Fuel Oil News

August 2026

VIEW FROM THE CAB: AN AWARD-WINNING DRIVER'S PERSPECTIVE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: WHAT'S NEXT FOR NWF?

INSIGHT: WHICH DEPOT REPLENISHMENT STRATEGY?

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A trusted community platform, we deliver essential news, expert insight and practical guidance to the UK and Ireland fuel distribution sector. We support you with the knowledge needed to thrive in the essential transition to a cleaner energy future.

Turning policy into progress

Another new face at Number 10 and another Cabinet reshuffle. Andy Burnham is the seventh UK Prime Minister in a decade, while Miatta Fahnbulleh becomes the latest Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero.

More political churn for a sector still waiting for direction.

One of Burnham's first actions was to remove VAT from domestic electricity bills in GB, with equivalent support for Northern Ireland. The cost of living is a stated priority, while Fahnbulleh's background suggests a focus on affordability and low-carbon heating.

The measure offers relief. Yet, with the saving still vulnerable to the next Price Cap increase or ongoing global volatility, the real challenge is not to create breathing space but to deliver lasting affordability.

Rising costs also reduce the appetite to invest in transition. Fossil fuel volatility and the economic and social costs of extreme weather keep the need urgent. What is diminishing is confidence in the approach.

Targets alone will not deliver transition. It depends on affordable, deployable solutions backed by clear and consistent policy.

The recent CMA report, covered in detail on page 5, highlighted the loyalty and trust underpinning heating oil customer relationships – as noted by Ken Cronin on page 16. That trusted industry proposes a renewable liquid fuel blend as a technically proven, immediately deployable route to reducing both emissions and fossil fuel use.

More than 16,000 responses to the Alternative Clean Heat consultation supported the proposal. Yet, over five months after it closed, government has still not responded.

The new Prime Minister and Energy Secretary have the opportunity to turn consultation into action.

The time to do so is now.

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On the cover

UKIFDA Driver of the Year 2026 Ian Walters of Rix Petroleum, who reflects on three decades behind the wheel, the changing role of tanker drivers and why safety, customer trust and mentoring the next generation matter.

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Claudia Weeks – she's one of our own!

That was the chant ringing around the Fuel Oil News offices earlier this year, as the 2025/26 Premier League season ended.

It was, of course, in celebration of Claudia Weeks, Community Content Lead for Fuel Oil News, finishing the season top of the Fuel Oil News FPL mini- league 2025/26, having amassed an impressive 2,331 points with her creatively named team – 'Neville Wears Prada'!

Almost threw it away

Doing a bit of an Arsenal, Claudia started the season strongly and built on early gains to put herself in the running for the title.

Having taken the lead as we entered the second half of the season, Neville Wears Prada suddenly hit a poor run of games, dropping down the table and bringing fresh hope to the teams below.

However, talk of a change of manager soon proved unfounded. After a switch in tactics and some shrewdly played chips produced a bumper crop of points, Claudia was firmly back in control.

A strong run-in ultimately secured a well-deserved first title for Claudia.

Highs and lows

An impressive 66 managers competed in this year's FON league with mixed fortunes along the way. More than 1,000 points separated the team at the bottom from the eventual winner.

Having finished the 2024/25 season with three representatives in the top 10, Claudia, Margaret and Adrian tightened FON's hold on the league this year, with all three finishing in the top six.

Thanks to our sponsor

League sponsor ESL Fuels has once again provided fantastic support, for which we are hugely grateful.

ESL Fuels is a family business that designs, blends, processes and supplies a range of fuels for the road, heating and marine markets, with a focus on innovation and sustainability.

New season announced!

In continuing partnership with ESL Fuels, Fuel Oil News has launched a new competition for the upcoming 2026/27 season, with more fabulous monthly and end-of-season prizes.

Who will take the individual title? And can a company field enough strong players to knock FON off its perch?

For your chance to win, scan the QR code below to register with us, or follow the joining link in our industry newsletter or on our website. Alternatively, email margaret@fueloilnews.co.uk for your invitation to join the FON mini-league 2026/27.

CMA heating oil market report finds suppliers did not materially profit from the crisis

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has concluded that the UK home heating oil market is "generally competitive" and that distributors did not profit materially from the price disruption caused by the Iran crisis – while calling for stronger safeguards for the 1.5 million households that rely on the fuel.

The watchdog's final report separates the causes of the exceptional price increases from concerns about how customers are protected when markets become volatile.

Average heating oil prices rose from 64ppl in February 2026 to 104ppl in March, before peaking at 123ppl in April – 92% above their pre-conflict level. For a typical 500-litre order, the average cost increased by around £200 between February and March, from approximately £320 to £520.

CMA found that the vast bulk of the March price increase was attributable to higher wholesale kerosene costs, and increased distributor operating costs, including longer collection journeys and higher haulage costs as supply tightened.

In its conclusion, the CMA noted that retail prices closely track wholesale kerosene prices and that distributor operating margins are generally thin. There was a small increase in margins as demand exceeded supply, but the CMA concluded that the effect on the retail price was limited and margins quickly returned to typical seasonal levels. The report also notes that distributors can make losses during quieter summer months and that competition remains strong.

The CMA found that most heating oil households have a good choice of suppliers and that there is a high level of price transparency.

Customers in remote areas with fewer supply options can face higher prices but the CMA found that this largely reflects the higher cost of supplying these areas rather than a lack of competitive pressure.

Stronger protection

Alongside the wider market study, the CMA investigated concerns that some confirmed customer orders had been cancelled as prices rose.

Its review found approximately 1,700 cancelled orders but stresses that the vast majority of orders placed were fulfilled and that the cancellations involved a relatively small number of distributors. While affected customers received refunds, some subsequently had to reorder at higher prices with the CMA estimating the additional cost may have been between £150 and £350 per customer.

A number of the suppliers involved have agreed to compensate affected households and the CMA is continuing discussions where redress is still required.

While the cancellations represented a small part of the market, the CMA has highlighted the need for greater protection for heating oil customers with increasing price volatility.

As an interim measure, the report specifically recommends that governments and consumer bodies work with UKIFDA and the Northern Ireland Oil Federation to strengthen existing codes, customer initiatives and access to dispute resolution, but rejected a heating oil price cap. It concluded that a cap would offer only limited protection against internationally driven wholesale price increases.

Industry welcomes findings

UKIFDA welcomed the report with Ken Cronin, UKIFDA Chief Executive, saying: "It underlines that distributors did not materially benefit from the Iranian crisis despite accusations to the contrary, and the majority of the price increase was due to the underlying wholesale price and associated costs which were outside the control of the industry.

"The market was found to be competitive with a good choice of suppliers. At the start of the crisis, we immediately contacted the government regarding our concerns about the impact on our customers and, in that same spirit, we will work with all government bodies on the recommendations set out in this report."

The association said it had contacted the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero during the first week of the crisis to raise concerns about the impact of higher prices on customers and had worked across the devolved nations to secure financial assistance for the most vulnerable.

WCF was among distributor's welcoming "the CMA's fair and balanced conclusion" commenting: "UKIFDA played an important role throughout the process, providing clear evidence and practical insight into how our industry operates.

"While the review followed concerns about orders being cancelled during a period of exceptional price volatility, the evidence showed that the overwhelming majority of distributors honoured their customers' orders, even when doing so meant supplying fuel at a financial loss.

"That reflects the industry we recognise at WCF: responsible businesses and committed colleagues who understand the importance of treating customers fairly and maintaining reliable supplies.

"We are proud of the role our industry plays and thankful to Ken Cronin, assisted by the Executive Committee, for representing it so professionally and ensuring the CMA had the evidence needed to reach an informed and balanced conclusion."

The CMA will now work with governments, regulators and the industry to consider how its recommendations should be implemented. The UK Government has committed to responding formally within 90 days.

The report ultimately draws a clear distinction between the global market forces that caused the price spike and the need for consumer-protection at such times.

Its findings clear the wider distribution industry of accusations of profiteering, while recognising that customers need greater confidence, support and access to redress when exceptional disruption occurs.

DISTRIBUTOR DIARIES

Read all these stories and more in full at www.fueloilnews.co.uk

THE LATEST UPDATES FROM OUR DISTRIBUTOR COMMUNITY

The BoilerJuice Charity Golf Day 2026: A swinging success!

The **BoilerJuice** Charity Golf Day has firmly established itself as an annual highlight in the industry calendar, building on the success of previous years. The 2026 event brought together customers, partners and colleagues for another memorable day of golf, networking and fundraising at the stunning West Midlands Golf Club in Solihull.

Held on one of the hottest days of the year so far, the sunshine added to the atmosphere as players took to the course for a fantastic day in support of charity.

Carl Bingham, Head of Relationships at BoilerJuice, said: "A huge thank you to all the suppliers who joined us on the day, braved the 35°C heat, and played their part in making the event a success.

"A special shout-out also goes to Noz Miah of Aim Recruit for sponsoring our 18th hole prize – thank you for your support.

"We're delighted to share that, together, we raised an incredible £2,814 for Mind, a charity doing vital work to support mental health across the UK. This was our best-attended Charity Golf Day to date, and we're incredibly proud of what was achieved through the generosity and enthusiasm of everyone involved.

"We love hosting events like these for our supply partners. They provide a relaxed and enjoyable opportunity to network, catch up, strengthen relationships, and bring people together outside of the day-to-day business environment.

"We're already looking forward to making next year's event even bigger and better, as well as creating more supplier-focused opportunities throughout the year.

"Watch this space! If you're interested in attending future events, please contact the team at supply-team@boilerjuice.co.uk. We would love to hear from you."

The results are in…

Overall Winner: Congratulations to James Pontin of CODAS, who claimed the overall prize.
Runner-up: Peter Clayton (SOS Fuels)
Third Place: Max Edwards (New Era)

Ben goes the extra mile for the Matthew22 Fund

Road Tankers Northern Sales Executive, Ben Firth, continues his remarkable fundraising efforts with a three-day walk along Hadrian's Wall and the launch of a new charity football tournament.

Ben and his partner, Amie, completed the walk from Bowness-on-Solway to Wallsend in May raising more than £1,200 in support of the Matthew22 Fund.

Set up in October 2023, the fund supports selected charities in memory of Matthew Hollingworth, who died from bone cancer on 16 February 2022.

Ben is pictured at the highest point of the route with the Matthew22 Fund mascot, Ben the lion.

Inaugural football tournament

Ben's fundraising continued in June when he hosted the inaugural Matthew22 Fund Football Tournament. Six teams from across Yorkshire competed for the title, with the event raising a further £634.

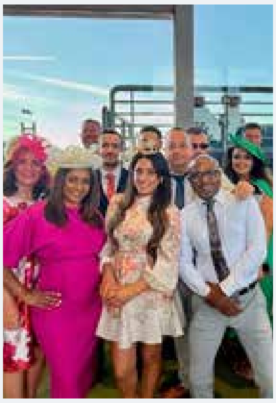
Ben originally began fundraising for the Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (CHECT) – one of the charities now supported by the fund. The two latest challenges take the total raised through Ben's fundraising efforts, to over £11,000, with further events already planned.

The 3rd annual Matthew22 Fund Golf Day will take place on 14 August and entries and sponsorship opportunities are still available.

"We are still taking entrants for this year's event, and sponsorship opportunities are also available," Ben told FON. "Over the last 2 years, we have raised more than £3,500 from our golf days, and this year is shaping up to be another successful day."

To enter the golf day, or discuss sponsorship opportunities, contact Ben at benf@matthew22.org.uk.

