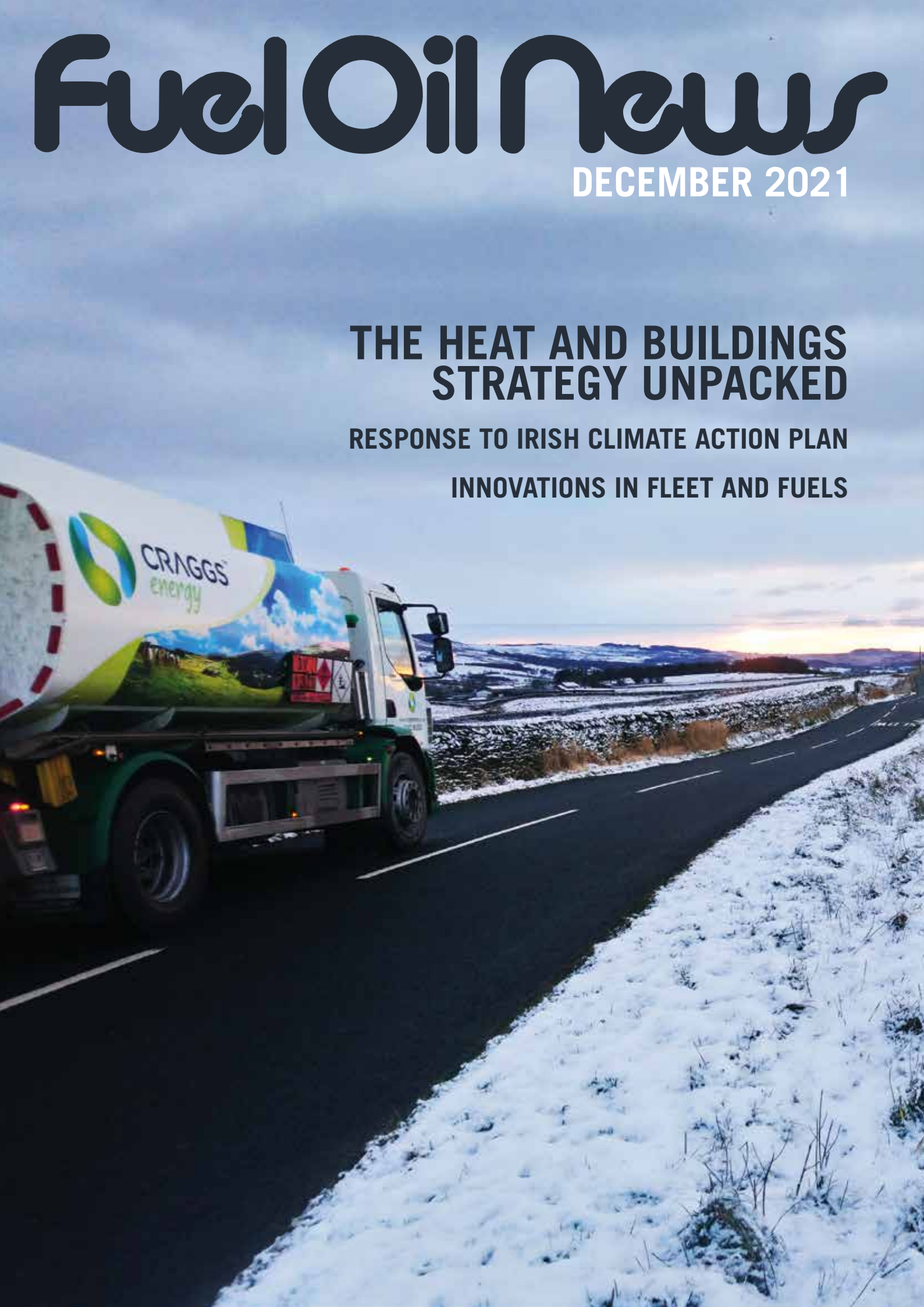
Fuel Oil News

DECEMBER 2021

THE HEAT AND BUILDINGS STRATEGY UNPACKED

RESPONSE TO IRISH CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

INNOVATIONS IN FLEET AND FUELS



MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A
PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR
TO OUR FRIENDS, CUSTOMERS
AND PARTNERS

2021–The Year of the Metal Ox

According to the Chinese zodiac, February 2021 was the start of the Year of the Metal Ox, bringing everything you would expect to be associated with this hardworking, durable and steady animal. An Ox year brings hard work but also success for those who put in the effort to create it, whether social, financial or professional. A year of reaping what you sow, for diligence under the burdens of responsibility.

As I cast an eye back over all we have shared from our community of producers, marketers and distributors it seems that the Chinese could well be on to something.

Hard work is a 'given' in our community, but this year has brought so many stories of those going above and beyond in an industry that, whatever challenges are faced, will always find a way – to succeed, to grow, to evolve, to deliver.

