling rural households pay the price of Trump’s illegal war in Iran. This is part of a wider debate about retrofitting and rural renewables.

“Well-insulated homes powered by renewable energy will prepare us for whatever volatile fossil fuel markets may do down the line.”

Short-term affordability measures may continue whenever markets spike. But long-term subsidy frameworks are increasingly designed to lower demand for heating oil through heat pumps, insulation and broader retrofit schemes.

What it means for the sector

Heating oil is increasingly viewed through the lenses of vulnerability, fairness, consumer protection and transition planning. That means future policy debates may focus as much on reducing litres consumed as on stabilising prices.

For now, ministers recognise the importance of heating oil to rural constituents and support for households may continue in the short term. But pressure to reduce reliance will build.

For distributors, understanding the implications of both approaches will be essential.

LCM Environmental expands services and strengthens capabilities with Octane acquisition

LCM Environmental has announced the acquisition of Octane Holding Group Limited and Octane Draincare Limited, strengthening its fuel, drainage and environmental services across the UK and Ireland.

The acquisition combines Bradford-based Octane’s technical expertise with LCM’s existing operations, supporting the company’s wider growth strategy.

Octane operates nationwide, specialising in the design, installation and maintenance

of bunded fuel tanks, fuel dispensing systems and drainage infrastructure. As an established specialist provider, the addition of the business increases LCM Environmental Group’s operational capacity and deepens technical expertise across key environmental and critical infrastructure services.

Octane founders, Richard Sykes and Jason Unsworth, said the transaction positions the business for continued growth under new ownership.

“We’re incredibly proud of what we’ve built

with Octane and the team behind it. LCM is the right partner to take the business forward.”

Richard Wallace, CEO of LCM Environmental, says the deal brings together complementary strengths as they look forward to “building on that success together as we support the next phase of growth.”

This latest environmental and infrastructure services sector development reflects continued consolidation driven by increasing regulatory demands and the need for scalable operations with comprehensive, integrated service delivery.

Government boosts heat pump grants for oil-heated homes

THE UK GOVERNMENT HAS INCREASED BOILER UPGRADE SCHEME SUPPORT FOR OIL- AND LPG-HEATED HOMES TO £9,000, REINFORCING ITS ELECTRIFICATION STRATEGY AMID RENEWED FOSSIL FUEL PRICE VOLATILITY. BUT WITH IRELAND REPORTING SURGING RETROFIT DEMAND, SCOTLAND ALREADY OFFERING STRONGER SUPPORT PATHWAYS, AND ANALYSTS WARNING THE UK REMAINS HAMPERED BY HIGH ELECTRICITY COSTS, THIS LATEST MOVE MAY REPRESENT MORE POLICY CATCH-UP THAN MEANINGFUL CHANGE.

In a move to strengthen support for heat pump adoption, ministers have increased Boiler Upgrade Scheme grants for eligible off-grid homes to £9,000.

The measure forms part of a wider package aimed at protecting households from volatile global fossil fuel markets while accelerating the shift toward lower-carbon heating. It follows recent price increases linked to international commodity shocks.

The message is clear: electrification remains the preferred long-term route for homes currently reliant on delivered fuels.

But for many off-grid homes, the key question is whether a larger grant is enough to overcome the real-world barriers to switching.

Catching up

While England and Wales have chosen to increase heat pump support, both Ireland and Scotland have already been moving through broader retrofit strategies.

In Ireland, ministers last month reported that overall home energy upgrade applications are up 96% so far in 2026, with applications for individual measures up 186% compared with the first quarter of last year.

Backed by €640 million in funding, Ireland is targeting 73,000 home upgrades in 2026.

Rather than relying on one technology, the Irish model combines clear messaging on affordability with multiple upgrade pathways, allowing households to improve homes step-by-step depending on budget and property suitability.

For many rural older homes, that flexibility may feel more practical than an immediate full system switch.

Scotland already further ahead

Scotland has also operated a more interventionist support model for several years, with available funding including stronger support for many rural and off-gas properties.

Against that backdrop, the latest UK announcement is significant – but far from pioneering.

The affordability challenge remains

There is another obstacle that subsidy may not

solve: the comparative cost of electricity.

New analysis from LCP Delta's Household Electrification Index recently ranked the UK last among eight major European markets for overall household electrification progress, and bottom specifically for heat pumps.

A key reason cited was the UK's spark spread of 4.6 – the highest in the study – meaning electricity remains significantly more expensive relative to gas than in competing markets.

In a simultaneous announcement the government has pledged to weaken the historic link between gas and electricity pricing. ...

This implicitly acknowledges a longstanding weakness in heat policy: persuading households to switch to electric heating is far harder when electricity remains comparatively expensive. Even official BUS guidance has previously acknowledged that, in some properties, the higher cost of electricity relative to gas can mean a heat pump initially leads to higher running costs.

If ministers are serious about mass electrification, reducing the running-cost disadvantage may prove just as important as increasing upfront grants.

Today's announcement recognises that off-grid properties often face a tougher challenge than urban gas-connected homes. It also underlines how firmly the government remains committed to an electrification-first pathway.

The grant increase is not a broadening of the technology debate. It is an attempt to make the same preferred route more financially acceptable.

Is £9,000 enough?

For some oil-heated households, the answer may be yes.

The larger grant could bring forward decisions already under consideration,

particularly where homes are well-insulated and owners have the means to cover installation costs.

But many off-grid homes present more complex economics. Older housing stock may still require insulation upgrades, radiator changes, hot water cylinder replacement or electrical works before a heat pump performs effectively.

That means the challenge is often not the grant itself, but total cost and complexity.

This is where Ireland's recent experience may offer lessons. Homeowners appear to respond strongly when governments frame support around warmer homes, lower bills and multiple practical pathways – not solely around one mandated technology.

What it means for distributors

For the liquid fuel sector, the grant uplift is unlikely to create any sudden demand impact.

Heating system replacement cycles remain slow, many households will delay major decisions, and a significant share of off-grid homes are likely to continue relying on oil for years to come. However, the reinforced policy direction is clear.

Across the UK and Ireland, governments are increasingly using subsidy frameworks to reduce reliance on delivered fuels – through electrification, efficiency measures, or both.

The bigger long-term industry impact may therefore be less about how many install heat pumps, and more about a gradual reduction in domestic fuel demand as homes become better insulated and less energy intensive.

Conclusion

The UK's £9,000 grant increase is a meaningful policy signal. But viewed alongside Ireland's retrofit demand surge, Scotland's longer-established support and Europe's more competitive electricity pricing, it also highlights how much further Westminster has to go.

The debate is no longer whether governments will subsidise the move away from delivered fossil heating fuels. It is which policies households trust, can afford and are willing to act on quickly enough to change the market.

At a glance: Why UK uptake still lags

- High electricity-to-gas price gap
- Upfront installation costs
- Rural property complexity
- Limited consumer confidence
- Policy uncertainty

MechTronic marks 1,000th OptiMate milestone with WCF Group at EXPO

MechTronic used UKIFDA EXPO 2026 to showcase a landmark achievement for its OptiMate fuel delivery system, unveiling the 1,000th unit produced since launch ten years ago.

The milestone system, built for WCF Group as part of an ongoing fleet expansion programme, features a one-off green metering head created to mark the occasion. The Leeds-based manufacturer says the milestone reflects a decade of growth for a system designed to support contamination-free delivery, improve operational efficiency and simplify driver workflows.

“Zero compromise” on fuel quality

For WCF Group, the latest delivery continues a long-term investment in delivery assurance and fuel quality. Following commissioning of the new unit, the business will have 14 OptiMate systems in service, with a further five scheduled for build later this year.

Paul Green, General Manager of Operations

at WCF Changers, said: “We chose OptiMate because its automated features and built-in contamination prevention provide a level of security that is invaluable. It’s a proactive measure that gives us absolute confidence in every drop of fuel we deliver.”

Brad Wilkie, Managing Director of MechTronic, added: “Reaching 1,000 systems is a testament to the trust our customers place in OptiMate every day. It is particularly fitting that this milestone truck belongs to WCF Group. Their commitment to fuel integrity and proactive contamination prevention aligns perfectly with the core mission of the OptiMate system.”

The cover image for this issue captures the presentation at EXPO, featuring (left to right) Paul Green, General Manager of Operations at WCF Changers; Ryan Creaser, Technical Sales and Service Engineer at COBO Ltd; Ben Firth, Sales Engineer at MechTronic and Phil Murray, Chief Executive Officer of WCF Ltd and outgoing UKIFDA President.



Since its launch 10 years ago, MechTronic has marked key milestones with exclusive colour editions: the 500th system in Red, and now, this 1,000th unit in celebratory Green. The signature “Blue” head remains the standard for fleets across the UK and Europe,

Also on display at the event was an Oil 4 Wales tanker fitted with OptiMate technology. As the first distributor to adopt the system a decade ago, its continued use demonstrates the growing role of automation and metering technology in improving delivery accuracy, reducing contamination risk and supporting operational standards across the sector.

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KEN'S CORNER



You Will Never Walk Alone

I left Liverpool after the UKIFDA Expo & Conference 2026 feeling both uplifted and frustrated in equal measure.