More information about Matthew's story and the work of the fund can be found at matthew22.org.uk.



Aim Recruit celebrates industry relationships at Royal Ascot

Aim Recruit, the HR and recruitment solutions specialist, welcomed clients and industry contacts to Royal Ascot for its 15th annual client day – an occasion that once again proved to be a standout event in the sector calendar.

Set against the iconic backdrop of Ladies Day at Royal Ascot, the event provided the perfect opportunity for guests to strengthen existing relationships, reconnect with colleagues and make new industry connections in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

With glorious sunshine throughout the day, guests enjoyed world-class racing, great hospitality and the chance to spend quality time together away from the pressures of day-to-day business.

Noz Miah, Founder and Managing Director, said: "Royal Ascot Ladies Day is always a fantastic occasion and this year certainly lived up to expectations. It was brilliant to see so many familiar faces from across the UK fuel distribution industry enjoying the day together.

"One of the best things about events like this is having the

opportunity to spend real time with people outside of the usual busy schedules and quick phone calls. There were no pitches or formal agendas – just good conversation, plenty of laughs and a chance to celebrate the relationships that make this industry such a strong community.

"Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make the day such a success. We're already looking forward to next year."

Oil4Wales: Running for a cause close to their hearts

In September 2025, someone very special to the Oil 4 Wales family, Colin Owens, was diagnosed with dementia.

In honour of Colin, and to support everyone affected by dementia, four members of the Oil 4 Wales Family – Sally, Kiegan, Ricky and Ryan – will be taking on the Great North Run 2026 to raise funds for Alzheimer's Society.

Sally Price, Colin's daughter and Oil4Wales Managing Director said: "Colin has dedicated so much of his life to building Oil 4 Wales and supporting countless people along the way. His kindness, generosity and belief in others have made a lasting impact on so many lives.

"Every donation, no matter how big or small, will make a real difference. Thank you for supporting this cause that means so much to all of us."Every donation will help Alzheimer's Society continue its vital work, funding life-changing research and providing support to those living with dementia, and their loved ones.

If you'd like to support Ricky, Sally, Kiegan and Ryan, you can donate here: justgiving.com/team/oil4wales

FAST proudly supports 5K fundraiser

Fuel Additive Science Technologies Ltd (FAST) was proud to sponsor Evie Derham as she completed a 5K challenge in support of Immunodeficiency UK – a charity that supports those affected by primary and secondary immunodeficiency.

For Managing Director, Paul Derham, the sponsorship carried a deeply personal meaning. Evie is Paul's daughter, and her son Hunter, Paul's grandson, lives with immune system complications which have resulted in repeated infections, hospital stays and ongoing treatment.

Paul commented: "As a business, we are always proud to support good causes, but this one was incredibly close to home. Evie is my daughter and Hunter is my grandson, or as he knows me, Pops.

"Watching your child cope with the worry, pressure and emotional strain of seeing their own child unwell is incredibly tough. Hunter has been through more than any little boy should have to, and as a parent and grandparent it is very hard to stand by and watch. You want to fix it, protect them and take the worry away, but sometimes all you can do is support, love them and help raise awareness.

Making a difference

Paul added: "For many families, the support and understanding provided by Immunodeficiency UK can make a huge difference. These are conditions many people have never heard of until they affect someone they love, and the charity gives families somewhere to turn.

"We are incredibly proud of Evie for completing the 5K and for using the event to support Immunodeficiency UK. Charities like this do vital work for families living with conditions that are still not widely known or properly understood."

"FAST was honoured to play a small part in supporting Evie's challenge."

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1 Tank Monitoring as a Service

Paul Wilkinson, NWF: Why people are at the heart of NWF's next chapter

PAUL WILKINSON HAS JOINED NWF FUELS AS MANAGING DIRECTOR FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE BUSINESS. HIS FOCUS AND THE NEXT STAGE ARE ABOUT ENSURING THE NEW OPERATING MODEL DELIVERS FOR THE PEOPLE WITHIN IT AND THE CUSTOMERS THEY SERVE. IN A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH FUEL OIL NEWS, HE EXPLAINS WHY LISTENING, TRUST AND EMPOWERMENT WILL BE CENTRAL TO NWF FUELS' NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH AS THE BUSINESS BUILDS THE TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE AND WIDER ENERGY OFFER NEEDED FOR LONG-TERM GROWTH.

Paul Wilkinson's first weeks at NWF Fuels have not been spent at a desk in the company's head office in Crewe. He has been visiting depots, meeting teams and getting out in a tanker – an experience he describes as memorable, but also reflects a long-standing belief about leadership.

"If you want to understand the nuances of the business and what is working and what is not, that won't be done from a desk in Crewe," he says. "To get the true picture, I like being out there."

It is a simple statement, but one that captures both Paul's approach and the shape of the task he has taken on in becoming managing director for NWF. He has inherited an evolving business in which much of the structural heavy lifting has already been done. Central functions have been brought together, a national depot footprint has been built through acquisition and the operating model has been reshaped. The next stage is to realise the benefits of those developments to make the structure work as effectively as possible for the people inside it and the customers it serves.

Making the structure work

Paul is clear that major change needs time to settle before its full benefits can be realised. Centralisation can create efficiency and remove some of the burden from depots, allowing local teams to concentrate on the last mile – the customers and deliveries. However, it can also weaken connections.

"The challenge is working out how best to reconnect them, because you do not want to go back to the original model," he explains. "The original model was right for its time but a business needs to evolve with the market. You have to consider how you can not only take cost out but also reinvest it in the right way."

"EVERY TIME YOU CENTRALISE, YOU REALISE THAT SOME OF THE PARTS YOU HAVE TAKEN AWAY NEED TO BE RECONNECTED."

That final point is important. Paul does not dismiss the commercial realities of a listed company or the need to deliver growth and shareholder return. He simply suggests that cost reduction is not the end of the strategy and that sustainable growth depends on reinvestment in both the customer relationship and the workforce.

"You neglect either of those at your peril," he says. "You cannot focus on one and discount the other. Frontline, customer-facing people are the ones best placed to demonstrate the differences between organisations."

This is the heart of the two-stage strategy that emerged from the conversation. The first phase created scale, structure and central capability. The second is about empowering the people, particularly through giving frontline colleagues the confidence and authority to succeed for themselves and the business.

Differentiating a commodity business

Paul sees a clear parallel between fuel distribution and the pharmaceutical wholesale businesses in which he spent much of his career. Both are high-volume, low-margin environments in which the underlying product offers limited scope for differentiation.

"Whatever people may want to think, what goes into our tankers and ends up with our customers – whether it is heating oil or commercial diesel – is no different from anybody else's," he says. "Once you accept that, you focus on the offering. What is the differentiator between us and our competitors? It cannot be the product and, for me, it cannot simply be price either."

Price matters, he acknowledges, but it is a differentiator any competitor can remove overnight. A market that competes only by cutting price risks a race to the bottom, with the customer experience ultimately suffering because there is no margin left to invest in it.

NWF is therefore developing what Paul describes as a strong roadmap for the coming months, with changes intended to make the benefits of choosing NWF more tangible and improve how customers interact with the business. Not yet ready to reveal the detail, Paul simply says: "Watch this space."

Empowerment is everything

Paul arrives with experience of organisations far larger than NWF, but also with the perspective of an entrepreneur who built a European business from his kitchen table. That combination, he believes, means he understands enough of finance, commercial activity and operations to ask the right questions without pretending to be the expert in every room.

"I am not afraid to employ talent that is way cleverer than me," he says. "It comes back to people."

His clearest expression of that philosophy is his approach to delegation. At Movianto, where he was brought in at the beginning of the pandemic to deliver the UK Government's COVID vaccine storage and distribution response, the organisation had to create new warehouse facilities and recruit 600 people under intense pressure and away from public view.

"What we built will remain my proudest professional moment," he says. "It was only possible because of empowerment and delegation, listening and taking feedback, and challenging it when I still did not believe it was correct. I encourage my teams to do exactly the same with each other and with me."

That does not mean an absence of direction. Paul sees his role as setting strategy, mentoring and supporting the leadership team, rather than becoming the point through which every decision must pass. "I see myself as a support function to the team."

Listening – and acting

Paul deliberately entered the sector without a fixed view of what he would find. After almost 30 years in healthcare, he wanted to avoid simply repeating the answers that had worked elsewhere. His first weeks have therefore been built around listening to people in customer service, finance, depots and tankers.

He has found a strong core of people who care deeply about the customer journey – a foundation on which the next phase can be built.

"Their views are an untapped resource," he says. "Some leaders forget to ask. Others ask but do not really listen, or do not want to act. Unless you are willing to act on the information you get back, do not ask the question."

Across different sites and roles, six or seven recurring themes have emerged. That consistency has helped the leadership team identify where action can have the most impact. It is important to Paul that, where a request cannot be met, the business must still explain why.

This is particularly important for tanker drivers, who may spend much of the working day alone and have fewer natural opportunities to share their experience. NWF intends to create more ways for those colleagues to be heard, alongside clearer career paths, training and investment in the next generation of drivers.

Paul is excited by the opportunity to turn NWF into the employer of choice he believes it can become. "There is some work to do but if you don't believe you can do it, I don't understand why anybody would want to lead anything."

"MY STYLE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT GETTING OTHER PEOPLE TO MAKE THE DECISION, OWN IT AND DO WHAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO DO. EMPOWERMENT IS EVERYTHING."

Technology in support of people

One of his early observations is the opportunity to close a perceived technology gap within the business. The investment he envisages is not limited to a new customer interface, nor is it about using artificial intelligence to remove people from the organisation.

"AI used in a positive way can enhance the workplace and enhance the customer journey," he says. "We cannot uninvent technology."

The opportunity extends across customer service, supplier interaction and operations. Like many established businesses, NWF is rich in data but has not yet fully realised its potential. Paul wants to combine internal information with weather patterns, customer usage and external factors to improve planning and decision-making.

Better preparation, in his view, ultimately becomes better customer service. It also gives colleagues better tools with which to do their jobs. This reinforces rather than contradicts the people strategy: technology should remove friction, improve judgement and allow the human interaction to carry more value.

Integration before expansion

NWF's growth has been shaped by acquisition, creating a broad depot network and significant national coverage. Paul remains open to further purchases where they make strategic and logistical sense but believes the original objective of achieving scale has largely been met.

The priority now is to generate a return from the investment already made by bringing acquired companies, systems and people into one cohesive organisation. It is another expression of the structure-first, people-next theme: acquisition creates the footprint; integration creates the value.

He is equally wary of treating volume as an automatic route to profitability. Additional volume frequently brings additional operational cost, he argues, so the expected improvement in margin does not necessarily materialise. Market share will remain an important measure, but the quality of that growth – how customers are won, retained and served – matters more than the headline number alone.

More than fuel in a tank

Looking further ahead, Paul believes NWF must participate actively in the wider energy discussion. He does not foresee the short-term disappearance of heating oil, diesel or other fossil fuels, but he is equally clear that domestic heating oil is not a growth market and that changing customer expectations cannot be ignored.

"We have to be at the centre of the broader energy discussion; otherwise, change will happen around us and we will have no influence on the outcome," he says. "We need to become more than a company that puts fuel in a tank – a trusted place customers can turn to when they are considering what the future looks like."

That may, over time, mean a broader range of energy solutions and advice. Paul stresses that this does not diminish the importance of the market NWF serves today. It is a recognition that consumers are increasingly seeking different combinations of affordability, convenience and lower-carbon choices, and that a long-term energy business needs to respond.