It began with a kick in the teeth – a hard-hitting 3rd lockdown but a massive vaccination programme coupled with a roadmap to freedom, saw the lifting of most restrictions for most areas by June – a privilege still being clung to as we near the end of the year.

Through another year of uncertainty, you have worked tirelessly to serve your communities in the present whilst contributing to immense industry efforts to carve out a new future for fuel and its distribution.

And the greatest joy of 2021 has been to finally meet, face-to-face, our families, friends and colleagues – in our own businesses and across the broader community of fuel distributors. It has been an absolute pleasure to visit with you again and I look forward to meeting many more of you in 2022.

So thank you, from all of us at Fuel Oil News, for making us such a part of this community – for sharing your special and memorable moments, personal and professional, so many of which we have been privileged to cover.

We offer our heartfelt appreciation of all of you who worked so hard to keep the UK & Ireland fuelled this year. We wish you, and yours, a hopeful Christmas and a healthy and happy 2022.

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Fuel Oil News

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

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On the cover

A wonderfully seasonal image of a Craggs tanker making its way through snow for an essential winter fuel delivery. Celebrating 10 years, the Hebden Bridge-based distributor features in 'In Conversation' on pages 12 & 13.

In this issue

In this issue we review the strategies for decarbonising home heating in the UK (pages 24 & 25) and Ireland (pages 14 & 15) as well as hearing the industry response. Vehicle innovations feature on pages 16 & 17)

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Government confirms all new HGVs will be zero emission by 2040

Transport Day at COP26 brought with it news that all new heavy goods vehicles in the UK will be zero emission by 2040, with the UK government confirming plans that will mean an end to the sale of all non-zero emission vehicles in the next two decades with a previously announced phase out of UK sales of petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

Becoming the first country in the world, according to the DfT, to commit to phasing out new, non-zero emission heavy goods vehicles. weighing 26 tonnes and under by 2035, by 2040 all new HGVs sold in the UK will be zero emission.

More support needed to meet the target

In response, Michelle Gardner, head of public policy at Logistics UK, commented: "The announcement of phase-out dates for new, non-zero emission HGVs at the tailpipe, such as those run on diesel, will help provide logistics businesses and manufacturers with much-needed certainty on the industry's path to decarbonisation.

"But these dates will only be attainable if the government provides the right support: our members need to see a nationwide network of recharging and refuelling infrastructure put in place, effective and affordable vehicles made readily available for all, and fairer charging arrangements for the necessary power upgrades to commercial premises.

"Certain specialist HGVs, or the jobs they are used for, present additional challenges in the move to zero tailpipe emission vehicles, so derogations to allow technologies longer to develop are welcome. With this exception, only zero tailpipe emission HGVs can be sold beyond these dates; we are disappointed that low carbon fuelled vehicles will not be available for sale after 2040.

"These fuels can act as effective, interim solutions while the technology for zero tailpipe emission HGVs matures; many of our members are keen to utilise these low-carbon alternatives. Logistics UK is therefore urging the government to give confidence to operators looking to invest in low carbon fuels through tax incentives and a clear policy framework."

Consultation needed for a fair and achievable transition

"It's vital that regulations acknowledge the different challenges experienced from one vehicle type to another," commented British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA) chief executive, Gerry Keaney.

"Usage of HGVs varies significantly, so we welcome the government's intention to consult on derogations that will enable a fair and achievable transition. The BVRLA looks forward to working with the government on the delivery plan that will be essential in ensuring the UK road transport network can be decarbonised successfully.

"The approach must be comprehensive, particularly around HGVs where the barriers remain huge. The recent funding that was announced to support trials of zero emission technology for the sector is a very positive step, and we eagerly await the clarity this will bring to help meet the phase-out dates."

New storage Charter covers impacts of energy transition

The TSA has formally launched a new Energy Transition Charter affirming the bulk energy storage sector's shared commitment to supporting the achievement of the UK's climate neutrality targets..

Developed in conjunction with member organisations and accompanied by strategic commitments to encourage leadership, innovation, skills development, promotion and engagement, the Energy Transition Charter sees members commit to:

- Strive to reduce their carbon footprint
- Support existing initiatives, including increases to the RTFO
- Promote use of alternative fuels, including biofuels, SAFs and renewable marine fuels
- Protect people and environment as processes and inventories change
- Ensure resilience and security of supply through the transition

Strategically, the charter considers collaborative working with all relevant stakeholders, regulators, technical bodies and institutions, support throughout the supply chain and the development of the necessary skills to meet changing needs through the energy transition.

Peter Davidson, executive director of the association, said: "The TSA and its members are committed to leading from the front in

the journey to net zero. With efforts already underway, the Energy Transition Charter highlights the sector's ambitions to seize future opportunities.

"By working with regulators and other stakeholders to ensure an effective transition to alternative energy sources, and by supporting the development of future skills, guidance and standards necessary to safely manage changing processes and inventories, our sector is committed to playing its full part in the transformative journey ahead."