Uplifted, because once again the industry turned out in force to support the event and UKIFDA. This year felt particularly special. Dawn Shakespeare – UKIFDA's event organiser and manager, among many other responsibilities – and I both celebrated birthdays during the week. The kind comments (and cakes) were hugely appreciated. The old adage still stands: older, but certainly not wiser.

I was also encouraged by the number of exhibitors who told me they had seen record order levels and strong new leads. That speaks volumes about the strength of the show and the value it continues to deliver. As always, we are listening carefully and are already thinking about how we can make next year's event even better.

But there was frustration too. Across the two

days, many people approached me to say they felt fingers were being unfairly pointed at our sector, and that the real experts in the room, the industry itself, were not being heard.

For the first time, I shared that frustration publicly. But I also set out a way to turn the negatives into positives. My presentation, ahead of the political interviews, focused on the lessons we must learn.

Yes, we are too dependent on one type of fuel.

Yes, we are too dependent on one source of that fuel.

Yes, we need the capacity to make more of our own.

These messages are not new. We have said them before. But I took some encouragement from the political interviews that followed; there are signs that some of these lessons are finally beginning to land.

My message remains clear: we cannot

replace one dependency with another. We need a diversified fuel mix that reflects how and where people live, what they can afford, and, crucially, gives them a choice. Above all, heating-oil consumers must be listened to, not handed more of the same.

Our industry should not be blamed. It should be recognised as an expert partner – one that understands its customers better than anyone.

I walked away from Liverpool feeling, genuinely, that I wasn't walking alone. The next stage is about building on that sense of togetherness and delivering what consumers asked for in the recent government consultation: a renewable liquid fuel option that can be implemented quickly, at no upfront cost to households or the taxpayer, and produced here in the UK using the refining skills we have honed for decades.

That is the path forward. And we will walk it together.

PEOPLE MOVES

Jamie Topham has been promoted to the new role, **Regional Director – South**, at **Watson Fuels**.



Announcing the appointment, Matt

Whitton, CEO commented: "Since joining the business (then Watson Petroleum) 20 years ago as a sales/admin clerk, Jamie has gone on to excel across a wide range of roles spanning sales, operations and planning.

"This depth of experience and strong understanding of our business puts Jamie in an excellent position to lead and achieve sustainable growth in our southern region."

Jamie added: "I am extremely proud to have worked for Watson Fuels for the last 20 years and, over that time, have built strong relationships with some truly excellent members of our business. We are extremely lucky to have some remarkable people working for us, and I am very excited for the future of our company."

"I am thrilled to continue to develop my career with a business that puts people at the heart of everything we do.

"In this new role, I'm excited to work alongside Rob, Regional Director – North, as we lead the next phase of growth for Watson Fuels, delivering for homes, farms and businesses across our regions."



Watson Fuels has also been joined by **Paul Passmore** who took up a Business Development Manager role there in March this year.



There are also two new developments at **EET Fuels** with **Kayleigh Phillips** promoted to Regional Manager and **Ian Davies**



taking up a new role as **UK Lead for Company Sites Operations (CLDO & COCO)**.



The team at **Greenarc Fuel Cards** has further expanded with the addition of **Lee Puxty**, as Customer Relationship Manager. Lee brings a strong customer support focus to his role.



In addition, **Peter Brooks** has joined as Business Development Manager,

with the company ambitious for continued growth.



Richard Armour has taken up a new position, joining **LCM** as General Manager.

Angus McFayden has joined **Rock Oil** as Area Sales Manager. Looking to build strong customer relationships, Angus said: "I'm excited to be joining a brand with such a strong reputation for high-performance lubricants and technical expertise."

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

James Hunt

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 **JAMES HUNT**, CEO OF NEW ERA ENERGY, TO DISCOVER HOW JAMES SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.



My alarm goes off at...

5:30am most days. I like to get up early and get moving before the day starts.

The first thing I do is...

Take the dogs out and clear my head. It's a good way to start the day before emails and calls begin.

I prepare for the day ahead by...

Training if I can. I'm currently preparing for the London Marathon, so most mornings involve a run, gym session or some conditioning work.

I can't leave the house without...

My phone, obviously, but also a plan for the day. Things change quickly in this industry, so you need to know your priorities.



My typical day –

No two days are the same, which is one of the things I enjoy about the role. A typical day will involve time in the office with the team, calls with customers and suppliers and looking at the bigger picture of where the business is heading.

I like to spend time walking the floor and speaking to people.

We have grown quickly, but I want to keep that close-knit feel where everyone knows they're part of the same team.

There's always something unexpected, whether it's an operational issue, a new opportunity, or a change in the market. The key is to stay calm and focused – making sure the team feels supported.

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

It's a big part of what we do now. Customers are asking more questions

about sustainability, alternative fuels and efficiency, so we spend a lot of time looking at how we stay ahead and offer the right solutions.

We have invested in HVO and other future fuel solutions. Making sure we are ready for where the industry is going is a daily focus.

My most memorable work moment...

My most memorable moment was being promoted to CEO from Managing Director, and seeing the business grow to stand alongside some of the biggest names in the industry.

It's something I'm really proud of, especially because it reflects the hard work the whole team has put in.

The worst part of my job...

Probably the hours. Running a business means there is no time to switch off. There's always something that needs attention.

The best part of my job...

The people. This industry is built on relationships, I enjoy working with the team, our customers and the wider community.

I relax after work by...

Training, spending time with my family, or taking my son to the boxing gym. That's where I switch off.

My favourite meal is...

Dinner with the family – when I'm home at a sensible time.

The last thing I do each day is...

Check emails one last time and make sure I know what the next day looks like.

I'm normally in bed by...

Around 10:30pm, although it depends on the day. Ready for an early start again the next morning.

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New Era Energy: The importance of community support

NEW ERA ENERGY, LED BY **JAMES HUNT**, HAS A STRONG COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING ITS LOCAL COMMUNITY – PARTICULARLY THROUGH SPORT. FOLLOWING ON FROM HIS 'A DAY IN THE LIFE' FEATURE, FUEL OIL NEWS SPOKE WITH JAMES TO EXPLORE THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORTING SPONSORSHIPS TO THE BUSINESS, THE IMPACT THEY HAVE ON TEAM CULTURE, AND WHY INVESTING IN SPORT CONTINUES TO BE A VALUABLE STRATEGY.

New Era Energy recently presented the Box Cup at Braintree Health and Sports Centre. James begins by sharing more about the event, explaining why it was important for the business to sponsor it, and what he hoped it would achieve for the local community.

The New Era Box Cup is something we were very proud to support. The event was co-created by Billy Long of Longs ABC Gym and Gary Davidson, who have both dedicated a huge amount of their lives to grassroots boxing.

I know first-hand the time and effort that goes into that. Billy has trained my sons, and Gary has recently helped me to prepare for my first London Marathon, so there is a real personal connection there and a lot of respect for what they do.

The event brought together young fighters from across the UK and Europe, many of whom train incredibly hard for opportunities like this.

It was important for us to sponsor it because grassroots sport gets young people off the streets. Boxing teaches them discipline, purpose and a positive mindset, helping to support their mental health.

We work in communities across the country, so it matters to us that we give back locally as well. Supporting the Box Cup wasn't just about putting our name on an event, it was about helping create opportunities for young people and recognising the people who put countless hours into coaching and running clubs.

How do you assess the 'success' of your sponsorship activities? Do you get any direct feedback or measurable outcomes?

Success for us isn't only measured in commercial terms. Of course, it's good for people to recognise the New Era name, but the real measure is the feedback you get from the people involved.

When you see young fighters, coaches and families genuinely proud of what they're part of, it reinforces how worthwhile it is. Knowing we're helping to support young people's mental health is something we will always champion.



We also see the benefit in relationships. Sponsorships like this bring customers, suppliers and local communities together in a different environment, that helps build trust, which is important in our industry.



You've described boxing as a positive outlet for young people. Do you see parallels between the discipline required in boxing and the skills needed in the industry?

There are a lot of similarities. In boxing you don't get results overnight, the same is true in business. You need consistency, discipline and the ability to keep going when things don't go your way.

When you see the work coaches like Billy Long put into young fighters, it reinforces the structure and guidance the sport provides, both mentally and physically. That discipline, respect and work ethic are exactly the same qualities you need in this industry.

Whether it's training for a fight, preparing for a marathon or running a business, you only get out what you put in.

Fuel distribution is, ultimately, relationship-driven. How do events like the Box Cup strengthen ties with customers, suppliers and the communities you operate in?

This industry is built on relationships, determination, graft and endurance – and so is boxing.

The Box Cup reflects that, created by people like Billy Long and Gary Davidson who genuinely care about the sport and the community around it. Having grown up in boxing, they continue to weave it into their lives, supporting not just physical strength but mental health and resilience.

UKIFDA Awards 2026 – Recognising excellence across the industry

A highlight of this year's UKIFDA EXPO & Conference was the unveiling of the winners of six prestigious industry awards. Highly regarded throughout the fuel distribution industry, the awards form a central part of the two-day event. They shine a spotlight on the people and businesses who go above and beyond to support customers, champion best practice, embrace new technologies and lead the industry forward.