It is a challenge that Paul suggests is made harder by regulatory uncertainty. Repeated shifts in net zero targets and policy direction make organisations nervous about committing capital when the rules may change again. He sees a legitimate role for industry collaboration here: not to dictate the outcome, but to ensure the sector's operational knowledge and the needs of its customers are considered as policy develops.

What success would look like

Asked what he would want to have achieved three years from now, Paul begins with the responsibility of a listed business: a stable return to shareholders. He quickly moves, however, to what must sit beneath that result – a fully embedded culture, effective use of technology and a customer experience differentiated by much more than price.

Paul is also keen to encourage leaders to emerge from within all areas of the business. He wants progression to be visible from the tanker driver upwards and believes leaders should be developing people capable of taking on greater responsibility. "If a tanker driver cannot see progression, what is their motivation to go above and beyond?" he asks.

His definition of success also includes a more diverse and genuinely inclusive workforce. Paul has previously created employment opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a particular focus on people with Down syndrome, and is looking forward to creating similar opportunities within NWF Fuels.

"The talent that is untapped is absolutely immense," he says. "A real inclusive culture within the business – I would like to achieve that."

An inward focus – for now

Whilst the conversation conveyed a high level of ambition, Paul is careful not to present himself as someone who has arrived with instant answers for an industry he is still learning. He has deliberately focused inward during his first months, rather than immediately building a wider industry profile.

"I have not come here to make an impression on the industry," he says. "I am focused on the people within the business I am leading. If some of the things we develop work, the industry will follow."

The immediate task is to get the vision that has been developed by Paul and the leadership team moving, then empower that team to take it forward. Only then does he expect to spend more time looking outward and building a broader view of the sector.

It is a fitting summary of both the strategy and the leadership style. The structure has been created. The next stage will be judged by whether its people feel heard, trusted and equipped to use it – and whether customers can feel the difference.

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Ian Walters, Rix Petroleum

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 **IAN WALTERS**, DRIVER, TRAINER AND ASSESSOR FOR RIX PETROLEUM AND WINNER OF THE UKIFDA DRIVER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2026 TO DISCOVER HOW IAN SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.

My alarm goes off at... 04:30am when I'm based at the Hull Depot. Yes, it's an ungodly hour to wake but the daily commute takes 40 minutes.

I'll arrive at work at 06:00am to spend time with the drivers carrying out their checks and to check in on any welfare matters. If I'm working away at our outer depots, it can be much earlier due to busy refinery periods.

The first thing I do is... put the kettle on! A good day starts with a very strong coffee; it's my daily go-go juice.

I prepare for the day ahead by...
Every day is different. My preparation is dependant on what training I'm conducting or delivering that day.

If I'm not driving, I'm training and assessing. If I'm not doing either, I'm busy report writing and document keeping. No two days are the same, so preparation must be well-coordinated.

I can't leave the house without...
my flask of coffee, laptop and my mobile phone. If I'm working from the Hull Depot, I'll also have my pack up made the night before to take with me.

My typical day –
I don't really have a typical day; the role I have can see me out delivering fuel on my own in busy periods or working from our outer depots as a relief driver, should someone be on long-term sick.

If I'm training, that could be classroom presentations on health and safety within working at height or emergency spillage response or compliance checks on both drivers and the tanker fleet.

I also carry out assessments of on-road driver performance, safe systems of work whilst delivering fuel products and practical PDP, as well as coaching and mentoring new employees to the industry. I also support any driver's mental health concerns.

It's a full-on job and due to its variety, it's vitally important that my diary and paperwork are all kept in order.

As well as the above, I also liaise with all our outer depot directors and business managers

regarding driver needs. This can see me travelling to our most southerly depot in Greys, Essex and then to our most northerly depot in Montrose, Scotland.

My most memorable work moment... this will have to be winning the UKIFDA Driver of the Year Award 2026. It has meant so much to me to be recognised for the hard work that I put in.

I take great pride in all aspects of my work, and to be able to celebrate this at the awards night was a great privilege and honour. Raising my award amongst the industry's leaders was a very memorable moment indeed.

The worst part of my job...when the job takes me away from my home and family, as well as my two amazing dogs who have become my walking partners.
As much as travelling the country keeps my job varied, I do miss my home comforts.

The best part of my job...spending time with the drivers. It's my core business and I find it very rewarding. I feel I give them all a positive experience throughout any visit programme and have built a trustworthy relationship with them all.

I like to keep all drivers at ease during any assessment as they can be quite daunting experiences, even for the most experienced. Time spent well within the driver cohort is where I'm best placed, so I find this the most enjoyable part of my job.

I relax after work by... a good long walk with my dogs when I get home. If time permits, I also go running. I try my best to keep an active lifestyle and walking or running helps this.

If I've had a full-on day, I can take this time to reflect and plan for the following day. I'm usually tired after a long day, but I do try to keep my eyes open to watch a bit of footy as it's currently the World Cup!

Should I be working away, I still try to keep my routine with an evening walk or run to explore my newly found surroundings.

My favourite meal... Thursday night is pizza night in my house. If I'm home, it's a hot and spicy one for me please!

On my bedside table is...my mobile phone, my beloved Manchester City alarm clock and my two books, The Thursday Murder Club, and the Band of Brothers. I'm an army veteran and still get inspired by the heroics of soldiers during World War 2.

The last thing I do each day is...put my dogs out for one last loo visit, give them their bedtime biscuits and get them settled on their beds.

I religiously pop in on my two boys to wish them a good night and have a quick catch up and then get myself in bed ready for another early start.

I'm normally in bed by...I try my very best to be in bed by 10pm. But I'm often being woken up by my wife after nodding off on the sofa.

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KEN'S CORNER

An end to finger-pointing lets us get back to concentrating on who matters most – the customer.

In recent columns, I have written about the frustration felt across our industry at being unfairly targeted. I have also highlighted our discussions with the Government about the unique role our sector plays as the last energy industry that truly knows its customers. We see them regularly, delivering fuel, servicing boilers and, very often, checking that they are safe and well.

It is therefore encouraging that the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) recent review has confirmed what the industry has said from the outset. The report found that distributors did not materially profit from the disruption caused by the Iranian conflict and that the vast majority of price increases experienced by consumers were driven by higher wholesale and additional distributor costs outside the industry's control.

The review also recognised that operating margins across the sector are typically modest and that households using heating oil generally have access to a number of competing suppliers. Taken together, these findings provide important context to what was an exceptionally challenging period for both customers and distributors.

Some may have expected me to use this opportunity to extract a public retraction of some of the wilder claims, but I don't think that serves our customers, who should be at the heart of this conversation.

In the early days of the conflict, UKIFDA, on behalf of the industry, contacted the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to raise concerns about the impact rising prices were having on our customers. At the same time, we worked diligently across the devolved nations to help secure financial support for the most vulnerable customers as quickly as possible.

While there were some who used precious time to point fingers, UKIFDA and the industry's priority was to put the customer first. That remains our focus today.

Indeed, there is something almost buried in the CMA report that reinforces this point. The CMA commented, "feedback from consumer bodies suggested that, under normal market conditions, consumers raise few concerns with the service they receive". One consumer organisation went further, reporting that "customers of home heating oil generally report better rates of customer satisfaction than other fuels."

That is something our industry should be proud of. It reflects the dedication of distributors and their teams, who continue to provide a reliable and highly valued service to our customers and communities across the UK. The next step for our industry now is to maintain and strengthen that level of trust.

The CMA report also makes clear that, while the overwhelming majority of distributors acted in line with industry codes and legislation, a small number fell short. It is clear this was not to make a profit, but mistakes were made during an extremely difficult period, and where that happened, lessons must be learned and improvements made.

The report contains a number of recommendations, and I have already pledged to work with the CMA and government to identify practical, proportionate solutions that deliver real benefits for customers. That work is already underway.

However, I am clear that any changes must recognise the unique characteristics of our industry. Just as we have consistently argued that there can be no one-size-fits-all approach to the future of home heating, we must also ensure that any new processes reflect the realities of off-grid living and the needs of the customers we serve.

The CMA rightly acknowledged that our industry already does a great deal to support vulnerable customers. There is undoubtedly more we can do, but we should not assume that simply copying approaches used elsewhere will produce the best outcomes. Rural communities, off-grid households and the challenges they face are often quite different.

Vulnerability itself is a complex issue. As we prepare for another winter and face continued geopolitical uncertainty, we must focus on where we can make the greatest difference and do so quickly.

For me, one area stands out. There is a significant difference between a vulnerable customer and a vulnerable customer with an empty tank. Whether a crisis is caused by severe weather, fuel shortages or sudden price spikes, the situation becomes far more manageable when households have sufficient fuel in their tanks and when the industry, government and customers themselves have time to make informed decisions.

That is the kind of practical, real-world nuance that I believe should guide the next phase of this discussion.

Ian Walters, Rix Petroleum: UKIFDA Driver of the Year 2026

IAN WALTERS, DRIVER, TRAINER AND ASSESSOR, AT RIX PETROLEUM, RECENTLY WON THE DRIVER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2026 AT THE UKIFDA CONFERENCE IN LIVERPOOL.

FOLLOWING ON FROM HIS 'A DAY IN THE LIFE' FEATURE, FUEL OIL NEWS CAUGHT UP WITH IAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIS ROLE AT RIX PETROLEUM, WHAT THE AWARD MEANS TO HIM, AND HOW HE VIEWS THE DOWNSTREAM INDUSTRY.

How did your journey in the sector begin, and what has kept you passionate about the role?

My journey into fuel transportation began in 1995, when, as a 20-year-old Private Soldier in the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC), I undertook Truck Tanker Fuel (TTF) training alongside my ADR qualification — something I've maintained ever since. After learning the ropes on an old Foden 6x4 tanker, I was quickly deployed to Bosnia on the first of three peacekeeping tours.

Those early experiences taught me the importance of responsibility, resilience and staying calm under pressure. Delivering fuel in difficult, and sometimes dangerous, conditions gave me a real respect for the role and the vital part fuel distribution plays in keeping operations moving.

Fast forward to today, and that passion has never left me. I still enjoy the variety the job brings, from travelling across the country and meeting customers to facing new challenges every day. For me, it's always been about more than simply delivering fuel — it's about building relationships and providing a reliable service people can trust.

I'm also passionate about helping others develop within the industry. As a trainer and assessor, I enjoy coaching and mentoring drivers to help them grow in confidence, develop their skills and become the best version of themselves.

Tanker drivers play a vital role in keeping customers supplied. Do you think people outside the industry understand the job?

Tanker drivers are the industry's unsung heroes. Most people simply expect fuel to arrive safely and on time without fully appreciating the skill, training and responsibility involved in making that happen.

There's a common misconception that the job is straightforward — that we simply connect a hose and deliver fuel. In reality, tanker driving is a highly specialised job requiring extensive training, ADR qualifications, strict safety procedures and a deep understanding of both the product and the delivery process.

Every delivery must be carried out carefully and professionally, often in challenging environments and conditions.

This is why experienced tanker drivers are such an important part of the industry.

What changes have you seen in customer expectations?

Customer expectations haven't really changed over the years, and good liaison with the sales reps and the desk teams is vital.

Occasionally there are issues which can delay a delivery, but this rarely occurs. Most of our customers are pleased that I've arrived on time or a day ahead of schedule.

With recent global tensions affecting fuel prices and supply, have you noticed increased customer frustration, and how do tanker drivers help maintain trust during challenging periods?

The world feels like a very uncertain place at times, and customers are understandably more aware of how global events can affect fuel prices and supply. During periods of instability, people naturally have questions and concerns, particularly around availability and rising costs.