£800,000 investment sees expansion of HVO fuel trials

The industry has announced the second phase of its fossil fuel replacement demonstration as it commits to convert 200 homes and businesses across the UK from oil heating to HVO this winter, amounting to an initial investment of over £800,000.

The news follows the publication of the government's Heat and Buildings Strategy (more throughout this issue) which recognises the potential role of renewable liquid fuels in the decarbonisation of off-grid homes.

Minimal inconvenience for immediate benefit

The demonstration will see properties immediately benefit from an 88% reduction in carbon emissions. The conversion requires minimal changes to the boiler and storage tank at a cost of around £500 and takes less than an hour to complete. The fossil-free fuel, sourced from waste cooking oil, fats and greases has been certified as sustainable by the International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC).

The initiative follows a trial last winter across 20 homes, from Cornwall to Scotland, which demonstrated there were no technical limitations to using HVO as a direct 'drop-in' replacement for kerosene.

This second phase will broaden the geographic spread and will also, for the first time, allow the industry to test the logistics of what could be a bigger transition to renewable liquid fuels over the coming years for the estimated 1.7 million properties using oil. OFTEC registered heating technicians will carry out regular checks on the appliances to monitor performance.

More homes and more distributors

The demonstration includes participants from all sectors of the industry and is being led by trade associations UKIFDA and OFTEC. A further 17 fuel distributors who represent around 80% of the home heating oil market will also be supporting the initiative.

In a joint statement, Ken Cronin, UKIFDA and Paul Rose, OFTEC, said: "We know from our research carried out over the last 12 months that oil heated homes want to decarbonise in a manner which causes the least disruption and offers the lowest cost of change. The drop-in fuel being used in our demonstrations, HVO, represents the most practical and cost-effective solution to both of these requirements."

Ken Cronin and Paul Rose added: "The Heat and Buildings Strategy acknowledges the role of renewable liquid fuels off-grid and the challenges of installing heat pumps in older properties. That's why we're rapidly expanding our demonstration project to show the real-world potential of a wider rollout of renewable liquid fuels.

"To succeed, off-grid decarbonisation will require a flexible approach to ensure households have a choice of low carbon heating technologies suited to the needs of their property. That's why we are urging the government to extend the incentives for renewable liquid fuels, beyond aviation and road transport, to include off-grid home heating."

OFTEC and UKIFDA are providing regular updates on the new fuel through the information website:

www.futurereadyfuel.info.

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IPU Group's charity challenge in memory of colleague

The West Bromwich-based IPU Group, is supporting two members of its team who are taking on a charity challenge, in aid of Cancer Research, in memory of Dave Hutchings, a much-loved colleague.

Melissa Payne, IPU's internal sales and marketing manager, said: "IPU's Tristan Philpotts (fuel and environmental manager) and Jacob Briley (service engineer) are braving December temperatures and attempting to walk 66 miles non-stop in just 33 hours in aid of Cancer Research.

"Doing loops in the Peak District over the 4th – 5th December, they're doing this challenge in memory of a much-loved colleague IPU recently lost to cancer and doing 1 mile for every year of his life. IPU also has another colleague and friend currently fighting it and know many others that are affected by it.

"Tristan and Jacob will be doing 4 large, 16-mile loops around the Edale area of the Peak District, passing a 'base camp' 4 times. Waiting there will be members of the IPU team, keeping the guys well fed and watered! Other members of the IPU team are also braving the cold and walking as much as they can.

"They are hoping to raise £2,000, and any donation received is so hugely appreciated! The team will be vlogging as much of the walk as possible, so look out for that on IPU's LinkedIn & Twitter page!"

If you would like to show your support for their efforts, you can donate at: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ipu-66milesin33hours

An interview with Tristan and Jacob can be found on the IPU website:

https://www.ipu.co.uk/news/charity-challenge-66-miles-in-33-hours/

Good luck to Tristan and Jacob!

Jacob Briley (l) & Tristan Philpotts (r) – determined to complete the challenge

Green fuel demand sees Crown Oil expand to new site

Rocketing customer demand for alternative, cleaner fuels sees Crown Oil expand with investment in a new site.

The Bury-based business, part of the £420m-turnover Crown Oil family of companies, has acquired land in Pilsworth, Bury, to enable it to continue the growth it has experienced during the last 12 months.

The 8.88-acre site will provide the family business with additional space to cater for its expanding sustainable fuels operation. The increased space will enable the business to carry out research and development (R&D) and blend and store alternative fuels.

Office staff including accounts, sales, customer services, marketing and IT will remain at the Heap Bridge head office.

Crown Oil, based on Bury New Road, became the first and only UK fuel supplier to run its entire fleet of tankers and delivery vehicles on hydrotreated vegetable oil in June 2021 as we have reported.

The business was later crowned the winner of the UKIFDA prestigious Green Award for 2021, which recognises those in the liquid fuel industry that are leading the way in sustainability and environmental performance as well as seeing its brand new HVO tanker named 'Fuel Oil News 2020 Tanker of the Year'.