Prior to the event, UKIFDA CEO Ken Cronin highlighted the strength of this year's entries – "full of remarkable individuals and companies" and described reading them as "a genuine ray of sunshine in a difficult period."

"The winning individuals, depots and companies definitely reflect the outstanding commitment, professionalism and forward-thinking approach of those shaping the future of our industry," Ken said, speaking after the announcements.

"Many congratulations to you all – a true inspiration to everyone."



Customer Service Award – Sponsored by Worldpay (now Global Payments)

Winner: Andrea Williams, Moorland Fuels

Andrea progressed to Sales Manager in just three years, demonstrating positive leadership and a clear focus on customer care. From improving team performance to supporting vulnerable customers and stepping in when it matters most, she consistently delivers for the company and her customers.

Runners-up: Natasha Tidswell – RSM Group and Patrick McCabe – Certa Ireland



Green Award – Sponsored by Oilshield

Winner: Certa Ireland

The judges noted that Certa Ireland is proving that large-scale decarbonisation can happen now – replacing fossil fuels with certified renewable alternatives without disruption or costly operational change.

With 12 million litres of fossil gas oil displaced and 28,000 tonnes of CO₂ avoided, the impact is immediate and measurable. Also, delivering an estimated 6,000 tonnes of CO₂ savings each year from its own fleet of over 100 heavy goods vehicles, Certa is not just adapting to change – it's enabling it across the industry.

Runners-up: James D Bilsland Ltd and Certas Energy



Innovation Award – Sponsored by Fuel Oil News

Joint Winners: Watson Fuels and Cobo Tankers.

The two companies have worked in partnership to deliver a step-change in tanker safety. Together, they've developed an innovative system that removes transfer risk between ladder and tank – ensuring engineers are secured before stepping onto the tank, creating a consistently safe working environment from start to finish. The result? Improved safety, reduced downtime and greater efficiency, alongside a stronger safety culture across operations.

With Watson Fuels being the first to roll out this technology, this collaboration sets a new benchmark for the industry.

Runners-up: BoilerJuice and FoxInsights



Depot of the Year – Sponsored by Pen Underwriting

Winner: Certas Energy's Drem Depot.

Driving the standard of distributor depot safety forward, this award is decided by UKIFDA's Technical Manager, who audits depots nationwide.

Runners-up: Barton Petroleum, Wellingborough Depot and Allan Stobart Fuels, Raughton Head Depot



Driver of the Year – Sponsored by OAMPS

Winner: Ian Walters, Rix Petroleum

The judges were particularly impressed by Ian's nomination – not only for his outstanding performance as a tanker driver, but for the influence he has across the wider business. His impact extends far beyond his own vehicle. Through mentoring, training, and leading by example, Ian helps shape how others work, think, and operate safely every day.

Runners-up: Malcolm Kington – Certas Energy and Richard Ingram – Craggs Energy



Young Person of the Year – Sponsored by Just Tankers

Winner: Charlotte Lewis, WP Group.

A Customer Experience Advisor, Charlotte impressed the judges with her rare combination of natural relationship-building skills, commercial drive and genuine professionalism. Already making a real impact at WP Group, Charlotte is a fantastic example of the next generation shaping the future of our industry.

Runners-up: Alannah Carton – Certa Ireland and Cerys Rushall – New Era Energy

Ken also added his thanks to: "Our sponsors, exhibitors and 1000+ delegates who made the event such a success."

THE LATEST UPDATES FROM OUR DISTRIBUTOR COMMUNITY

Ange Coletta Celebrates 25 Years with Barton Petroleum Ltd

Ange Coletta, Group Supply and Sales Manager at Northamptonshire-based fuel distributor **Barton Petroleum Ltd**, recently marked 25 years with the company.

Reflecting on his career, Ange said: "I began my career with Barton Petroleum in February 2001 as a tanker driver. In 2004, I was promoted to Depot Manager at our Oakley (Bedford) Depot, where I had the privilege of growing the business annually for over 10 years.

"In 2015, I was given the opportunity to manage our sister company, Cotswold Petroleum, alongside my wife Jan, who left her teaching career to support this next step. Based in Moreton-in-Marsh, we spent five fantastic years there, building a great team and continuing to grow the business annually.

"I returned to Bedford in 2020, where Richard Burton, then Managing Director of Barton Petroleum, offered me the role of Group Sales Manager across both companies.

"I am sincerely grateful to the Burton family, particularly Richard and Don, for their trust, support, and the opportunities over the years. Barton's is an organisation that I'm very proud to be part of. I would also like to thank Clive Morin for his continued support in recent years, particularly following his appointment as Managing Director.

"It is wonderful to see the next generation, Lawrence and Oliver, involved in the family



business, and I wish Barton Petroleum continued strength and success for many years to come."

Instrumental to the business

Clive Morin, Managing Director, added: "Along with several people now holding senior roles at the company, Ange started as a driver in 2001.

"It quickly became apparent that Ange had the potential to adapt to a management role. After spending 12 years running our Bedfordshire depot, he then became instrumental in getting our new depot in the Cotswolds established.

"Ange's biggest talent has always been in sales, and he became our Group Sales Manager in 2020. He is a well-known figure in the industry and a great asset for Barton Petroleum!"

Congratulations Ange on 25 fantastic years in the industry from the team at Fuel Oil News!

New Era Energy: Recognised at National Awards

Essex-based fuel distributor **New Era Energy** has been named a finalist at the prestigious Fleet News Awards 2026 in London, earning shortlist spots in both the Sustainable Fleet of the Year and Fleet of the Year categories.

Representing the company on the night were Hollie Mills, Billy Fuller, Dan Sefton and Melissa Lancaster, who attended the ceremony hosted by comedian Katherine Ryan.

A proud moment

Reflecting on the achievement, Brand Manager Melissa Lancaster said: "Being shortlisted for both Sustainable Fleet of the Year and Fleet of the Year is something we're incredibly proud of.

"We've worked hard to build a fleet that leads on sustainability by running on HVO and setting the highest operational standards, so to be recognised at the Fleet News Awards among such strong competition is a huge achievement for everyone involved."

Congratulations to all at New Era Energy.



Allan Stobart: "Quiz & Curry" proves a winning combination for vital charity

A "Quiz & Curry" charity night held by **Allan Stobart** Lubricants & Fuels in aid of the Great North Air Ambulance Service raised an impressive £1200!

Combining a delicious curry with a prize quiz proved irresistible and ensured a hugely successful evening.

"Our Quiz & Curry Night was an incredible success, and we raised an amazing £1,200 for the Great North Air Ambulance Service!" Beth Hindmarsh shared on behalf of the Raughton-based distributor.

"A huge thank you to everyone who came along and joined us as well as all of the local businesses who supported our charity night through their generous raffle prize donations.

"We would also like to thank the Peraz family, who catered the evening, for the amazing food and thank you to John and the Rosley Village Hall committee for providing us with the venue for the occasion."

Amazing fundraising!



Crown Oil: Proud to support annual community event

Fourteen members of the **Crown Oil** team recently took part in a 9.3k run to raise money for Cardiac Risk in the Young, in memory of a local lad Thomas Hardman, who sadly passed away suddenly in 2012 at just 21 years old. An annual event organised by his family and friends raises vital funds for heart screenings in the local community, helping to prevent similar tragedies.

The team from Crown Oil joined this year's event which saw an incredible turnout of more than 280 people running or walking the route.

The business also supported the important local cause with a £2000 donation and is already looking forward to taking part again next year.

Vital support for a fantastic cause.



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Ireland's fuel shock: Protests, policy and supply chain pressure

FROM REGULATORY CLEARANCE TO NATIONWIDE PROTESTS AND A €505M SUPPORT PACKAGE, IRELAND'S FUEL CRISIS HAS UNFOLDED AT PACE. BUT BEYOND THE HEADLINES, WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT COST PRESSURES, POLITICAL RESPONSE AND THE OPERATIONAL RISKS FACING FUEL DISTRIBUTORS ACROSS THE UK AND IRELAND?



A crisis driven by cost pressures

Ireland's fuel market came under intense pressure last month, as protests linked to the rising cost of fuel disrupted supply chains and prompted swift government action.

While the images of blockades and supply disruption dominated headlines, the underlying driver is clear: sustained high fuel costs and their impact on households and businesses.

In the week before the protests, Ireland's competition regulator, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), published findings clearing the industry of any wrongdoing in relation to the recent surge in fuel prices.

In the days that followed, however, protests escalated and distribution networks were affected, bringing operational challenges sharply into focus. Concerns over fuel prices, combined with wider cost-of-living pressures had reached a tipping point.

This was not a crisis driven by market malpractice – but by affordability.

That distinction matters.

Policy response already in motion

A €505 million support package was announced by the Irish government against this backdrop, but was not delivered as a direct reaction to protest activity.

Officials made clear at the time that engagement with recognised industry groups and representative bodies had already been underway, with the package forming part of a pre-existing effort to address fuel affordability pressures.

The package announced was in addition to €250m worth of measures introduced just weeks before, to support fuel-dependent workers.