As tanker drivers, we may not be directly involved in pricing or supply decisions, but we still play an important role in maintaining customer confidence and trust. Often, we're the face of the company and the only person the customer sees, so providing reassurance, professionalism and good communication is essential.

If customers have detailed questions, I'll always make sure they're put in touch with the right people within the business who can help. But for me, it starts with delivering a reliable service and taking pride in good customer care. Building trust with customers is a huge part of the role, especially during more challenging periods for the industry.

Safety is so important. What key lessons do you try to pass on when training and assessing new drivers?

Safety underpins every aspect of fuel distribution and is at the heart of everything we do as tanker drivers. One of the biggest lessons I try to pass on to new drivers is that if something doesn't feel right, stop and seek advice before continuing. There should never be any hesitation when it comes to making safe decisions.

The role involves a wide range of procedures and safety checks every single day, all designed to protect both the driver and the customer. Those processes are there for a reason and should never be bypassed simply to complete a job more quickly.

I always remind drivers that quality and safety matter far more than speed. I'd rather see one delivery carried out perfectly and professionally than several completed poorly. Taking pride in doing the job safely and correctly is what makes a great tanker driver.

What qualities make a great tanker driver?

In today's industry, great tanker drivers come from all kinds of backgrounds with a wide range of experience. One thing they all share, however, is a commitment to developing their skills and carrying out the role to the highest possible standard.

For me, key qualities are patience, professionalism and a strong safety mindset. Drivers need to be constantly aware of the product they're transporting and remain calm, courteous and respectful throughout the working day, particularly when dealing with customers and navigating busy roads.

A great tanker driver also needs to be both proactive and adaptable — thinking ahead while driving, anticipating potential issues and reacting safely when situations change unexpectedly. With the standard of driving on today's roads becoming more challenging at times, maintaining concentration, awareness and professionalism have never been more important.

How have tankers evolved since you started?
The development of tanker technology since I started my career has been incredible. Modern tankers are far more advanced, with integrated metering systems and handheld technology that allow drivers to control deliveries, change product compartments and manage hose reel functions directly from the delivery point. Once the delivery is complete, customer receipts can even be printed instantly on site.

It's a huge step forward from the days of operating older vehicles with manual levers and switches, but the biggest advantage is improved safety and efficiency. Today's systems allow the driver to remain where they need to be throughout the delivery — monitoring the process and always staying fully in control.

The vehicles themselves have also evolved significantly, with features such as adaptive cruise control, eco-driving modes and anti-idling systems helping to improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact. Manufacturers have clearly recognised the need for tankers that not only perform to a high standard but also support the industry's move towards lower emissions and more environmentally responsible operations.

Can you tell us about an especially memorable delivery, customer, or experience?
Over the years I've carried out deliveries in all kinds of challenging conditions, both during my military career and throughout my time in the fuel distribution industry. One experience that has always stayed with me, however, was during a competency assessment with one of our Scottish drivers near the Montrose depot in the middle of a severe snow blizzard.

We were delivering gas oil to a farm where the access roads had become completely blocked by heavy snowfall. The only possible route was across a neighbouring field that the farmer had been using with his tractor. With a near-full tanker and very limited traction, it certainly wasn't a straightforward decision.

After assessing the situation carefully, we decided it was safe enough to proceed. The crossing was slow and difficult, with challenging conditions throughout, but thanks to the driver's skill, concentration and patience, we managed to reach the farm safely and

complete the delivery.

What made the experience so memorable was the customer's reaction afterwards. The farmer was genuinely grateful that we had gone the extra mile to keep his farm operating during such difficult winter conditions. A hot coffee and biscuits waiting for us at the end certainly helped as well — one of the small perks of the job.

What conversations are you hearing from customers about alternative fuels, sustainability, and the future of energy?
There's a growing awareness among customers around sustainability, alternative fuels and the future of energy. More people are asking questions about reducing emissions and exploring products that have less environmental impact, which is something the industry is continuing to adapt to.

One of the biggest changes we're seeing is the increased interest in alternative fuels such as HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil), which offers a lower-carbon alternative to traditional diesel. Within our own fleet, we even have dedicated tankers carrying distinctive green and blue livery to help raise awareness that more environmentally conscious fuel options are available.

Customers are also talking more about wider changes in home heating and energy use, including the introduction of heat pumps in new-build developments as part of the move away from higher carbon-producing systems.

At the same time, many customers recognise that while change is necessary, the cost of transitioning to alternative heating systems can still be a major challenge. There's a real understanding that the industry and consumers both need to move towards more sustainable solutions, but affordability and practicality remain important parts of the conversation.

What opportunities and challenges does this present for fuel distributors and tanker drivers?
There's a clear shift towards cleaner and more sustainable technologies, whether that's the growing use of heat pumps in domestic properties or the development of lower-emission and electric vehicles within transport fleets.

At the same time, the reality is that many parts of the country — particularly rural and remote areas — still rely heavily on traditional fuels. As I travel across the UK and visit customers in more isolated locations, it's clear there remains a significant demand for reliable fuel deliveries, and that won't disappear overnight.

For the industry, the challenge will be balancing the move towards greener solutions while continuing to provide the dependable service customers still need today. It's an evolving landscape, and fuel distributors will need to adapt alongside changing technologies, customer expectations and environmental goals.

What have been your proudest career moments, and what advice would you give to someone considering joining the industry?
Looking back on my career and where the journey first began, being recognised with a Driver of the Year award and named as an ambassador for my company are certainly among my proudest achievements. It's a real honour and something I'm incredibly proud of.

Equally rewarding, though, has been the opportunity to train and mentor other drivers throughout my career. Seeing new drivers develop their skills, grow in confidence and become highly capable operators is hugely satisfying. I also enjoy helping experienced drivers adapt to new technologies and processes, particularly as modern vehicles continue to evolve and require different driving techniques and approaches.

For anyone considering a career in the downstream fuel industry, my advice would be simple — be prepared to work hard and take safety seriously. It's a demanding role that comes with responsibility, long hours and the need for ADR compliance, but it's also a career that offers variety, challenge and a real sense of purpose.

No two days are ever the same, and if you enjoy a role that keeps you thinking, developing and facing new challenges, then it's a fantastic industry to be part of.

With more than three decades of experience behind the wheel, Ian's passion for the industry remains clear. From championing safety and customer service to supporting the next generation of drivers, his story highlights the vital role tanker drivers continue to play in keeping communities, businesses and farms supplied across the UK.

Delivering Insight

Helping FODs gain a competitive edge with actionable, data-led guidance

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, we consider a fundamental business question that distributors may need to revisit in the light of changing business costs.

Ex-rack terminal collection or delivered-in supply: which is best for my business?

Introduction

Every litre a distributor sells begins its journey at a fuel terminal. How that litre reaches your depot may only add a penny or two to its cost – but across millions of litres each year, those pennies quickly become tens or even hundreds of thousands of pounds. Yet for many distributors, the decision to collect fuel themselves or buy delivered-in supply was made years ago and has rarely been revisited.

In this month's Delivering Insight, we examine the true economics of depot replenishment, comparing ex-rack collection with delivered-in supply to help you decide which model best suits your business.

Getting fuel into the depot efficiently is critical to operational resilience and profitability. The decision over how fuel reaches the depot is not simply a transport choice; it can impact capital investment, operational flexibility, stock control, and profit margins.

As labour, transport, and operating costs continue to increase, now is an appropriate time to review whether your current model remains the most efficient way to move fuel into your depot.

We compare the benefits of each approach, including a look at a hybrid model, review the factors influencing costs and consider how you determine which is best suited to your business.

Approaches to depot replenishment

Road fuels are supplied on either a delivered-in or ex-rack basis through a network of refineries, fuel terminals, and storage facilities operated by major fuel suppliers and independent terminal operators across the UK and Ireland.

Examples include Greenergy, EET Fuels, MB Energy, Phillips 66, Valero, Exolum and other major suppliers, refiners and terminal operators. Ex-rack collection is typically available to approved, inducted customers with the relevant supplier account and terminal access, subject to product availability at the chosen terminal.

Many of these suppliers also offer delivered-in fuel, with transport managed on behalf of the customer from terminal to depot. Delivery availability will depend on factors such as depot location, order volumes, product requirements, supplier delivery capacity, and specific commercial agreements.

The following sections compare the operational and commercial advantages and challenges of each approach.

Delivered-in

Having fuel delivered directly to the depot offers a convenient and straightforward solution for FODs. By relying on the supplier to manage transport from the terminal, distributors avoid the need to coordinate collections, vehicle availability, and driver resources. This reduces transport responsibility and allows depot staff to focus on core distribution activities.

For distributors without sufficient collection capability or spare transport capacity, delivered-in supply avoids the need to expand transport resources, including additional vehicles, drivers and the associated costs of depreciation, insurance, maintenance, wages, training and compliance.

However, delivered-in fuel typically includes a premium above the terminal price, reflecting the cost of transporting fuel from the terminal to the depot, together with the supplier's operating costs and commercial margin. The level of premium will vary depending on factors such as delivery distance, supply location, order volumes, etc.

For contracted fuel supply, the premium may be fixed for the duration of the contract. Where delivered-in supply is secured under an agreed pricing arrangement, transport costs can be easier to forecast, as the haulage element is incorporated within the agreed premium rather than managed separately through a transport operation.

Distributors also have less control over transport scheduling, remaining reliant on supplier availability and delivery times while ensuring suitable site access and personnel are available to receive the delivery.

Finally, effective planning is also important, as issues such as insufficient tank capacity or changes at the point of delivery can result in additional costs, including Left on Board (LOB) charges where a tanker cannot fully discharge its load.

Ex-rack terminal collection

Ex-rack collection allows FODs to purchase fuel directly from a network of fuel terminals, with distributors taking responsibility for arranging transport from the terminal to the depot. This gives distributors greater control over when and how fuel is moved into the depot, allowing collections to be planned around operational requirements, changes in demand and depot stock levels. Access to suitable terminal locations can also support emergency collections and reduce reliance on supplier delivery schedules.

Not all ex-rack customers operate their own transport fleet. Some distributors purchase fuel on an ex-rack basis but appoint an independent haulier to collect and deliver fuel from the terminal to the depot. This provides access to ex-rack purchasing without requiring investment in vehicles or fleet infrastructure, although transport costs remain payable through the haulier's charges.

Where a distributor already operates a transport function, ex-rack collection can improve the utilisation of existing vehicles and driver resources. By planning collections effectively around terminal locations and customer delivery routes, businesses may be able to reduce unnecessary mileage and

Ex-Rack Collection Method	Cost Implication
Distributor fleet	Vehicle ownership and operating costs sit with the distributor
Third-party haulier	Transport cost is paid through an external haulage charge

Vehicle	New Purchase Price	Used Purchase Price	Leasing / Hire Cost
Tankers (Artic)	£80k–£140k / €90k-€160k	£10k–£30k / €12k-€35k	£300-£700 / €345-€800 per month
Truck (Tractor Unit)	£80k–£200k+ / €90k-€230k+	£10k–£70k+ / €12k-€80k+	~£1,400 / €1,600 per month

Maintenance Expense	Average Cost
Preventive Maintenance (Annual)	£3,500 – £5,000 per vehicle
Unplanned Repairs (per incident)	£500 – £5,000 per incident
Roadside Assistance	£150 – £300 per incident
Towing and Recovery	£300 – £800 per incident

make better use of transport assets already in operation.