Investment comes on the back of success with cleaner greener fuels

The business has championed the use of cleaner fuels to customers across sectors including construction, on-road transport, rail, inland waterways and stand-by power, going the extra mile by hosting virtual webinars, offering one-to-one support and creating educational resources to help organisations understand the benefits.

The investment marks the success of Crown Oil's work to encourage customers to make the switch to greener fuels. As of November 2021, its customers have saved 31,500 tonnes of CO2 from switching to HVO fuel, which is equal to the emissions released from 6,851 passenger cars driven on fossil fuels for a year.

HVO offers a fast and simple step towards net zero without the need for electrification or vehicle modifications, reducing net CO2 emissions by up to 90 per cent and nitrogen oxide emissions by up to 27 per cent.

Managing director Matthew Greensmith said the investment was timely, taking place as the world's leaders meet to discuss environmental issues at COP26 commenting: "As green measures have never been higher up the agenda, businesses have a responsibility to act now to contribute towards reducing the effects of climate change.

"Crown Oil has taken this responsibility seriously, encouraging customers to make the change to HVO, while setting the example ourselves.

"As a result, we have found demand for greener, cleaner, alternative fuels increasing, which has led to a need to expand our current operations into a new site. Our Pilsworth site will enable us to serve an even greater number of customers and carry out more research and development into alternative products.

"We look forward to opening this additional site and continuing the work that resulted in our Green Award earlier this year."

As part of its green efforts, the business has also pledged to run all of its buildings on renewable energy by 2023.

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Survey finds Mabanaft's supply standards remain high

As one of the UK's largest independent fuel importers and wholesalers, Mabanaft is proud of the strong and lasting relationships it has built with customers. Part of this is down to listening to their requirements and delivering products and services that meet their needs. Each year the company surveys its customers to help ensure that standards remain high and was extremely pleased with the feedback received this year.

A performance to be proud of

Clare Charlton, inland sales manager at Mabanaft, said: "Despite the continued challenges of 2021, customers are telling us we have provided excellent service and delivered a reliable supply of fuel throughout."

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2021 SURVEY:

Getting the priorities right

Mabanaft's customers' key priorities remain the same when choosing a fuel supplier; customer service, reliable continuity of supply, accuracy of invoicing and price, and importantly, Mabanaft has once again performed very well in these key areas.

Delivering great customer service

94.6% of customers rated the service they received this year as excellent or good, with those rating customer service as excellent up by 13%. Comments included 'always attentive and very transparent with any query or price enquiry' and 'a great team who are a pleasure to deal with.'

Whilst home-working can present challenges, staff at Mabanaft have worked hard to maintain standards over the past 12 months. 95% of customers say staff are friendly and helpful, that calls are answered promptly, and requests are responded to effectively and efficiently.

Reliability and continuity of supply

Reliability of supply remains of paramount importance, and this year 89.2% of those surveyed rated Mabanaft's supply reliability as excellent or good. Once again, despite demand for home heating oil remaining high as people continue to work from home, Mabanaft has been able to keep pace with demand.

Accuracy of invoicing

Mabanaft knows the importance of accurate invoicing – errors simply create additional unnecessary administration – so is delighted that 94.6% of customers rated their invoice accuracy as excellent or good, an increase of 2%. Online deal administration on Mabalive certainly helps ensure that errors are identified and resolved before invoices are raised and it is expected that this score will further improve as more customers embrace online administration.

Competitive pricing

Mabanaft's goal is to provide quality fuel at competitive prices and, according to the survey, the majority of respondents feel that Mabanaft's prices are either excellent or good. Online pricing on Mabalive continues to prove its worth, with live prices available to view online between 8am and 5.30pm, ensuring transparency.

On the mark with online

Customers praised Mabalive highly, especially for enabling users to 'see pricing at a glance and place orders quickly and easily' as well as offering 'instant access to the market and its changing position'. They also rated online reporting and deal administration highly for its ease of use and capability to save valuable time. In response to customers' feedback, small enhancements such as allowing customers to update orders with a PO number will be incorporated in the near future.

Reviewing the feedback from this year's survey Clare commented: "We have also received helpful suggestions on ways to improve certain aspects of our service and will be using this feedback to inform future developments.

"It was interesting to learn that customers want to know more about fuel delivery services (we are contacting interested parties to see how we might meet their needs) and gain insight into customer interest in new fuels. Requests for Mabanaft to have a presence in additional locations will also be taken into account.

"We'd like to thank everyone who took part for their valuable input and look forward to working with you all over the coming years."

Forward-thinking Ford Fuels' partnership with rugby club

The Bristol and South-West based distributor, Ford Fuels, is proud of its partnership with Chipping Norton Rugby Club. Ford Fuels has supported the rugby club in becoming fossil fuel free by providing them with HVO to power their ground's maintenance equipment.