However, the timing of the announcement – coinciding with escalating disruption and ahead of a planned vote of no confidence by Sinn Féin – means the measures were inevitably being viewed through a political lens.

For the sector, this reinforces a key dynamic: policy, politics and operational reality are increasingly moving in parallel, rather than in sequence.

Regulatory clarity

While price rather than practice is the focus of

the protests, (ongoing but reducing at time of writing) the CCPC's findings remain significant.

They confirm an understanding that recent price increases are rooted in global market dynamics rather than anti-competitive behaviour – an important message for the industry at a time of heightened scrutiny.

Yet in fast-moving situations such as this, there is often a lag between regulatory clarity and public understanding. Initial political rhetoric and media coverage can shape perceptions quickly, while more detailed findings take longer to filter through.

The result is not necessarily a distrust of suppliers, but a more immediate and understandable frustration around affordability – combined with a market narrative that can take time to rebalance.

Operational pressure at the sharp end

For fuel distributors, the most immediate impact of Ireland's recent events was operational.

Protest activity created real-world challenges:

- restricted access to depots and delivery routes
- delays and re-routing of tankers
- increased pressure on drivers and logistics teams
- spikes in demand as customers react to uncertainty

In this environment, distributors are no longer simply managing supply, they are managing disruption.

This sits alongside an already challenging commercial backdrop: prices remain elevated

Lessons for the UK and Ireland market

Ireland's experience offers a number of practical takeaways for fuel distributors across the UK and Ireland:

1. Cost pressures can quickly become operational risks

Affordability challenges can escalate into disruption, even where markets are functioning correctly.

2. Operational resilience is critical

Disruption – whether from protest activity or other causes – requires robust contingency planning.

3. Communication supports stability

Clear, factual engagement with customers helps manage uncertainty during periods of heightened attention.

and extremely volatile, margins are under pressure, and customer sensitivity is high.

The events in Ireland underline how quickly external factors – whether political, social or economic – can translate into frontline operational strain.

A secondary challenge: narrative and communication

While cost – not trust – was the primary driver of recent events, there remains a secondary challenge for the sector.

Where political rhetoric has amplified concerns, and where protests have heightened visibility, distributors may still face questions from customers seeking clarity on pricing.

Here, communication becomes critical.

Not as a defence against accusations of wrongdoing, but as a means of explaining market dynamics, reinforcing transparency and maintaining customer confidence during periods of volatility

As seen in both Ireland and the UK, where there is an ongoing Competition and Markets Authority investigation into fuel pricing transparency, the ability to clearly articulate how prices are formed is becoming an increasingly important part of doing business.

A fast-moving landscape

The impacts of Ireland's fuel crisis are still unfolding.

What is already clear, however, is how quickly a situation driven by cost pressures can move through multiple phases – regulatory scrutiny, public protest, political response and operational disruption.

For distributors, the impacts are immediate.

As Patrick Kirby of Tria Energy observes: "For distributors, normal has become exceptional and the exceptional has become normal.

"We are managing impacts at the moment that we would never have thought possible.

"Even those who have operated in the industry for years have never seen such a level of volatility and sadly, these events seem to be occurring with increasing frequency."

In today's environment, resilience is no longer defined solely by infrastructure and supply – it also depends on the ability to navigate rapidly shifting external pressures, often playing out in real time.

ESL Fuels Biofuel Market Update – Q1 2026

IN ASSOCIATION WITH PORTLAND ANALYTICS



Feedstocks

UCO prices recorded limited movement across Q1, increasing marginally from \$1,100/mt to \$1,135/mt (71.9-76.0ppl), remaining close to the three-year high of \$1,160/mt (76.3ppl) reached in September 2025. In January, Indonesia opted to increase export levies on POME and UCO, to protect supply and generate revenue for its domestic biofuel mandate and emerging SAF production, after POME exports reached 14 month highs due to strong demand from EU renewable fuel producers. The increase follows reports that Indonesia may divert crude palm oil (CPO) volumes typically destined for export into domestic biofuel production, as part of an effort to exert influence over global CPO prices. Conflict in the Middle East and a domestic tallow shortage caused a price spike in US feedstocks, including UCO, leading to increased interest in US demand for Asian UCO, drawing volume away from European markets.

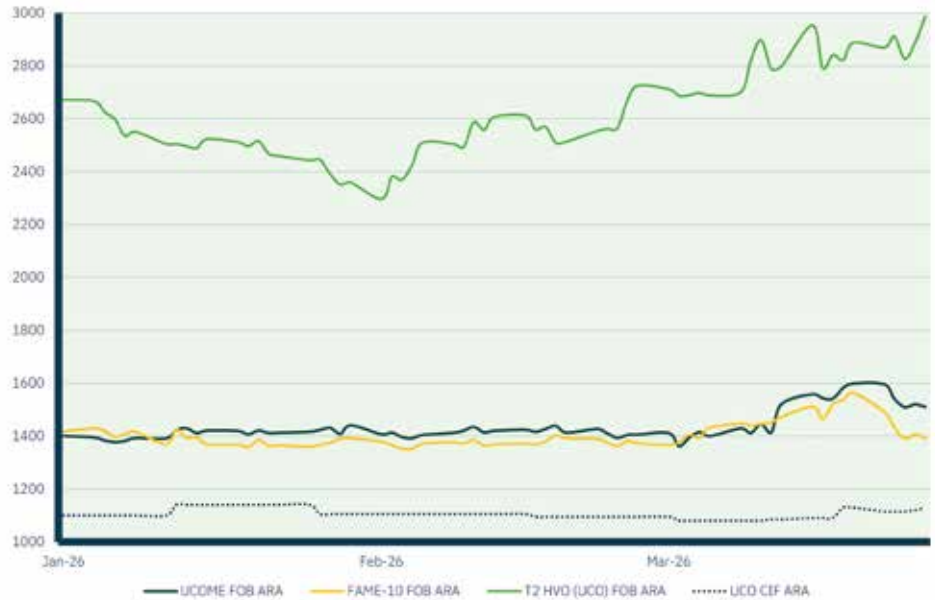
Biodiesel

Following a relatively flat market through much of January and February, a surge in Low Sulphur Gasoil Futures, the underlying price benchmark for European biofuels, driven by the outbreak of war in the Middle East, saw biodiesel prices rise in March. However, premiums above LSGO fell to their lowest levels in two years, causing certificate markets to decline across Europe due to the narrowing of the differential between mineral grades and biodiesel, with demand capped by EU limits on the bio content of road fuels. Q1 2026 also marked a structural change in feedstock preference, due to the implementation of revised German and Dutch biofuels policies from 1st January (retroactively applied as the legislation continues to work its way through parliament). The new mandates have seen the value of waste-based biodiesels (e.g. UCOME) fall relative to those produced sustainably from crop (e.g. FAME-10) due to the scrapping of double-counting in these markets. As a result, the UCOME price differential to FAME-10 fell into negative on several occasions throughout Q1, demonstrating the shift in demand for European biofuels blenders.

FAME-10 and UCOME

UCOME started the year trading at a discount to FAME-10, reaching a Q1 low of -\$35.75/mt (-2.3ppl) on 3rd January, a trend that continued

Wholesale NWE Prices (\$ per Metric Tonne)



throughout the first half of the month as the premium on waste-based biodiesels dissipated due to the scrapping of double-counting, lowering the compliance value of UCOME relative to other grades. However, an increase in UCO prices, compared to a relatively liquid rapeseed market, saw UCOME prices rise back above FAME-10 during the second half of January and throughout February, with the differential averaging \$42/mt (2.7ppl) across this period. Conflict in the Middle East following US airstrikes on Iran commencing 28th February marked the start of a period of volatility, with FAME-10 prices quickly jumping, briefly seeing the UCOME differential fall into negative again. However, it widened once more towards the end of the quarter as biofuels markets anticipated the announcement of higher US biofuels mandates, expected to drive up feedstock costs, in particular UCO. As a result, the UCOME premium above FAME-10 rose to a Q1 high of \$148/mt (9.9ppl) at the end of March.

Market Outlook

Looking ahead to Q2, revisions to the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), under its "Set 2" regulations, are likely to impact HVO supply out of the US, the primary source for the UK in Q1 as it traded at a discount to the European market. Therefore, despite the Trade Remedies

Authority's (TRA) decision in mid-March to recommend against countervailing duties on US HVO exports to the UK, the existing price arbitrage between US and European product is expected to narrow into Q2. A late amendment to the EPA's renewable fuels policy also saw the current imported feedstock penalty scrapped, meaning biofuels produced from both domestic and imported feedstocks will be treated equally under the new regulations. As the US does not produce enough feedstock domestically to meet the additional demand expected as a result of the revised RFS, the US will be reliant on imports to meet the new targets, which will likely impact the availability of feedstock supply to Europe, increasing production costs for HVO and first generation biodiesels such as UCOME.