The commercial benefits of ex-rack collection are typically greatest for distributors purchasing larger fuel volumes, where avoiding supplier haulage premiums can create potential savings. However, these savings must be considered against the full cost of managing the transport function, including vehicles, drivers, maintenance and compliance.

Operating an artic fleet requires significant investment and ongoing management. Whether vehicles are purchased outright, financed through leasing arrangements, or acquired through contract hire, distributors must consider the implications for cash flow, ownership and long-term operating costs.

The table above provides an indicative comparison of the capital investment and leasing costs associated with artic tankers and tractor units under different acquisition methods.

In addition to vehicle acquisition costs, operators must account for ongoing expenses including driver wages, fuel, maintenance, insurance, compliance and administration. The second table above shows examples of typical maintenance expenses and the average cost. For a detailed comparison of tanker ownership options and cost comparisons, see our previous article: 'Fleet strategy for fuel distributors: when to lease, when to buy, and when to replace'.

Successful ex-rack operations also rely on effective transport planning. Vehicle availability, driver resources, terminal opening hours, waiting times and collection scheduling must be carefully managed to maintain supply continuity. Without sufficient scale or effective fleet management, the additional responsibilities and costs of ex-rack collection can outweigh the benefits of avoiding supplier haulage charges.

Load size and cost per litre

While the operational advantages of delivered-in supply and ex-rack collection differ, the economics of both approaches are ultimately determined by the total cost per litre of moving fuel from the terminal to the depot.

As many of the costs associated with putting a tanker on the road (e.g. driver wages, fuel, maintenance, standing charges) are incurred regardless of the volume transported, full-load movements provide the lowest transport cost per litre.

Smaller loads spread these costs across fewer litres, increasing the transport cost per litre. For delivered-in supply, this is generally reflected in a higher delivered-in premium (many suppliers implement small load premiums), while for ex-rack collection it increases the cost of each litre collected because the same collection costs are spread across fewer litres.

This is illustrated below by converting a fixed transport cost into a pence per litre (ppl) cost at different load sizes:

Choosing the most suitable approach

There is no single replenishment model that is best suited to every FOD. The right approach depends on balancing cost, operational control and flexibility, with factors such as annual fuel volumes, fleet utilisation, terminal proximity and transport costs all influencing the decision.

Typically, the economics of ex-rack collection improve as fuel volumes increase, allowing the fixed costs of operating an artic fleet to be spread across more litres moved. As a result, delivered-in supply may remain the more economical option for lower-volume distributors or those without sufficient vehicle capacity or driver resources to justify dedicated fuel collections. Conversely, larger distributors with established transport operations and consistently high fuel volumes may be better positioned to realise the benefits of ex-rack collection.

For many distributors, the most effective solution is a hybrid approach, combining ex-rack collection with delivered-in supply. This enables businesses to utilise ex-rack where it is commercially advantageous, while retaining delivered-in supply to provide additional flexibility during peak demand, fleet constraints or other operational pressures. Used together, both approaches can help optimise costs while maintaining continuity of supply.

Conclusion

The answer to "Which is best for my business?" is unlikely to be the same for every distributor. The most profitable solution depends on your volumes, transport operation, terminal access and commercial priorities. This review is not about finding a universal answer – it's finding the right answer for your business.

Rising labour costs, increasing vehicle costs, changing supplier relationships and advances in fleet technology mean the economics are continually shifting. A model that made perfect sense five years ago may no longer be the most profitable today.

The question isn't whether ex-rack collection or delivered-in supply is better; it's whether your current approach is still the right one.

HOW LOAD SIZE AFFECTS TRANSPORT COST PER LITRE

Load Size	Cost Per Load (£)	Pence Per Litre (PPL)
36,000	£450	1.25
30,000	£450	1.50
24,000	£450	1.88
18,000	£450	2.50
12,000	£450	3.75

Review your depot replenishment strategy

1. Calculate

Gather the information you need:
- Annual litres moved into the depot
- Average tanker load
- Number of collections/deliveries
- Distance from terminal
- Delivered-in premium
- Fleet operating costs
- Driver costs
- Fuel costs
- Maintenance
- Waiting time

Then calculate your true cost per litre into the depot.

Delivering Insight

2. Compare

Now compare your current model with the alternative.
If you're buying delivered-in, ask:
• How much of my premium is transport?
• Would ex-rack become viable if volumes increased?
• Could another supplier reduce haulage costs?
• Would a hybrid model save money?

If you're collecting ex-rack, ask:
• Are my vehicles fully utilised?
• How much do empty miles cost?
• What is waiting time costing me?
• Would delivered-in be cheaper at quieter times?

3. Decide

Finally, ask: Is the cost difference meaningful?

If the difference is only a fraction of a penny per litre, it may be worth considering whether the operational flexibility, resilience and reduced management burden outweigh the potential financial saving.

Ex-rack is clearly cheaper
> Review fleet utilisation and collection opportunities.

Delivered-in is clearly cheaper
> Consider reducing or outsourcing collection.

Neither option is compelling
> Explore a hybrid strategy.

Summary of influencing factors

Factor	Delivered-in	Ex-rack	Hybrid
Upfront investment	✓Low	×High	Medium
Operational control	Medium	✓High	✓High
Fleet requirement	✓None	×Significant	Moderate
Flexibility	Medium	✓High	✓Highest
Cost at lower volumes	✓Often favourable	Less favourable	Good
Cost at higher volumes	Less favourable	✓Often favourable	✓Strong

Every distributor should periodically recalculate the true cost of getting a litre from the terminal gate into the depot. Only then can they be confident they are making the best commercial decision for their business.

Business question:

"If we were starting this business today, knowing what we know now, would we choose the same depot replenishment model?"

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

What does it mean to be an award-winning depot?

IN APRIL, CERTAS ENERGY'S DREM DEPOT WAS ANNOUNCED WINNER OF THE DEPOT OF THE YEAR AWARD 2026 AT THE UKIFDA EXPO AND CONFERENCE, RECOGNISING THE DEPOT TEAM'S COMMITMENT TO OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE, CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND SAFETY STANDARDS.

THE COMPANY SAID THE AWARD REFLECTS THE DEDICATION AND HARD WORK DEMONSTRATED BY COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE SITE.

FUEL OIL NEWS CAUGHT UP WITH EUAN CRAIG, DEPOT MANAGER, TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE DREM DEPOT, WHAT THE ACHIEVEMENT MEANS TO THE TEAM, AND THEIR AMBITIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

Congratulations on the award! What does it mean to you and your team?
This award means a great deal to us because it recognises the hard work, professionalism, and dedication of everyone at the depot. Fuel distribution is a demanding industry in which safety, reliability, teamwork, and customer service are critical every day.

Receiving this award reflects the commitment shown by the entire team to consistently maintain high standards. It is something we can all be proud of, and it motivates us to be continuously improving.

What would you suggest are the key ingredients of a truly excellent fuel depot?

In my view, a truly excellent fuel depot is built on a foundation of safety, reliability, and people. Safety must always come first, with robust processes, strong compliance standards, and a culture where everyone takes responsibility for operating safely.

Customers depend on fuel being delivered on time and without disruption, so efficient operations, well-maintained equipment, and effective planning are essential to maintaining a dependable service.

Understanding customer needs and consistently delivering high levels of service help build valuable trust and relationships.

What role does leadership play in running a successful depot operation?

Leadership is what brings together people, processes, and performance. When leadership is strong, it creates a culture of accountability, teamwork, and excellence that drives success across the entire operation.

What else do you believe contributes significantly to depot performance and safety?

Strong communication and collaboration underpin safety. It's a responsibility shared by everyone.

Clear operating standards, regular audits, preventative maintenance programmes, and effective risk management help ensure consistency and reduce the likelihood of incidents.

Communication plays a major role; regular team briefings, and open dialogue between colleagues help ensure that information is shared quickly and accurately.

How do you establish a culture in which everyone takes safety, service and accountability seriously?

Safety must be embedded into everyday activities rather than treated as a separate initiative. Regular toolbox talks, open discussions about risks, learning from near misses, and encouraging people to challenge unsafe behaviours help create an environment where safety becomes everyone's responsibility.

How has depot management changed over the last five to ten years?

Over the last ten years there has been a big increase in regulatory requirements. Fortunately, there has also been a huge advance in technology. Real-time data, improved fleet and inventory monitoring systems and digital reporting tools have enabled managers to make faster, more informed and accurate decisions and improve operational efficiency.

There has also been a stronger emphasis on safety culture. While compliance has always been important, today's approach places greater focus on proactive risk management, behavioural safety, near-miss reporting, and continuous improvement rather than simply meeting regulatory requirements.

At Certas Energy, this is driven by our 'Safety F1rst' and 'Doing the Right Thing' initiatives.

How are digital systems and automation changing depot operations?

Digital systems and automation are transforming depot operations by improving safety, efficiency, accuracy, and decision-making. Many tasks that were once heavily reliant on manual processes can now be monitored, recorded, and managed in real time, giving greater visibility across the entire operation.

Real-time alerts and automated controls can identify issues earlier, allowing us to respond before they impact safety.

What does "future proofing" a fuel depot mean in practical terms?

In practical terms, to me, "future proofing" a fuel depot means making sure the site, its people, and its systems are prepared to operate safely, efficiently, and competitively in a changing landscape.

A key part of this is maintaining tanks, pipelines, loading systems, and safety equipment to a high standard.

Future proofing also means embracing new and improving technology. Bringing in modern systems helps improve efficiency and ensures the depot can adapt to new challenges and requirements as they emerge.

How do you maintain high standards during peak winter demand or other high-pressure periods?

Maintaining high standards under pressure and during winter is about being well-prepared, proactive, communicating effectively, and ensuring safety always remains the priority.

What advice would you give to other depot operators aiming to raise standards and performance?

My main advice would be to focus on getting the fundamentals right and being consistent with them every day. High standards and performance in a depot environment are rarely about one big change; it is about small, steady improvements and maintaining focus to never become complacent.

How will the energy transition influence the fuel depot of the future?

As we move through the energy transition, I believe the fuel depot of the future will be more digital and will likely handle a broader range of products than today.

I think automation will continue to increase, particularly in scheduling, inventory control, and compliance reporting.

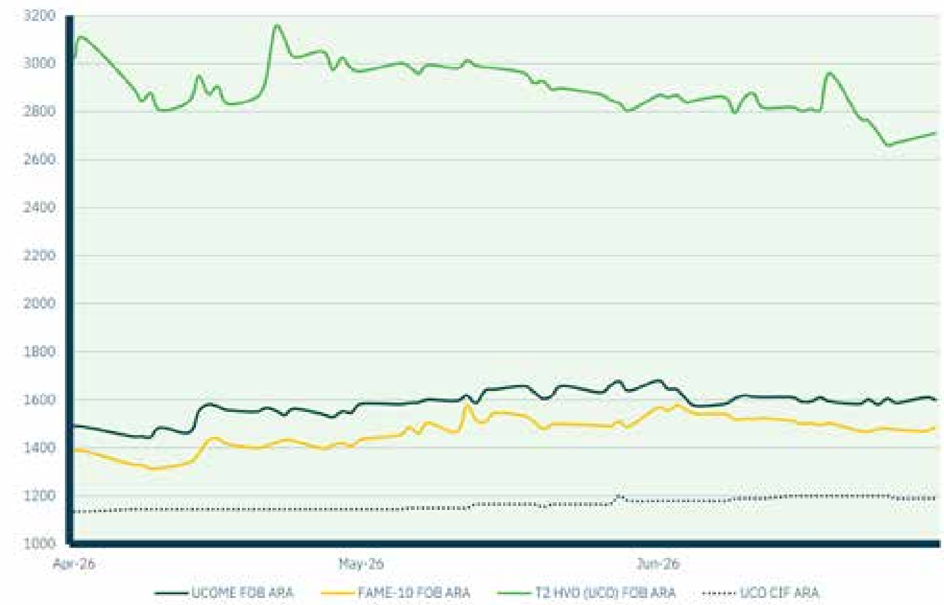
Sustainability will also be central to depot design and operation. This could include reduced emissions from site operations and greater energy efficiency.