Neil Rumary, Ford Fuels' marketing manager, said: "We have chosen to partner with Chipping Norton Rugby Club by providing them with a renewable fuel (fossil free) alternative to regular gas oil.

"Our aim is to promote change and sustainability and reduce emissions by using HVO as an excellent alternative. Supplying CNRFC with this product shows that emission reduction is possible with any individual, business, or organisation regardless of the size and emissions footprint.

"We are hopeful that other organisations will notice CNRFC's actions and follow their example."

If you have interesting examples of customers making the switch to low carbon fuels let Claudia know: claudia@fueloilnews.co.uk

Scottish Heat in Buildings Strategy published

The Scottish Government published its own Heat in Buildings Strategy in October, just ahead of the UK version.
The strategy, which builds on a consultation held earlier this year, sets out the actions it will take to deliver on climate change commitments, support economic opportunities, and ensure a just transition, including helping to address fuel poverty.

As in the BEIS version, the Scottish strategy aims to rapidly scale up deployment of heat pumps so that by 2030 over one million of Scotland's 2.5m homes and the equivalent of 50,000 non-domestic buildings are converted to 'zero emissions' heat. The concept of 'zero emissions at point of use' remains a controversial and misleading element of the Scottish government's strategy because it ignores the upstream emissions that may be caused by power generation.

Setting challenging targets for efficiency and emissions

Targeting energy efficiency is also a priority. However, while 45% of Scottish homes now achieve EPC C or better, off-grid rural homes lag well behind this average. Until this is addressed – if it can be – the strategy's aim that 'the vast majority of the 170,000 off-gas homes that currently use high emissions oil, LPG, and solid fuels, as well as at least 1 million homes currently using mains gas, should convert to zero emissions heating by 2030' may be difficult to achieve in practice.

To drive the transition in existing buildings, the Scottish Government intends to introduce regulations via an All-Tenure Zero Emissions Heat Standard. This will require the installation of zero, or very near zero, emissions heating systems in existing buildings in both the domestic and non-domestic sectors. This legislation will support their commitment to phasing out the need to install new or replacement fossil fuel boilers in off gas properties from 2025, and in on-gas areas from 2030. A consultation on these regulations will take place in 2022.

A place for biofuel in future heating

There is acceptance that many households will require support to make the transition and, over the current Parliament, £1.8 billion is being made available for heat and energy efficiency projects.

Pragmatically, the strategy identifies a role for biofuels, including bio heating oil, within heat, which meet its definition of a 'low emissions fuel'. An internal Bioenergy Working Group is being set up and a bioenergy strategy is promised in 2023.

While the Scottish Government has some scope to act, it is worth noting that many of their plans are subject to technical developments and/or require legislation changes at a UK level in reserved areas over which they do not have powers.

Craggs support community during fuel crisis

Craggs Energy and Craggs Fuel Cards proved again how vital our industry is to the communities served when they opened up their Padiham Fuel Station to the public, with extended opening hours, on September 27th, to support with the increased demand caused by the 'fuel supply crisis' in its local community.

The Craggs Fuel Station, which has a yard suitable for cars, vans, LCVs and HGVs, is typically only open only to UK Fuels and KeyFuels fuel card holders during working hours. However, as local stations either had a very small distribution limit or were completely empty, they were able to open up the depot to support the local community with supplies of diesel.

In the one week they opened their doors early morning and late into every evening to all members of their community to help ease the pressure; they welcomed charities, district nurses, emergency service workers, farmers, local businesses and, of course, the general public.

The business was very proud of their team and the way they handled the challenge of helping as many customers through their doors as possible – in all weathers!

Appreciation from those helped

Feedback from the people who benefitted from Craggs community-minded initiative shows just how vital this lifeline was: "I'm a district nurse and was so relieved that Craggs offered fuel to the public as it got me out of a sticky situation. The last thing we needed after Covid was another crisis affecting people who are vulnerable and need services to stay healthy. The team were excellent and very helpful, I would use this local business exclusively for fuel – what a change meeting a business with a social conscience. Keep up the good work."

"It's refreshing that a local firm has gone out of its way to help out the local community when they could easily have looked the other way. Without their very helpful staff and "diesel", I could have been unable to go to work and, as I drive HGVs for a supermarket, it could have had further ramifications. So, I would just like to wish you and your business all the best for the future."

Keeping everyone moving

Kevin Jackson, Craggs Fuel Cards sales manager said: "It was clear to us from the very start that demand for our services was going to be high. With local forecourts running low on fuel stocks and, in many cases, completely closed, we wanted to be able to help and support not just our local businesses but the local community at large, keeping everyone moving where possible.

"To give you an idea of just how much of a demand there was for our services; the average UK forecourt sells 8,000 litres of fuel stocks per day, with anywhere between 8-12 pumps on their forecourt. In the 4 days we were open, we processed just over 22,000 litres of diesel transactions to the general public alone – an average of 5,500 litres per day.

"What made this even more astounding was the fact we only have 1 fuel pump in our yard that can be used at any one time.