HVO

Q1 was a period of uncertainty for HVO supply to the UK, with suppliers awaiting the outcome of the TRA's anti-subsidy investigation into US HVO. Following its initial Statement of Essential Facts issued at the end of November 2025, the TRA initially recommended duties of between 20-23ppl to be applied. As a result, throughout Q1, T1 (non-EU) cargoes were being offered with varying levels of TRA duties protection (50% or 100%), which saw the price gap to T2 (EU) product narrow, albeit still at a discount. Following the TRA's U-turn, the gap reopened,

however the EPA's announcement of its "Set 2" RFS regulations saw the differential narrow once more towards the end of the quarter. Wholesale T2 prices for UCO-derived HVO rose by \$330/mt (23.5ppl) across Q1, reaching a three-and-a-half year high of \$3,007/mt (177.9ppl) by the end of March, driven by a combination of high underlying LSGO prices due to the Iran War, and an expected increase in demand from the revised RFS. The price impact of the conflict in Iran was tempered to some extent in the UK by high inventories held by UK suppliers, causing the UK price to be depressed, with an incentive for suppliers to reduce stock levels to avoid severe backwardation costs. However, a significant drop in the value of RTFCs saw T2 prices net of RTFCs rise to 145.0ppl, the highest level since October 2022. The RTFC benefit on waste-derived HVO fell from 57.0ppl to 32.8ppl across Q1, an increase of 24.2ppl on the final cost of HVO for UK end users..

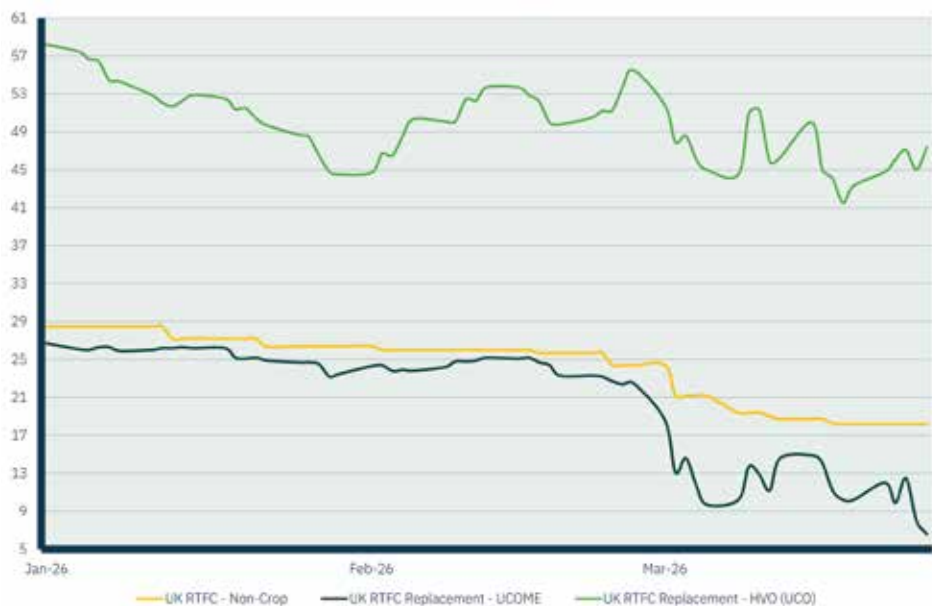
T2 HVO vs ULSD (UK Pence per Litre [PPL])



Certificates

After starting 2026 at a 33-month high of 28.50 pence per certificate, non-crop RTFC prices fell throughout Q1, ending March at a two-year low of 16.40ppc. The decline in certificate prices was largely due to rising diesel costs across the quarter, which saw the differential between biodiesel and mineral diesel narrow, reducing the cost of blending. This was particularly prevalent throughout March, following the outbreak of war in the Middle East at the end of February. Non-crop RTFC prices fell by 8ppc in March, with the differential between mineral diesel and UCOME, the primary biodiesel blendstock used to generate certificates declining by 85%. However, with the diesel futures market in greater backwardation, the differential widens again down the forward curve, lending support to RTFC prices and creating dislocation between non-crop RTFCs and UCOME RTFC replacement prices."

RTFC and Replacement Prices (UK Pence per Certificate [PPC])



News and Policy

The TRA concluded its anti-subsidy investigation into US HVO on 12th March, deciding that no countervailing duties should be imposed, ending a period of uncertainty for UK HVO supply. The TRA initially recommended duties of 20-23ppl on US HVO imports, before ultimately reversing its decision on the basis that US HVO production is no longer being subsidised following the expiry of the Blenders Tax Credit at the end of 2024.

The decision may be open to appeal due to the 45Z credit, which effectively replaces the BTC, although the challenge over 'like products' remains. The US Environmental Protection Agency has announced record-high biofuel mandates under its revised "Set 2" Renewable Fuel Standards, causing a surge in RIN (US biofuel credits) pricing and a subsequent upturn in domestic production of renewable diesel and biodiesel. Higher targets in the US are likely to impact the availability and price of exports to the UK, with local demand expected to soak up supply from US producers. Additionally, the new regulations have scrapped a penalty on imported feedstocks, meaning the US is likely to turn to the global market for supply.

Indonesia raised export levies and duties on refined UCO and POME, key feedstocks used in biodiesel production, for three consecutive months across Q1 2026, in order to support its domestic blending mandates. Plans to move to a B50 target were shelved in January, however policy-makers are reconsidering due to the recent spike in fossil fuel prices. This is in addition to a blanket ban on exports of raw UCO and POME introduced in 2025, following reports that the country was exporting more than its total production capacity, leading to concerns over feedstock fraud.



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The Middle East conflict has changed off-grid decarbonisation... but not in the way you think



AS GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST ONCE AGAIN SEND SHOCKWAVES THROUGH GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS, QUESTIONS OF AFFORDABILITY, RESILIENCE AND LONG-TERM ENERGY SECURITY HAVE MOVED SHARPLY BACK INTO FOCUS. THE UK GOVERNMENT REMAINS CLEAR THAT ELECTRIFICATION, ALONGSIDE THE CONTINUED EXPANSION OF RENEWABLE POWER, IS CENTRAL TO ITS PREFERRED PATHWAY TO DECARBONISING HEAT – AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THESE TECHNOLOGIES WILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE.

YET THE CURRENT VOLATILITY ALSO HIGHLIGHTS THE RISKS OF RELYING TOO HEAVILY ON ANY SINGLE ROUTE TO TRANSITION. IN THIS OPINION PIECE, **MALCOLM FARROW** DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AT OFTEC, ARGUES THAT A BROADER MIX OF SOLUTIONS – INCLUDING RENEWABLE LIQUID FUELS ALONGSIDE HEAT PUMPS – COULD DELIVER EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS MORE QUICKLY, MORE PRAGMATICALLY AND WITH GREATER FAIRNESS FOR THE MILLIONS OF OFF-GRID HOUSEHOLDS FACING THE GREATEST COST AND PRACTICAL BARRIERS TO CHANGE.

For most rural homes and businesses living off the gas grid, heating oil has long been a reliable and affordable choice of heating system. In fact, when you look at the data, it has consistently been the cheapest form of heating in the past few years, even when compared to mains gas.

While prices do fluctuate, we have seen time and again that when they go up they tend to come back down just as quickly. This track record of the fuel being a low cost option is why so many still depend on it today.

Of course, we need to recognise the current situation. The fluctuation in the price of kerosene, triggered by the unexpected conflict in the Middle East, is understandably incredibly unwelcome. Already in the middle of a serious cost of living crisis, any price increase is a significant challenge to families and businesses. It is a difficult time, and we welcome the support the government has provided to help people manage these costs.

We should also recognise the hard work and dedication shown by the liquid fuel heating industry. From the fuel distributors to technicians, people have been working around the clock to support their customers and keep their heating on in recent weeks. But as we look past the current challenges, we need to think about how we move forward.

Electrification urgently needs a rethink

Almost everyone agrees that we need to move towards cleaner, low carbon heating systems. This goal isn't the problem. The challenge is how we get there. Even before the recent conflict in the Middle East, the cost of living was the top concern for most families. Now, the government is warning us not to underestimate how hard coming months will be.

In the current economic landscape, a rapid nationwide switch to heat pumps isn't realistic. The scale of change needed in homes across the country is massive. While the government offers a £7,500* subsidy through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, the grant covers less than half the full cost for many older, off grid properties. The reality is the money just isn't there, neither in the government's budget nor in the bank accounts of consumers.

We've previously discussed how it's not just about money. Many older buildings may require disruptive upgrades, such as new radiators or better insulation, for a heat pump work effectively. Not to mention most heating systems changes are a distress purchase when households don't have time to retrofit their property. So, whilst electrification and heat pumps have an important role, over reliance on them may have the perverse effect of slowing progress in the short to medium term.

Why renewable liquid fuels make sense

This is where renewable liquid fuels, like Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), come in. The biggest hurdle for most people is the upfront cost of a new heating system. Renewable liquid fuels solve this problem because a 20% blend works immediately in the existing boiler without any intervention required. It's a drop-in solution that doesn't require a full-scale home renovation.

But what about the running costs? While kerosene prices have risen sharply, the price of HVO has remained much steadier. It has only seen a minor increase in comparison at the time of writing. Ironically, if the government had supported HVO years ago and equalised the duty so it was more widely available for home heating, consumers would have been in a much better position today.