As Euan suggests, the depot of the future is likely to be more digital, more connected and increasingly adaptable. Yet the message from this year's Depot of the Year is that success is about much more than the right technology. The industry's highest-performing operations will continue to be those where skilled people, robust processes and a culture of continuous improvement work together to deliver safe, reliable service every day.

ESL Fuels Biofuel Market Update – Q2 2026

IN ASSOCIATION WITH PORTLAND ANALYTICS

Wholesale NWE Prices ($ per Metric Tonne)



Feedstocks

Demand for biofuel feedstocks was subdued in April, with buyers exercising caution due to high market volatility and increased freight rates arising from the US-Iran conflict. UCO prices therefore remained relatively flat at the start of Q2, trading in a $10/mt range across the first month of the quarter. However, prices then steadily increased from the start of May onwards, rising from $1045/mt (74ppl) to reach $1200/mt (80ppl) by mid-June, its highest level since September 2022, with strong US demand absorbing a significant share of global UCO supply, following amendments to its Renewable Fuels Standard biofuels policy announced at the end of Q1. RIN (US biofuel credit) prices rose sharply in response to the changes, creating a more profitable environment for US renewable fuel producers, driving demand for biofuel feedstocks such as UCO and tallow as they look to maximise production.

Biodiesel

Biodiesel prices opened Q2 trading at a discount to Low Sulphur Gasoil (LSG) for the first time ever due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, as rapidly rising mineral diesel prices outstripped biodiesel grades, with the FAME-10 premium to LSG reaching a low of -$37.25/mt (-2.5ppl) on 7th April. Outright prices were suppressed through much of April due to a combination of high feedstock supply and a temporary excess of certificates (ERUs) in the Netherlands driven by high Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) production. Under Dutch regulations, ERUs generated from SAF can be used to meet road fuel mandates, therefore increased SAF supply saw compliance demand for road biofuels fall. Demand recovered throughout May into early June as mandates in Germany and the Netherlands created a more bullish outlook. However, outright prices then fell back as the conflict between the US and Iran reportedly neared resolution, causing a decline in underlying LSG prices. Despite this, strong demand meant biodiesel prices did not fall to the same extent, with the FAME-10 premium to LSG rising above $630/mt (32ppl) for the first time since February.

FAME-10 & UCOME

While April's diesel price rally saw biodiesel differentials to LSG compress, the UCOME premium to FAME-10 widened early in Q2, rising from $102.5/mt (6.7ppl) to $160/mt (10.4ppl) by 21st April. Despite low blending costs as a result of the squeeze on LSG premiums, mandate and blend wall limitations capped demand for cheap FAME, meaning UCOME prices remained comparatively strong. Compliance demand saw outright prices across both grades rise in May, with UCOME in particular reaching a 3.5-year high of $1680/mt (110ppl) on 1st June, as European biofuel demand reflected its preference for high GHG savings vs fossil equivalents. However, as LSG prices then began to fall, biodiesel premiums compressed unevenly across different grades, with outright UCOME prices falling at a faster rate compared to other biodiesels, causing the premium to FAME-10 to narrow to a Q2 low of $33/mt (2ppl). This was short-lived, as FAME-10 prices declined by $100/mt across June, closing the quarter at $1487/mt (99ppl), while UCOME prices remained firm, trading above $1600/mt (106ppl) at the end of Q2.

Market Outlook

The regulatory landscape in the US and Europe continues to shape biofuels markets in Q2, with the implementation of the US' new 'Set 2' Renewable Fuels Standard and the approval of amendments to German and Dutch national biofuels policies. This has already impacted biofuels markets, with high GHG reduction grades such as UCOME and HVO in particular supported by compliance demand. This is a trend that looks set to continue through the second half of the year, with the mid to long-term demand outlook remaining positive. The abolition of double-counting for advanced biofuels will continue to lift physical demand, with suppliers no longer able to rely on multipliers to meet quota obligations. RME-linked grades (FAME0 and FAME-10) face a less certain picture, constrained by blend wall limits, along with a weaker GHG savings profile relative to HVO and UCOME, leaving prices more reliant on conventional LSG price correlation than regulatory tailwinds throughout H2 2026. However recent increases in HVO prices have seen blenders revert to UCOME or other FAME grades despite their lesser GHG credentials.

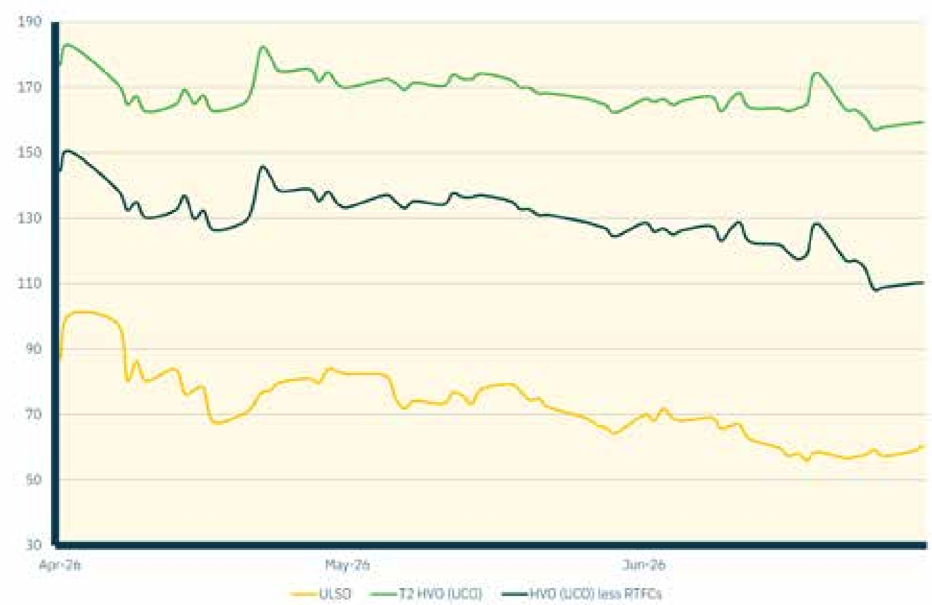
HVO

Despite indications of increased supply into the market, European HVO prices remained elevated in April. Wholesale T2 prices for UCO-derived HVO rose to $3149.50/mt (169.0ppl) on the 22nd of April, marking its highest level since the end of August 2022 amid rising gasoil futures due to the Middle East conflict. Additionally, expectations of tighter compliance-driven demand under strengthening renewable fuel mandates has lent support to HVO prices, reinforced by Germany's approval of a revised greenhouse gas reduction (THG) quota, raising its 2026- 2040 renewable fuel targets. In May, HVO prices fell by $162.50/mt (7.6ppl) amid a significant retreat in underlying gasoil futures. Trade data revealed a sharp decline in HVO flows across Europe, following significant demand destruction, particularly in voluntary markets, and flows adapting to the changing mandates around the globe. However, reports of additional supply coming online continued as Repsol launched its 200,000 mt/year plant in Spain, Orlene launched a 300,000/mt plant in Poland, and Brazil was reportedly considering a $1 billion biofuel investment. HVO prices continued a downward trajectory in June, declining to $2710.50/mt (159.3ppl) by the end of Q2, largely underpinned by sharp losses in gasoil futures as a result of the peace agreement between the US and Iran, which reduced geopolitical and supply-side risk premiums.

Certificates

Following a Q1 decline, non-crop RTFC prices opened Q2 at a two-year low of 16.20 pence per certificate (ppc), as rising diesel prices narrowed the differential between biodiesel and mineral diesel and reduced blending costs. However, RTFC prices started to rise from the 17th of April following a decline in underlying gasoil futures, after Iran announced the Strait of Hormuz would reopen to commercial traffic during a temporary ceasefire with the US. In May, RTFC prices remained relatively stable, edging up from 18.30ppc to 18.90ppc as falling diesel prices were offset by modest increases in biodiesel. In June, renewed expectations of a US-Iran settlement and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz contributed to a sharp fall in diesel prices, widening the biodiesel--mineral diesel spread and increasing blending costs, helping non-crop RTFC prices recover to pre-conflict levels of 24.50ppc.

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



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

News & Policy

Anticipated changes to the UK's Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) have been pushed back to at least 2028 in response to high fuel prices arising from the US-Iran war. Following an initial consultation announced in November 2024, proposed changes were expected to be announced in 2026, ahead of a target of 2027 for implementation. The changes are likely to include more ambitious targets to bring the UK in line with its EU counterparts, requiring a higher content of biofuel in the supply mix, therefore likely raising the cost of fuel to the end user.

The European Biodiesel Board has called on the EU to maintain ambitious renewable fuel targets beyond 2030, warning that carbon pricing mechanisms alone are unlikely to provide sufficient incentives to drive investment in low- carbon fuels. The industry body argues that continued dedicated transport fuel mandates under the post-2030 Renewable Energy Directive will be essential to provide long-term demand certainty, alongside stronger enforcement, improved certification frameworks, and fewer barriers to higher-blend biofuel use.

The UK Department for Transport (DfT) has launched a Call for Evidence to review the flexibility of its SAF mandate amid concerns over limited non-HEFA and e-fuel supply. The consultation, which closes on the 28th of July 2026, is considering proposals to allow a greater rollover allowance (enabling obligations to be met using SAF certificates generated in the previous compliance year,) introduce additional incentives for advanced SAF pathways to boost investment, and revise certificate rules and supply caps to address market constraints.

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From tank monitoring to customer engagement

TELEMETRY BEYOND TANK LEVELS: WHY CUSTOMER APPS ARE BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TOOL FOR DISTRIBUTORS

TANK MONITORING HAS TRADITIONALLY FOCUSED ON HELPING DISTRIBUTORS IMPROVE DELIVERY PLANNING AND STOCK MANAGEMENT. INCREASINGLY, HOWEVER, SUPPLIERS ARE LOOKING AT CUSTOMER-FACING APPS AS A WAY TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION, IMPROVE RETENTION AND SIMPLIFY THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

FOLLOWING A MAJOR REDESIGN OF ITS FOXMOBILE PLATFORM ALONGSIDE THE LAUNCH OF ITS FOURTH-GENERATION HARDWARE, FUEL OIL NEWS SPOKE TO FOXINSIGHTS' SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER, GORANA **BRALO**, ABOUT HOW CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS ARE CHANGING AND WHAT DISTRIBUTORS ARE NOW LOOKING FOR FROM DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.

Tank monitoring has traditionally focused on helping distributors improve delivery planning and stock management. Increasingly, however, suppliers are looking at customer-facing apps as a way to strengthen communication, improve retention and simplify the customer experience.

Following a major redesign of its FoxMobile platform alongside the launch of its fourth-generation hardware, Fuel Oil News spoke to FoxInsights' Senior Product Manager, Gorana Bralo, about how customer expectations are changing and what distributors are now looking for from digital technology.

FoxInsights has launched both new hardware and a redesigned customer app. What prompted the changes?

The new fourth-generation hardware has been designed to optimise both installation and data and introduces practical improvements for both distributors and installers.