"All this was in addition to serving our commercial customers with their Keyfuels and UK Fuels fuel cards."

New refinery manager at Fawley

ExxonMobil has appointed Riccardo Cavallo refinery manager at its facility in Hampshire.

Riccardo brings more than 20 years' refining experience and replaces Simon Downing who has retired after more than 35 years with the company, including four as Fawley refinery manager.

Commenting on his appointment, Riccardo said: "For over 70 years, ExxonMobil, Fawley, has operated at the heart of the New Forest community, providing high value employment and making a key economic contribution and I am proud to be part of its exciting future.

"Fawley's strength is the integration of the refining and the chemical sites, but the quality and commitment of the Fawley people is what makes this place special.

"I am looking forward to continuing to work together to address the dual challenge of meeting the future energy needs of consumers and businesses while working to support the UK's net zero ambitions."

Paul Greenwood, lead country manager and chairman of Esso UK, said: ''Riccardo has extensive operational experience that befits the UK's largest refinery. As the site looks towards the future, his knowledge and experience will help us continue evolving to meet changing needs and expectations."

ABSL and Greenergy agreement to produce advanced biofuels

Advanced Biofuel Solutions Ltd ('ABSL'), developer and producer of advanced biofuels, and Greenergy, leading manufacturer and supplier of waste-based biofuels, have announced the signing of a Joint Development Agreement to develop, construct and operate up to five municipal waste-based biofuel plants in the UK.

The first plant is to be situated at Ellesmere Port near Liverpool with commercial production due to commence 2025. Subsequent plants are planned over the following years.

Together, the five plants would replace millions of litres of fossil petrol and diesel used in transport fuels, saving 800,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, with the output of the plants equivalent to powering 5,000 HGVs.

Solving the waste problem and contributing to the developement fuels obligation

Using ABSL's proven and patented RadGas technology, the first plant will convert, annually, 133,000 tonnes of municipal waste into biomethane for gas vehicles or biohydrogen for hydrogen vehicles.

The fuels will qualify as development fuels (new types of advanced biofuels made from sustainable wastes, such as municipal waste) under the UK's Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation. The RTFO legislation requires that transportation fuels must contain a growing percentage of renewable Development Fuels (dRTFC) with the target introduced at 0.1 % of total fuel by volume in 2019 and continuing to increase each year to 2.8 % by 2032.

Nathan Burkey, executive chairman of ABSL, said: "Today's announcement enables ABSL to accelerate significantly the speed and scale of the deployment of our RadGas technology. The partnership brings together cutting-edge technology with the experience of large-scale fuel production and distribution to produce low carbon fuels for transport critical to achieving net zero."

Christian Flach, Greenergy CEO added: "We are continuing to progress innovative waste-based fuel projects that divert waste from landfill or incineration and create low carbon fuels for the transport sector at scale. This agreement is a further expansion of our leading renewables business and will enable us to continue to support our customers through the energy transition."

Market context

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) legislation requires that transportation fuels must contain a growing percentage of renewable Development Fuels (dRTFC). Development Fuels are defined as new types of advanced biofuels made from sustainable wastes, such as municipal waste. This content target was introduced at 0.1 % of total fuel by volume in 2019 and continues to increase each year to 2.8 % by 2032.

The disposal of municipal waste in the UK is a significant problem, with a significant amount of waste from UK homes and businesses sent to landfill or incinerated.

When complete, the first project will transform 133,000 tonnes of waste into renewable fuels for transportation.

Uncertainty on future for renewable liquid fuels is 'not acceptable'

Industry trade associations UKIFDA and OFTEC, welcome the publication of the Biomass Policy Statement (BPS) which reaffirms the role of renewable liquid fuels in decarbonising off-grid sector but call for greater certainty in their statement below.

The recognition that not every home off the gas grid will be suitable for a heat pump and will require an alternative low carbon heating solution is important because the route to net zero must be fair if it is to succeed and secure widespread support from consumers.

Whilst the BPS highlights the potential of HVO, which is currently being put into 200 homes across the UK as part of a demonstration project by OFTEC and UKIFDA, the government must go further.

Uncertainty is not acceptable

Waiting to confirm the long-term use of renewable liquid fuels after 'determining the number of properties that take up an air source heat pump' leaves millions of households in limbo and facing uncertainty over the long terms costs they may face. This is not acceptable.

Whilst we must be bold with our decarbonisation ambitions, the foundations have to be realistic. The very nature of off-grid housing stock could push the cost of heat pumps beyond £20,000 for some households once the necessary energy efficiency upgrades have been made, not to mention the disruption to consumers. A more flexible approach is surely needed.

The sustainably sourced renewable liquid fuel HVO offers a near drop-in replacement for heating oil at a fraction of the cost of the other options and immediately reduces emissions by 88 % following a simple conversion costing no more than £500 for most households.