Looking toward a secure future

Fuels such as HVO can be sourced from America, which removes some of the challenges of sourcing kerosene from the Middle East. As demand for these renewable fuels grows domestically, we expect to see more of it produced right here in the UK.

The response to the recent government Alternative Clean Heating consultation shows that people want this option. Nearly 16,000 rural households, heating technicians and fuel distributors responded to the consultation, urging the government to support renewable liquid fuels. They want to play their part, but they need options that are affordable and practical.

A pragmatic path forward

All households, not just those off-grid, are currently in a very challenging situation. It's absolutely right that our immediate focus continues to be working with the government and as an industry to support consumers. But as we turn our attention to the future, we have to be pragmatic. Now is not the time for rash decisions based on the current situation.

A technology inclusive approach is the only way to make genuine progress towards net zero. This shouldn't be an argument between heat pumps and liquid fuels. We need both. By supporting renewable liquid fuels alongside heat pumps, we can create a transition that is fair, affordable, and realistic for everyone, no matter where they live.

Malcolm Farrow Director of Marketing and External Affairs at OFTEC

** Editor's note: figure correct at time of writing, subsequently increased to £9,000 for oil- and LPG-heated homes.*

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Engineering confidence into HVO: what comes next as renewable fuels mature?

MOVING THROUGH 2026, HYDROTREATED VEGETABLE OIL (HVO) IS NO LONGER A NICHE ALTERNATIVE FUEL. IT IS AN INCREASINGLY ESTABLISHED PART OF THE UK'S LOWER-CARBON FUEL MIX, WITH GROWING USE ACROSS APPLICATIONS WHERE OPERATORS WANT EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS WITHOUT REPLACING EXISTING DIESEL-POWERED ASSETS.

That growing presence signals progress. But it also changes market expectations.

Customers are no longer simply asking whether HVO can help reduce carbon intensity. Increasingly, they are asking whether it can deliver the same consistency, reliability and operational confidence as the diesel it is replacing. For suppliers and distributors, that shift marks an important next stage.

Looking beyond early adopters, we consider what comes next for HVO as it moves from niche alternative to mainstream fuel. We also speak with Tammy Coates, Fuel Additives Business Manager at SBZ Corporation, about the role premium additives may play in that wider uptake.

Why performance matters as markets mature

HVO has gained traction as a practical route to lower emissions with minimal disruption. Yet, like any fuel, it has characteristics that differ from conventional diesel.

Its paraffinic structure supports cleaner combustion, but certain factors may require closer attention depending on the application.

As more mainstream users adopt HVO, expectations naturally rise. Operators want assurance that vehicles, generators and plant will start reliably in winter, perform consistently under load and remain protected over time. They also want confidence in storage stability where fuel may be held for longer periods.

In short, HVO is increasingly being judged as a working fuel, not just a sustainability solution – a clear sign of a market maturing.

The role of treatment and specification

This is where additive chemistry and product specification enter the discussion.

Fuel treatments are designed to support performance in areas such as:

- lubricity protection for pumps and injectors
- injector cleanliness and combustion efficiency
- cold flow performance in lower temperatures
- oxidation resistance during storage
- consistency across varying supply conditions

For some, standard compliant HVO will be

entirely appropriate. For others – operating in harsher environments, storing fuel longer-term, or relying on uptime-critical equipment – treated grades may provide additional reassurance.

That simply reflects the reality that different applications place different demands on any fuel product. Appropriate measures can stabilise, protect hardware, and improve operational consistency.

What this means for distributors

This presents a commercial opportunity.

As HVO moves mainstream, differentiation may become less about simply offering renewable fuel and more about how well that fuel is supported. Product knowledge, storage advice, technical guidance and transparent discussions around performance become increasingly valuable.

That is particularly relevant for distributors whose competitive strength lies in customer relationships and service rather than scale.

Helping customers understand which grade is right for their operation – and whether enhancement offers real value – may become an important part of the conversation.

As Tammy notes: “Premiumisation is sometimes misunderstood as simply a commercial label. In reality, it is a technical response to a more complex fuel landscape.

“Premiumisation starts with consistency. Renewable and transitional fuels behave differently, and operators need reliability. The right chemistry stabilises fuels and protects the equipment that depends on them.”

Of course, for many customers price will remain the first consideration – any premium proposition must demonstrate clear operational value.

Conventional additives still have a role

Tammy also highlights that, even in lower carbon fuels, certain fossil-derived additive chemistries remain essential: “Lubricity improvers, detergents, cold flow enhancers, and stabilisers are often formulated using proven hydrocarbon chemistry because they deliver enhanced performance.”

A result she says is not contradiction but synergy: renewable base fuels enhanced with carefully selected additive technology that enables them to meet, or exceed, traditional diesel performance expectations.

Not every customer needs premium

Cost will, of course, remain a deciding factor.

Some users will prioritise carbon reduction and require a straightforward compliant product at the best price. Others may place greater value on reliability, storage confidence or reduced maintenance risk.

The likely outcome is a more segmented market, serving different customer priorities. That is typical of a fuel moving from early adoption into maturity.

Looking ahead

The early growth of HVO was driven by sustainability goals and early adopters. Its next phase may be shaped by aspects familiar to distributors: value, performance and trust.

Markets tend to ask different questions as products mature. The first phase is often about awareness. The second – adoption. The third – optimisation.

HVO appears to be entering that third phase.

The debate is no longer simply whether renewable liquid fuels can play a role. Across many sectors, they already are. The next question is how to supply them reliably, competitively and with required operational standards.

The right additive strategies can offer that practical bridge between new fuel chemistry and familiar operational confidence.

As renewable fuels become more widely available, they will increasingly be judged not only on emissions savings, but on how they behave in day-to-day operations.

For the industry, that is an encouraging sign. It suggests HVO is moving beyond early adopter status and becoming a mainstream fuel judged by the same standards as any established product.

That will be, for distributors, where the next opportunities – and expectations – begin.

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:

Technological developments: Should you be implementing them?

Smart investment, practical gains – and why SMEs should act now

Recent *Fuel Oil News* analysis of the evolving depot manager role highlighted a clear trend: technology is not just supporting operations – it is reshaping them.

From centralised planning and remote monitoring to data-driven decision-making, many of the responsibilities traditionally anchored at depot level are increasingly being coordinated across wider networks.

That shift is already driving efficiency gains, but it also raises a more immediate question for distributors: what technology should you actually be investing in – and where will it deliver the most value?

For many fuel distributors, technology has historically been viewed as something for the larger players – expensive, complex and disruptive to implement.

That perception is changing fast.

Across the UK and Ireland, distributors of all sizes are under pressure to improve efficiency, control costs, meet compliance demands and deliver stronger customer service.

At the same time, margins remain tight, labour remains stretched and customers increasingly expect faster, more transparent service.

For SMEs in particular, technology is no longer a “nice to have”. It is becoming a practical route to staying competitive.

The good news is that meaningful gains no longer require enterprise-scale budgets. Many of today's most effective tools are modular, subscription-based and designed to integrate with existing operations.

The smartest approach is not wholesale transformation – it is targeted implementation.

Five technologies delivering value now 1. Fleet telematics and route optimisation

For most distributors, transport remains one of the largest controllable costs.

Vehicle telematics and route planning software are therefore often the best place to start.

Modern systems provide live vehicle tracking, route optimisation, driver behaviour insights and predictive maintenance alerts.

The GRS Fleet Telematics annual report 2025 suggests telematics can cut maintenance costs by 12–18%, while route optimisation can significantly reduce unnecessary mileage and failed delivery attempts.

For SMEs running a modest fleet, even small efficiency gains per vehicle can quickly add up across the year.

Practical payback:

A distributor with ten tankers saving just a few miles per vehicle per day can create a meaningful annual fuel and labour saving.

2. Tank telemetry and remote monitoring

Telemetry has moved from a premium extra to a mainstream efficiency tool transforming the way organisations monitor, predict and control fuel consumption.

Remote tank monitoring allows suppliers to track customer tank levels in real time, helping to:

- Detect losses via theft or leaks
- Prevent runouts
- Improve delivery scheduling
- Reduce emergency drops
- Increase route density
- Improve customer retention

This is particularly valuable in rural heating oil markets, where inefficient scheduling and reactive deliveries can significantly erode margin.

For distributors managing commercial sites, farms or vulnerable domestic customers, telemetry can also strengthen service reliability and customer confidence.

Distributor view:

Telemetry can often justify itself through avoided emergency deliveries alone.

3. AI in forecasting, planning and customer service

Artificial intelligence is already appearing in fleet and logistics software, often without operators necessarily recognising it as AI. Examples include:

- Demand forecasting based on weather and buying patterns
- Route optimisation for delivery efficiency
- Predictive maintenance alerts
- Automated customer communication 24/7 reducing the need for staff cover
- Chatbots handling routine enquiries
- Real time delivery updates

A recent study by Webfleet found 48% of UK fleet managers already using AI (15%) or planning to do so within five years (33%) with a further 43% considering future adoption.

More than half believe it will improve route planning and logistics as well as boosting fuel efficiency and reducing emissions. Further benefits include enhanced driver safety and behaviour analysis as well as predictive maintenance and asset management.