An integrated E-Ink display directly on the sensor allows installers or customers to see the current tank level and device status immediately without logging into the app. This enables technicians to verify the first measurement right at the tank and customers can check their level at a glance.

It also includes a built-in tilt sensor that works with the installation process. Rather than relying on indicator lights, installers receive live feedback through the app display with the tilt sensor live view integrated into the setup flow to help position the sensor correctly during installation.

The new hardware required a new installation flow in the app. While updating this, it made sense to deliver a full app redesign especially as we'd already identified areas where the user experience could be improved.

Most customers aren't used to interacting with monitoring software so we wanted the core information – fill level, consumption history, trends – to be immediately readable. The update also introduces dark mode and a number of smaller interface improvements.

Tank monitoring has traditionally been about helping distributors plan deliveries. Is its role beginning to change?

We have certainly seen changes.

When FoxInsights first entered the market, the primary objective of the monitor was to give distributors better visibility of customers' tank levels to support delivery planning and improve operational efficiency. Today that remains important, but distributors are increasingly looking at how digital tools can help strengthen customer relationships as well.

Over time we realised the app, that enabled customers to see their data, was an underutilised asset. The customer has it installed. They open it. They trust it. That gives distributors a new opportunity to communicate proactively and offer additional services.

Many customers now expect to be able to check their tank level whenever they choose, rather than waiting until they're close to empty or making a phone call. That changes the role of the app from simply displaying information to becoming part of the overall customer experience.

Technology is changing to reflect the ability of digital tools to support customer retention, improve communication and encourage repeat business.

Many distributors already communicate with customers by email or text. Why does an app offer something different?

Customers generally open a tank monitoring app because they want to check something that's immediately relevant to them – their fuel level. It's a direct touchpoint between distributor and customer. That presents an opportunity to deliver communications where customers are already engaged, rather than competing with many other emails or messages.

Because distributors can brand the app with their own identity, it also helps reinforce the relationship between supplier and customer. FoxInsights provides the underlying technology, but the end user sees the supplier's logo, colours and contact details so that the brand, and customer relationship remain the distributor's.

Are you able to share any quantifiable benefits?

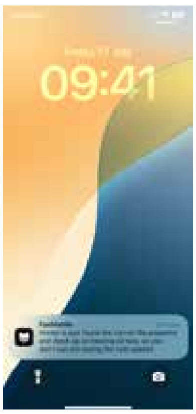
While the new devices are only just shipping and the first installs are taking place, our current insights are from our existing partners.

Our data analysis shows that, for one of our UK partners, more than 80 % of end customers opened the app at least once a month during the heating season, and over 57 % did so every week. It's a level of regular contact that most distributors will not have had previously.

The contact pays off in loyalty: partners who actively use these touchpoints are reporting high levels of customer retention and reduced churn.

While the figures vary between distributors, we consistently see higher engagement among customers who actively use the app than through more traditional communication channels.

The platform also includes engaging communication tools. How are distributors using these?



There are two main approaches.

The first allows distributors to send straightforward push notifications, such as quick announcements, seasonal reminders or important service updates. These can be sent to all customers or selected groups.

The second

enables more targeted campaigns through the app. These use customer data, allowing messages to be tailored according to factors such as tank level or previous purchasing behaviour. Formatted content, images and interactive buttons can all be used to engage targeted recipients with specific offers or messages and monitor responses.

The intention is to help distributors communicate with customers proactively, rather than relying solely on reactive ordering.

Many independent distributors are carefully assessing investment in new technology. What would you say to businesses that remain cautious?

The caution is understandable. Any investment has to demonstrate a clear return.

"Tank monitoring" can sound abstract. The starting point is to focus on the operational challenges you're trying to solve rather than the technology itself. For many distributors, that's improving delivery planning by knowing when customers are likely to need fuel before they call you. That changes how you plan routes, how you use your trucks, and how many kilometres your drivers cover.

Our experience is that having reliable tank-level data allows distributors to plan more efficiently. Partners tell us they've been able to significantly reduce unplanned or unnecessary deliveries, improve route planning and make better use of vehicles and driver time, reducing fuel costs, driver hours and vehicle wear.

Implementation has also become much simpler than it was a few years ago. Installation is straightforward and the platform is designed for day-to-day operational teams rather than specialist IT staff. For many businesses, the biggest challenge isn't the technology itself but adapting existing processes to make the most of the information available.

The distributors who've been most hesitant have often told us the same thing after going live: the transition was faster than expected, with the value visible within the first delivery cycles.

What have you learnt from working with distributors that you didn't expect?

One of the biggest lessons has been just how important installation is. When distributors told us their biggest frustration was with inconsistent data they couldn't explain, in most cases it could be traced back to faulty installations.

That taught us something important: the installation underpins everything that follows. If a device is installed correctly, calibrated properly, positioned well, with the app set up and the end customer onboarded, the data is reliable and everything downstream of that works.

That influenced many of the changes we've made in the latest generation and the app update. The integrated display, the tilt sensor guidance, and updated installation process. All of it is about making sure the installation is correct first time because a well-installed device has a low total cost of ownership and delivers value from day one.

We've also learnt that many distributors initially focus on the operational benefits, such as delivery planning, before recognising the wider opportunities around customer communication. Once the app becomes part of the customer relationship, businesses often begin looking at new ways of using it alongside their existing marketing and customer service activities.

One of the biggest surprises has been that the technology itself isn't usually the biggest challenge – it's helping businesses adapt their existing processes to make the most of the information they're now receiving.

To us it was a simple "plug and play" – install the devices and start using the data in your processes. But using a digital channel effectively alongside traditional campaigns is a skill that takes time to develop. The technology isn't the barrier; it's the shift it creates in internal processes and people can be slow or hesitant to adapt.

As a result, we work closely with our partners through this transition stage. Once fully adopted, it becomes integral to the daily business.

How important is it that installers and office staff understand the technology as well as customers?

It is important, but there's a difference between understanding technology and feeling you need to become a software specialist. The aim should always be to make technology simple enough that it helps people do their jobs more effectively, without needing to understand everything that underpins that.

For installers, that means clear instructions that help them get the installation right first time. They don't need to understand the technical principles behind sensor positioning; they simply need feedback that confirms the device is set up correctly. That's why the integrated display, tilt sensor and updated installation flow in the app have all been designed to achieve this.

The same applies in the office. Dispatchers shouldn't have to interpret raw sensor data to decide which customers need a delivery, and sales teams shouldn't have to run analysis to identify customers who may benefit from a conversation.

The technology should present the right information in a way that's easy to act on – whether that is for logistics, sales, or customer communication.

Looking ahead, how do you see customer-facing technology evolving?

The new hardware addresses today's requirements, but we see it as one step in a much broader, and ongoing evolution. It will continue to evolve as new opportunities emerge.

On the software and platform side, we see this redesign as a foundation rather than a finished product.

As more distributors make use of telemetry and customer data, the focus will increasingly shift from simply monitoring tank levels to using all the available data to support better operational decisions and stronger customer relationships.

We'll see greater automation, smarter route planning and more personalised customer communications, with routine tasks and decisions increasingly data-driven. This isn't to replace people, but to give teams better information so they can spend more time adding value.

Ultimately, successful distributors will be those who combine good technology with good customer service. Telemetry can tell you when a customer is likely to need fuel, but it's how distributors use that information to improve service and build trust that will make the real difference.

Case study: Targeted campaigns in practice

A FoxInsights customer in Continental Europe is a heating oil distributor who has run 14 of these campaigns to a base of around 35,000 app users. Its two most recent heating-oil campaigns each reached roughly 5,000 customers, with click rates above 90% and a 4% order rate – generating around £ 430.000 in revenue per campaign. Just as telling, 67% of those orders were for premium-grade product, compared with 30% in the partner's normal order mix

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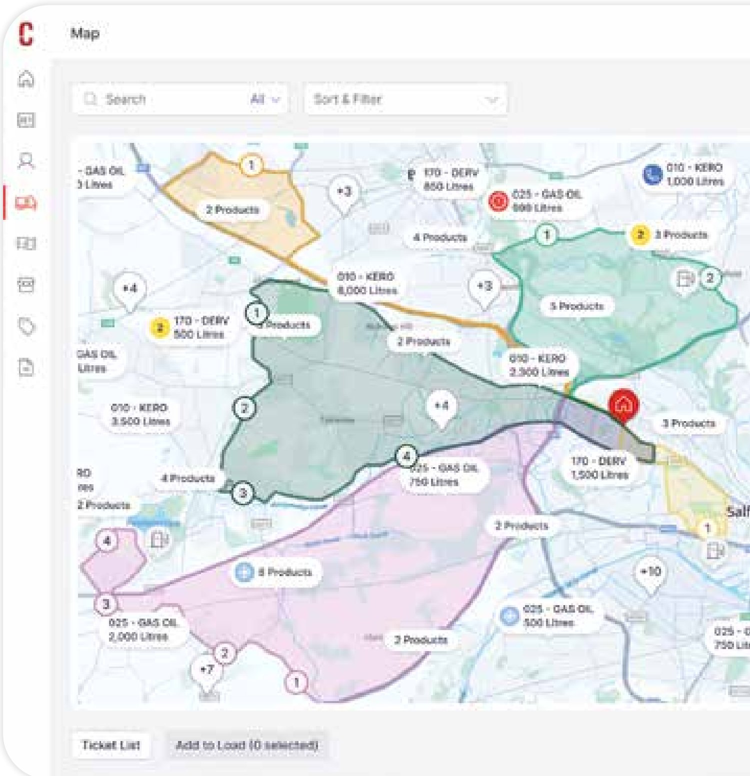
Today, **CODAS 7** moves that foundation forward with purpose.



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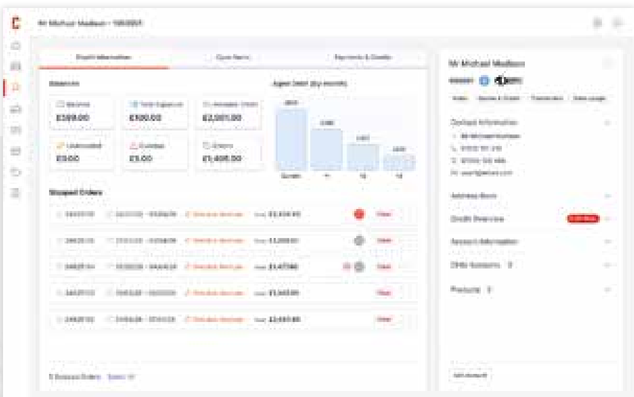

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PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

JULY IN VIEW

WHY IS JET FUEL SO VULNERABLE TO PRICE SHOCKS?

Now that the USA and Iran are re-engaged in their on/off conflict, we can expect one grade of fuel to make a quick return to the headlines. Over the last few months, there have been many column inches devoted to the shortage of jet fuel and consequent high prices, as a result of so much refining capacity being stuck “inside” the Strait of Hormuz. Seeing as many of you will be jetting off on holiday at this time of the year, this month’s report will revisit what jet fuel is, why it is so prone to price shocks and what (if any) are the plans to find alternatives in a decarbonising world?