Our industry is ready and waiting to rollout this ideal solution if the right policy levers are put in place to extend incentives for the fuel beyond aviation and road transport to include off-grid heating.

In that regard we look forward to the full biomass strategy publication in 2022.

Craggs Energy
10 years in and still looking forward

CRAGGS ENERGY, THE FORWARD-LOOKING DISTRIBUTOR, IS CELEBRATING ITS 10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY. AS THIS EVER-GROWING AND INNOVATIVE COMPANY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS, CLAUDIA WEEKS INTERVIEWS CHAIRMAN, CHRIS BINGHAM, AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, RICHARD WALLACE, TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS DYNAMIC COMPANY, LOOKING BACK ON PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND DISCUSSING PLANS FOR A GREENER FUTURE.

How has the development of the business changed from those hopeful beginnings through to the current day?

It's remarkable we are celebrating ten years of Craggs Energy and the wider group. Looking back, it's been quite some roller coaster at times – with all new businesses the first year or so is always manic and the second year the realities of running a new company start to become very real. There is a reason that more than one in three new businesses fail after the first year and another third fail after year three. Starting a new business is hard and keeping it alive long enough to become sustainable, well that's even harder. And yet, together as a wider group, we've built more than six brand new companies since 2011.

When you originally launched in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, you began with just one fuel tanker and a Land Rover. What are you running now?

The Group now serves thousands of customers, operates a fleet of over forty vehicles and employs over a hundred members of staff. We run numerous companies from multiple locations and supply our services across the whole of the UK. We have depots and offices across the country in Devon, Scotland, Lancashire and Yorkshire and we are expanding our fuel cards business with new premises.

When you began there were three members of staff. Are the original members still part of the business and how many people are involved with Craggs now?

Today we are a team of about 100 people but, over the years, countless others have been part of this journey and we all owe them a great deal. We still have numerous original members of staff with us in senior roles but have also welcomed a wealth of new talent and experienced industry professionals.

Tell us about the companies you have acquired since 2011. Do you have any further plans for acquiring and developing more companies?

Together as a wider group we've built and acquired several companies, including Moorland Fuels Ltd, Clovemead Fuel Systems and LCM Environmental. All of our companies are stable and will continue to grow in the coming years. We are immensely proud of what we have achieved but also very grateful for the years of effort that everyone in the business has contributed.

Our shared vision has contributed massively towards the success of these acquisitions, and we are excited about our prospects, especially in regard to our nationwide "decarbonisation" services and we are looking forward to working with even more homes and businesses across the UK to continue to provide a first-class fuel delivery service.

As part of our growth strategy, we are always looking for opportunities to expand our operations to support new and existing clients. We are actively seeking acquisitions and expect more future growth for the group.

You are keen to support your customers on their journey to carbon neutrality and it's an important part of your future vision. Do you offer homes and businesses a range of carbon reduction strategies?

We currently offer GreenD+HVO Fuel – the cleanest alternative diesel on the market and have the first in-land HVO hub in the UK. We have secured numerous geographical distribution rights for GreenD+ and have invested in several operational infrastructures

Left to Right CFO Jason Sharp with CEO Chris Bingham and MD Richard Wallace on location at the company Head Office in Cragg Vale, West Yorkshire.

to ensure we have the capacity to meet the demand. We already have several businesses signed up to this renewable diesel alternative and many more that have shown an interest in making the switch to HVO.

We also work with leading Carbon Project Developers to offer a carbon offsetting option which funds several low carbon projects across the world. These projects are often based in developing countries and can take the form of rolling out new green energy technologies or directly soaking up CO2 from the atmosphere by planting trees or creating offshore kelp farms.

We are currently developing programmes to help both residential and commercial oil customers on their carbon neutral journey. These programmes include optimising existing oil infrastructure, removing redundant fuel systems, the development of bespoke renewable project plans and fully managed renewable installations.

Your Craggs Apprenticeship Academy was very successful, do you still work with apprentices?

We currently have three apprentices working for the group in finance, digital marketing and customer service roles and we are passionate about apprenticeships and have had many successes in the past with our award-winning academy. We still have three of our original apprentices with us in senior roles and they are a real asset to the company.

Emily Yates has recently moved to our operations team and won the young person of the year award at the UKIFDA conference. She is keen to learn new skills and, as part of her own personal career development, she has recently passed her HGV Class 2. Joseph Elwin is the internal sales manager for LCM Environmental and runs a team of account managers who offer services across the UK. Jack Halliwell has progressed to senior account manager for businesses nationwide.

What is the future vision for the company?

As we look towards the next decade for our group of businesses, we will continue to provide a first-class service, with a strong, customer focussed team and our collaborative approach will allow us to offer new initiatives to our commercial and residential oil customers.

As the energy landscape is continuously changing, a large focus moving forward will be to support our customers on their journey to Net Zero. This will feature as an important part of our future vision, and we are proud to be able to support homes and businesses with a range of carbon reduction strategies.