For fuel distributors, the most immediate benefit is not futuristic automation – it is smarter decision-making using existing data, freeing up fleet management time.

4. Cloud-based management systems

Many smaller distributors still rely on spreadsheets, paper records or disconnected legacy systems.

Cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and management platforms can combine:

- Pricing
- Stock control
- Customer accounts
- Scheduling
- Compliance records
- Invoicing
- Reporting dashboards

That reduces duplication, removes paperwork and gives management clearer visibility



of margins, vehicle costs and operational performance.

Commercial reality:

There are industry-specific solutions providers who offer a modular approach, so it is not necessary to implement everything at once. Start with the pain point causing most friction.

5. Mobile apps for drivers and customers

Mobile tools are helping bridge depot operations and field activity.

- Driver apps now support:
- Job dispatch
- Navigation
- Live tracking
- Proof of delivery
- Communication

Smart tech doesn't always mean self-funded

There are funding support schemes worth exploring before finalising any implementation.

While most digital investments are self-funded through operational budgets, distributors should review external support routes where eligible:

R&D Tax Relief (HMRC)

A UK tax reduction scheme for SMEs that is available for qualifying innovation or software development projects

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

A local authority managed funding programme supporting SMEs delivering projects that improve local productivity or services.

Rural England Prosperity Fund

A UK rural growth fund relevant for rural depot or service improvements (closes 2026)

Regional grants and apprenticeship/digital skills programmes may also support training linked to implementation.

Key Insight: Speak with your accountant and local authority growth team before assuming support is unavailable.

- Vehicle checks
 - Incident reporting
- Customer-facing apps can offer:

- Order updates
- Delivery notifications
- Account management
- Repeat ordering

For smaller distributors competing against larger national businesses, this can materially improve customer experience without materially increasing headcount.

What are the barriers for SMEs?

While the opportunity is clear, adoption is not always straightforward.

Common obstacles include:

Upfront implementation cost

Software subscription fees are often manageable. The larger spend is usually initial implementation – configuration, integration, hardware rollout, training and data migration.

These costs vary significantly depending on the scope of deployment, organisational size / complexity and required integration with legacy systems.

Legacy systems

Historic paper-based processes or ageing software can slow implementation.

Skill / resource gap

Many SMEs do not have dedicated internal digital or IT teams.

Change resistance

Long-established manual processes can be hard to replace if teams are not brought along on the journey.

Supplier dependency

Choosing the wrong vendor can lock businesses into costly systems that do not scale.

Best returns for smaller distributors

For most independent distributors, the highest-return investments tend to be:

1. Fleet telematics

Fast wins on mileage, maintenance, driver behaviour and scheduling.

2. Tank telemetry

Reduces run-outs, improves planning and supports route density.

3. Mobile workforce tools

Cuts paperwork and improves service visibility.

4. Basic data dashboards

Better commercial decisions using clear and accurate numbers.

Large ERP overhauls may deliver value but often suit phased implementation rather than a first move.

Costs

Cost involved in technology implementation include:

- Initial capital investment
- Software licensing / subscription
- Ongoing data storage, cloud hosting and cybersecurity
- Staff training

Likely ROI timeline

ROI is delivered through improved efficiency, reduced operating costs and customer acquisition / retention. While every business differs, a realistic guide is:

- **Telematics:** 6–12 months
- **Telemetry:** 6–18 months depending on install base
- **Mobile apps / digital POD:** 3–9 months
- **ERP / integrated systems:** 12–36 months depending on scope

Delivering Insight: Recommended actions for FODs

1. Start with operational pain points

Where are costs leaking – mileage, paperwork, stock visibility, failed deliveries or customer service pressure?

2. Prioritise high-impact tools

Telematics and telemetry often outperform larger transformation projects in year one.

3. Trial before committing

Pilot systems in one depot, fleet segment or customer group.

4. Choose industry specialist, SME-friendly suppliers

Look for simple onboarding, easy integration, practical support and scalable pricing.

5. Build in phases

Start with visibility (tracking and telemetry), then optimisation (routing and scheduling), then automation (predictive ordering).

Final word

Technology should not be viewed as replacing the strengths of independent distributors – local service, trusted relationships and agility.

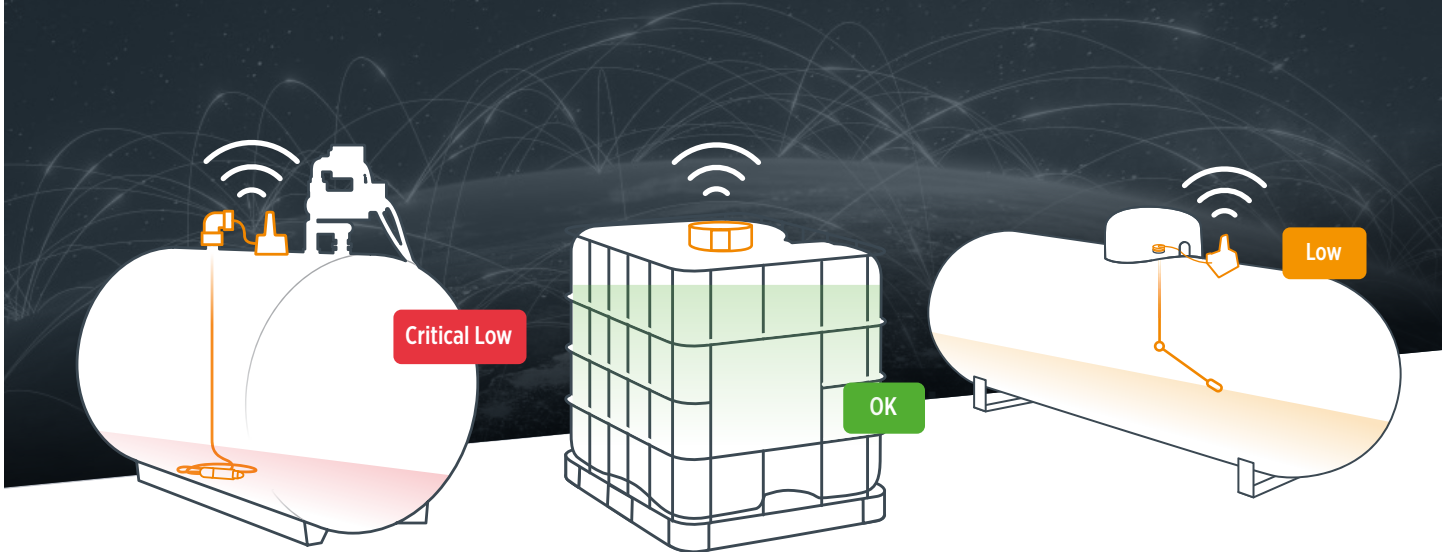
Instead, it should strengthen them.

Larger operators are already using technology to drive density, visibility and service responsiveness. SMEs risk falling behind if investment is delayed too long.

The winners are unlikely to be those spending the most. They will be those investing smartest, solving real operational problems and implementing change step by step.

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PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

APRIL IN
VIEW

HOW ONE WINNER IS EMERGING FROM A CRISIS THAT CREATES MANY LOSERS.

In truth, it is nigh-on impossible to write a coherent oil market report at the present time. Markets up by 13 pence per litre (ppl) on 2nd April, then down 20ppl on 8th April and back up 10ppl the following day. These wild fluctuations in price currently revolve around the whims of religious fanatics whose stated aim is to “obliterate” Israel and a man who is happy to announce the “annihilation of a civilisation”, whilst standing next to a human-sized Easter Bunny.

The attention of this unprecedented energy crisis has been focussed largely on the Middle East itself, but in fact, the region that has suffered the most widespread economic impacts is Asia. For the last 20 years, Asian demand for oil products has grown faster than any other part of the world and most of that growth has been fuelled by Middle Eastern energy. Prior to the US and Israel attacks on Iran, most of the crude that flowed through the Strait of Hormuz was destined for Asia. In the Philippines, 90% of energy imports came from the Middle East. Bangladesh relied on ME imports for 95% of its energy needs and South Korea imported 70% of its oil from the Gulf region. Two thirds of India and Pakistan’s LNG came from Middle Eastern producers and Qatar alone, supplied 30% of China’s LNG in 2025, 45% of India’s and 99% of Pakistan’s!

“THE REGION THAT HAS SUFFERED THE MOST WIDESPREAD ECONOMIC IMPACTS IS ASIA.”

The result of the current situation then, has been massive price rises. Vietnam saw a 40% rise in the cost of fuel in March, whilst in the Philippines, prices shot up by over 75%. Myanmar experienced a staggering 100% rise! Singapore Gasoil (the manufacturing base grade for the region’s diesel) had surpassed \$180 per barrel by April 14th – up 95% since February 2026.

One of the key factors behind these market spasms is the lack of supply resilience

that exists across Asia. As we know, the US and Europe hold around 90 days of stock for release (or partial release) in times of crisis and the developed countries of Asia have similar arrangements; China holds around 115 days, South Korea has almost 200 days and Japan holds a staggering 250 days of emergency reserves. At the other end of the scale however, things don’t look quite so rosy. The Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam all hold about 3 weeks of reserves (based on average demand), whilst the emerging economic super-power of India only has around 15 days!