Jet Fuel (often called Jet A1 and sometimes called AVTUR = Aviation Turbine Fuel) is a type of paraffin that comes from a refinery’s Crude Distillation Unit (CDU). Gasoline (petrol) “sits” above Kerosene in

> “EXPOSURE TO THIS KIND OF VOLATILITY IS THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES.”

the CDU, meaning the former boils first (at a lower temperature), giving it a more volatile and explosive nature. Diesel lies lower than Kerosene in the CDU, which means it takes longer (higher temperature) to reach its boiling point, resulting in diesel being more stable than kero, but less flammable. Put all of this together and you have the reason that Kerosene is used to power aeroplanes. Gasoline would not only be excessively hazardous, but its combustibility (whilst good for take-off) would be inefficient once the plane was airborne. Fuel consumption would be too rapid, and the plane would have to quickly land to refuel. Diesel on the other hand is much more fuel economic and releases energy in a more “conservative” fashion. This means that it would be suitable for jet propulsion once the plane is airborne, but to take-off would require a runway that was about 5,000m long! Kerosene then is the perfect “in-between” grade; more stable and fuel efficient than petrol, but more combustible than diesel.

Refinery yields vary according to the crude slate (i.e., the type of crude that a CDU

processes), but in general the amount of jet fuel produced from 1 barrel of Brent Crude (=159 litres) is around 25 litres (i.e., a 15 % yield). By comparison, Brent yields 65 litres (~ 40 % yield) of petrol and 55 litres (~ 35 % yield) of diesel. Certain refining processes can increase the yield of jet fuel, but these are technically difficult and expensive. Which means that whilst still not a specialist grade, jet fuel is most definitely not a ubiquitous, “everyday” grade such as gasoline or diesel.

This “weak” supply position versus strong and very specific demand dynamics (planes have to use it and there are no alternatives) is one of the reasons that jet fuel is prone to rapid price shocks. In Europe, the situation is exacerbated by a lack of indigenous production and an over-reliance on imports (the UK for example, imports 60 % of its jet fuel). This price volatility has obviously been amply illustrated in 2026, where the price of jet went up to $234 per barrel ($1,842.50 / tonne) in the aftermath of the Israeli and US attacks on Iran.

But this is not the first time that jet fuel has been acutely affected by price shocks. During the Arab Spring in 2012, Jet A1 topped $150 / bbl, even though the associated loss of production from Libya only concerned crude oil. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (widely seen as a crude and diesel crisis), jet fuel still hit $188 / bbl ($1,475.25 / tonne), whilst crude at the same time was “only” trading at $119. And that same level of extreme price movements can also occur when prices tank, with jet often falling the fastest and furthest. In the pandemic, the UK saw a 30 % reduction in jet fuel demand in Q1 2020, and this resulted in a drop in the price of Jet A1 from $83 / bbl at the start of that year ($652 per tonne) to $14 / bbl ($111 / tonne) by the end of April!

For refinery schedulers and aviation fuel buyers alike, the exposure to this kind of volatility is the stuff of nightmares. There is no such thing as a jet fuel refinery; you can’t just stop producing one product e.g., (jet fuel) if you want to carry on producing another (e.g., diesel). At the same time, increasing jet fuel production at the expense of other grades is difficult and requires more complex refining technology. Buyers of course can hedge their exposure, but protection can only last so long and at some point, the hedge has to be renewed at a higher price. Equally, hedging

> “SUCH IS THE TORTUROUS TIGHTROPE OF SUPPLYING AND BUYING JET FUEL.”

your jet fuel around $85 a barrel, only to see the price plummet to $15 / bbl is a fairly calamitous exercise – particularly if your planes are grounded through lack of demand.

Such is the torturous tightrope of supplying and buying jet fuel. Over the last few months, some commentators have pointed to Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) as a neat solution to some of these problems. Not only does it reduce emissions, but with the supply chain sitting outside the machinations in the Middle East, could SAF support supply resilience and help strip-out price volatility? We will have a look at this topic next month, but in the meantime, happy holidays!

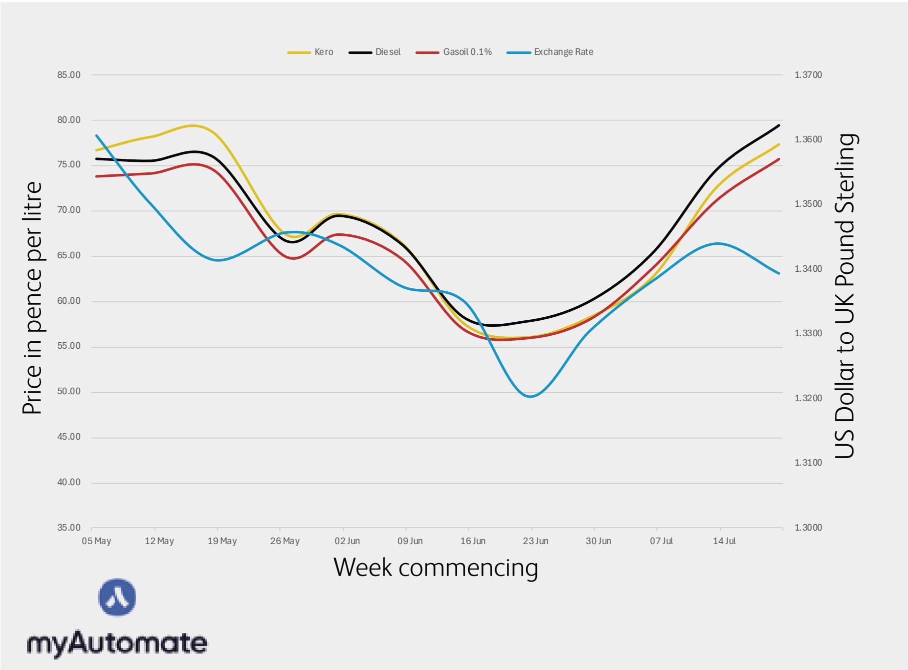
For more pricing information, see page 30

Portland
www.stabilityfromvolatility.co.uk

Wholesale Price Movements: 17th June 2026 – 22nd July 2026

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	64.75	66.85	64.44
Average daily change	2.07	1.91	2.07
Current duty	0.00	52.95	6.48
Total	0.00	119.80	70.92

All prices in pence per litre



Kerosene

Highest price	Biggest up day
79.07	+7.20
Wed 22 Jul 26	Wed 08 Jul 26
Lowest price	**Biggest down day**
55.43	-2.96
Fri 26 Jun 26	Thu 09 Jul 26

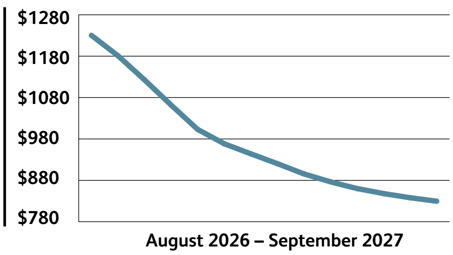
Diesel

Highest price	Biggest up day
80.55	+7.98
Wed 22 Jul 26	Wed 08 Jul 26
Lowest price	**Biggest down day**
57.48	-3.66
Fri 26 Jun 26	Thu 09 Jul 26

Gasoil 0.1%

Highest price	Biggest up day
77.06	+8.28
Wed 22 Jul 26	Wed 08 Jul 26
Lowest price	**Biggest down day**
55.62	-3.57
Fri 26 Jun 26	Thu 09 Jul 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	71.30	78.08	127.15	81.28	83.42	132.13
North East	70.25	76.71	126.23	84.22	81.71	129.89
North West	71.82	79.31	128.62	81.39	83.95	131.88
Midlands	70.32	77.24	126.69	79.75	82.16	130.67
South East	70.42	77.20	126.67	89.88	85.78	130.12
South West	70.77	77.04	126.51	83.30	81.95	129.66
N. Ireland	70.88	78.41	n/a	80.12	84.41	n/a
Republic Of Ireland	84.64	83.84	128.09	92.52	88.80	132.15
Portland	68.63	74.76	123.38			

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

Enjoying a beer on holiday.

WELCOME TO AUGUST'S EDITION OF OUR SPECIAL MONTHLY FEATURE WHICH GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO 'MEET' AN INDUSTRY FIGURE AND, HOPEFULLY, TO DISCOVER ANOTHER SIDE TO THEM BEYOND THE WELL-KNOWN FACTS. THIS MONTH WE CHAT WITH **BEN FIRTH**, SALES EXECUTIVE, ROAD TANKERS NORTHERN LTD.

> "BUILD GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS, LISTEN TO THE CUSTOMERS' NEEDS, AND ALWAYS DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU'LL DO."
> **BEN FIRTH**

Sum up your working life in 25 words or fewer.
From workshop floor to sales, my 20-year career has given me a deep understanding of the fuel oil industry and the people within it.

Describe yourself in 3 words.
Sociable. Reliable. Dedicated.

What were your childhood / early ambitions?
I always wanted to be a professional footballer! If that failed, I looked up to my dad and wanted to follow in his footsteps working with tankers… here we are now, 20 years in!

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
Teleportation – because life is too short to spend it stuck on the M1!

The best advice you've ever received?
Listen to those you are learning from – advice I now pass on to new starters. There are a lot of knowledgeable people in the industry!

Your top tips for business success?
Build genuine relationships, listen to the customers' needs, and always do what you say you'll do.

Recent dog walk with Harry, Harvey, and our Cockapoo Teddy

What's the last photo you took on your phone?
My eldest son receiving an award at his football presentation day!

If you could have dinner with any person, living or dead, who and why?
Greedily – all my grandparents. I recently lost my last one, and it is 30 years since my first passed. I'd love to show them the man I have become and for them to meet their great-grandchildren.

You can only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what is it?
This is a tough one… probably peanuts! I am a grazer and could eat them all day! Salted, dry roasted, chilli… all of them haha!

The best thing about your job?
I am very lucky that I get to travel to places I probably wouldn't have if I didn't do the job I do. Spending time with customers is a real pleasure.

The quality that you most admire?
Honesty – it helps to build lasting relationships.

What are you most likely to say?
There's always a way! (There really is!)

What are you least likely to say?
It can't be done. (Because there is always a way!)

Describe your perfect day.
Big breakfast, then a round of golf. Back home for a BBQ with the family, and a few cold beers of course!

Your favourite sports team?
Manchester United!

If you could be any fictional character, who and why?
James Bond – Travel the world, wear the suits, drive the cars, play with the gadgets, beat the bad guys and get the girl! What's not to love haha!

Share your greatest personal achievement.
Watching my boys grow up! They fill me with so much joy and pride. They are 2 little superstars and their characters have me smiling and laughing every single day!

Share your pet hate or biggest irritant.
Poor timekeeping.

What would your Mastermind specialist subject be?
Premier League football years 1998-2008 – the greatest era of the Premier League. I spent a lot of my time watching it!

If you were PM what would be the first law you'd pass?
Free school meals and access to sports clubs for every child. I played football from age five and it helped me build my confidence and make new friends as I was quite shy. Every child should have the same opportunity.

If you had a time machine, would you go to the future or the past?
The past. To a time before mobile phones and social media! Riding your bike to your mate's house to knock and see if they could play out, not knowing even if they were at home! I wish kids today still had this!

Taking part in Total Warrior 2025

What is number 1 on your bucket list?
I would love to take a cruise around the Caribbean. I visited Jamaica in 2014 and the people are almost as laid back as I am! It is definitely my kind of place!

If you were Editor of Fuel Oil News magazine, what's your first article?
How we attract, develop and retain young people to keep our industry thriving for years to come. There has been and still is a lot of experience leaving the industry through retirement, and that knowledge can't be bought. Passing this on to the younger generation coming through is vital for keeping this industry as great as it is.

What 3 things would you take to a desert island?
My golf clubs, a lifetime supply of peanuts and my phone!

Something about you people would be surprised by?
I once played in goal at Old Trafford and kept a clean sheet!

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