“AT THIS POINT, THERE ARE NO GOOD OUTCOMES.”

As a result, many Asian governments have been quick to introduce fuel conserving measures. Bangladesh has imposed daily limits on fuel sales, whilst four day working weeks and working from home orders have been mandated in Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand. Even China with its plentiful reserves, acted quickly by banning exports of refined products to protect domestic supply. Other countries have lent on fuel subsidies, which whilst appeasing an unhappy populace, is a curious approach to dealing with product shortage. Both South Korea and Indonesia have put caps on consumer prices, whilst Pakistan, India and Bangladesh already have them in place, meaning that the general public buys fuel at normal levels, whilst their governments foot the bill of higher prices. In effect, consumers are carrying on buying their fuel as if there is no crisis to consider, at a time when the tough reality of a supply crunch, is that only high prices will suppress demand and maintain stock levels. In addition, subsidising fuel normally has serious ramifications on national debt levels and tends to weaken local currencies, as \$ reserves are raided to pay for the (oil) subsidy.

Of course, there is one clear winner here and that is Russia. Very much on its uppers after 4 years of war and, prior to March 2026, an oil price that could not sustain its military operations. All that is now changed, as desperate Asian nations queue up to take Russian product. The Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka have all now taken Russian cargoes, something they have avoided doing since the Ukrainian invasion of 2022. This process has been facilitated by the 30-day (now extended) US sanction waiver on Russian imports, which was implemented in an attempt to cool down prices.

At this point, there are no good outcomes from the US and Israel’s monumental misadventure. Even environmentalists who sought solace in the fact that the events of the last 2 months would further push Asian countries towards a battery-powered vehicle future, now fear that the more likely outcome is the return of Old King Coal to meet the energy needs of countries like India, Pakistan and Indonesia.

“ONLY HIGH PRICES WILL SUPPRESS DEMAND AND MAINTAIN STOCK LEVELS.”

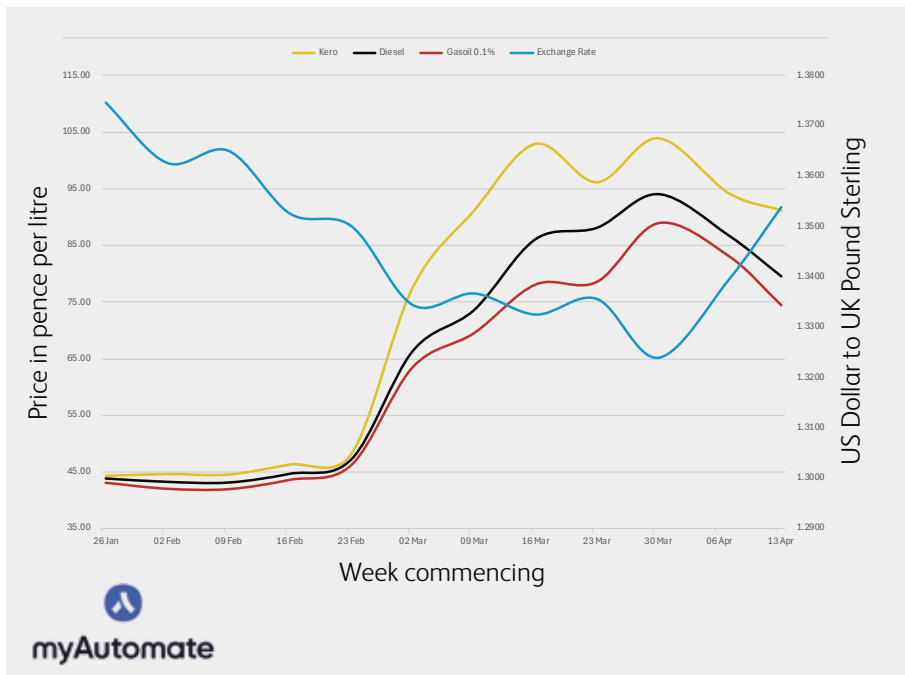
Meanwhile, as we write this report, the US President has come up with a new scheme which smacks of more economic self-harm. The plan is to prevent Iranian Oil from travelling through the Strait of Hormuz – an action which (as the events of the last 6 weeks have surely demonstrated) will only compound product shortages and drive prices higher.

For more pricing information, see page 26

Wholesale Price Movements: 20th March 2026 – 13th April 2026

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	98.24	87.25	80.79
Average daily change	6.05	5.69	6.05
Current duty	0.00	52.95	10.18
Total	0.00	140.20	90.97

All prices in pence per litre

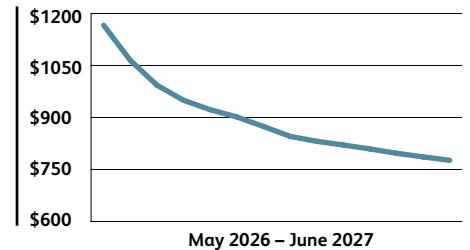


Kerosene	
Highest price 111.09 Thu 02 Apr 26	Biggest up day +14.53 Thu 02 Apr 26
Lowest price 87.51 Fri 10 Apr 26	Biggest down day -19.28 Wed 08 Apr 26

Diesel	
Highest price 101.80 Thu 02 Apr 26	Biggest up day +13.85 Thu 02 Apr 26
Lowest price 76.75 Tue 14 Apr 26	Biggest down day -18.04 Wed 08 Apr 26

Gasoil 0.1%	
Highest price 98.45 Thu 02 Apr 26	Biggest up day +13.95 Thu 02 Apr 26
Lowest price 71.34 Wed 25 Mar 26	Biggest down day -17.24 Wed 08 Apr 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	96.81	91.93	140.70	110.37	98.22	146.21
North East	95.76	90.56	139.78	114.80	96.47	143.84
North West	97.33	93.16	142.17	110.30	98.61	145.78
Midlands	95.83	91.09	140.24	108.69	96.89	144.64
South East	95.93	91.05	140.22	122.43	101.17	144.04
South West	96.28	90.89	140.06	113.32	96.69	143.55
N. Ireland	96.39	92.26	n/a	108.96	99.32	n/a
Republic Of Ireland	110.15	97.69	141.64	120.40	103.47	146.13
Portland	94.14	88.61	136.93			

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



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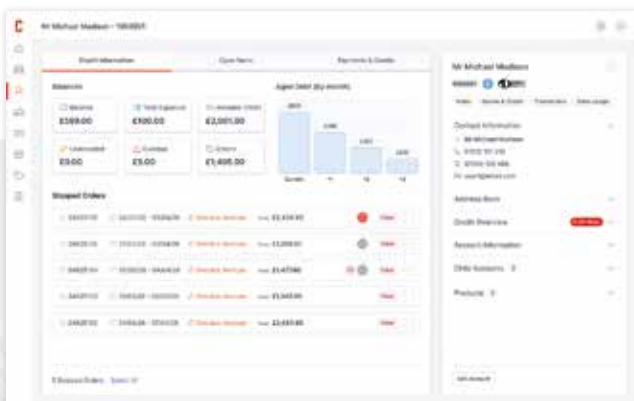
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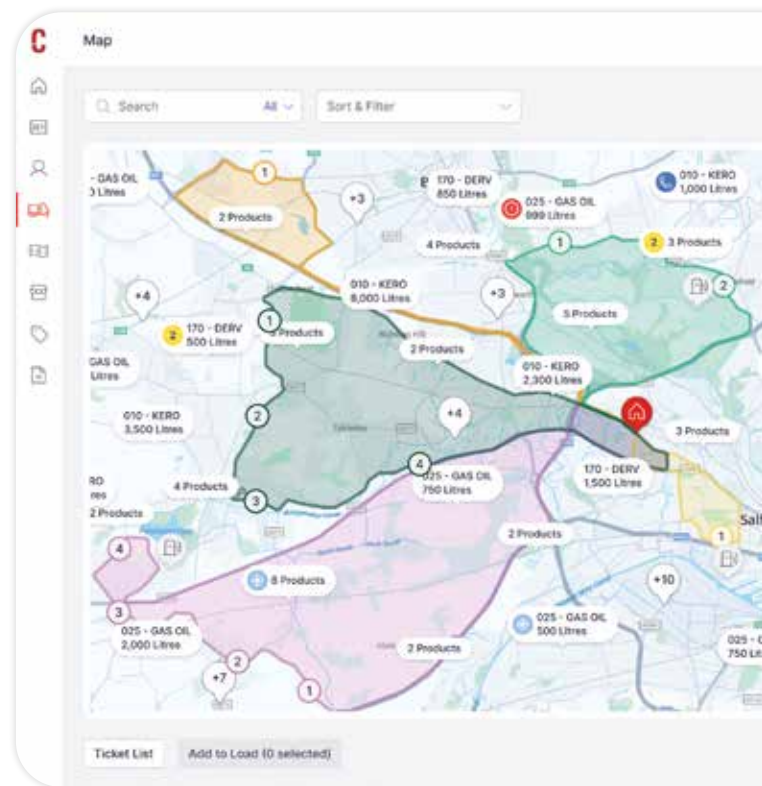


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