Fuel Oil News looks forward to covering future developments at Craggs. With such drive, ambition, and innovative plans we have no doubt that we will be reporting more successes after the group's next 10 years.

You can find out a little more about Richard Wallace as we feature him in our 'In Profile' on page 27 of this issue.

Coming soon – Fuel Oil News Annual Industry Directory 2021-2022
The essential reference directory for the fuel distribution industry

If your company offers a relevant product or service and you would like your details added with a FREE basic listing contact rhian@andpublishing.co.uk

For details of opportunities to make your company stand out with an enhanced listing or advert in print and online contact margaret@fueloilnews.co.uk

Distributed free with our January issue – don't miss your copy!

Irish Government publishes Climate Action Plan

Irish government lays out ambitious Climate Action Plan

November saw the publication, by the Irish government, of its Climate Action Plan (CAP), which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by the year 2030. The Taoiseach (Irish PM), Michéal Martin, described it as an 'important moment and said it was time to 'step up'.

In a programme costing €125bn (£107bn), funded by a combination of public and private sector investment, the plan lists a range of emissions reductions for multiple sectors, rather than specifying precise figures. Those will be laid out next year after the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) passes a Carbon Budget.

Mr Martin said: "We will of course debate the various elements of our plan, but on the requirement for urgent action, there is no debate. Failure to act now is not an option."

Phasing out fossil fuel heating

The plan calls for an end to the use of fossil fuels to heat homes, in favour of carbon neutral options.

Electric heat pumps and other low carbon technology will be promoted in new and existing buildings as fossil fuels are phased out for 'space and water heating in all new buildings'.

With a commitment to completing 500,000 residential retrofits and installing 600,000 heat pumps in residential buildings (of which 400,000 to be installed in existing buildings) a cornerstone of the plan involves finding ways to meet this target.

The plan promises a national retrofit plan, which will offer those in older homes and buildings a new low-cost loan scheme to retrofit their homes, as well as committing to the opening of three new training centres for retrofit upskilling.

"FAILURE TO ACT NOW IS NOT AN OPTION"

Agriculture

Ireland's agriculture industry will be asked to reduce its emissions by between 22%-30% through improvements in breeding and feeding practices, and big reductions in the use of chemical nitrogen fertilisers.

Transport

Transport emissions see cuts of between 42% and 50% called for, with all buses to be replaced by electric vehicles by 2035 and a move to walking, cycling, and public transport.

Electricity generation

The Climate Action Plan seeks a cut in electricity emissions of between 62%-81% through phasing out coal and peat-fired generation and moving to wind and solar with these energies expected to account for 80% of Ireland's energy provision by the end of the decade.

An unprecedented but vital challenge

"As I said in Glasgow, the scale of the challenge is unprecedented, but it is not too late to act," the Taoiseach emphasised, but also recognised: "…that the transition to climate neutrality no later than 2050 will require a profound change in the practices and sectors that support our lifestyle.

"Our homes, workplaces, communities must all adapt but the benefits to all of us and future generations are clear.

"In terms of our public health and our overall quality of life, the plan we are publishing today has the potential to be transformational.

"For some it will be difficult, but the simple truth is that if we delay any further, we will face greater costs and be able to seize fewer opportunities."

Industry response calls for 'affordable choices'

Responding to the publication of Ireland's CAP, the liquid fuel distribution industry believes the Government must not ignore renewable liquid fuels in home heating plans:

There are nearly 700,000 homes in Ireland that rely on oil for heating as well as a significant industry and infrastructure which supports a significant number of jobs in rural communities.

The published action plan ignores the role that a renewable liquid fuel can play in decarbonising homes in Ireland at significantly reduced cost and disruption to consumers and with the ability to reduce carbon emissions by 86%. Renewable liquid fuels can be delivered using the existing infrastructure in place and are being tested in consumer homes in the UK.

The challenge in decarbonising the home heating sector in Ireland is stark, but by no means insurmountable. Large-scale change will not come about overnight, and no one technological solution holds the key to meeting the diverse needs of households. While the use of air source heat pumps can be an effective and environmentally friendly solution for many, electrification is not a panacea. The high costs of the 'deep retrofitting' processes usually required to allow a heat pump to be installed (2020 average €56,000) means this solution is beyond the reach of many families. It is of little surprise, therefore, that the State's retrofitting targets have not been met in recent years.

UKIFDA Irish representative Nick Hayes

Other sectors have led the way

One area which the heat sector can look to as an example of how this can be done is the transportation sector, where the existence of the Biofuels Obligation Scheme has made an enormous contribution in reducing non-ETS emissions by 300,000 tonnes per year. A scheme which the Government rightly calls "a key pillar of energy policy" has helped industry and consumers alike to make massive progress without in any way jeopardising the essential role which the transport sector plays.

Given the support biofuels and other low carbon fuels enjoy in other areas, UKIFDA and its partners believe it is vital to properly examine how such fuels can play a similarly important role in cutting emissions in the heating sector. Introducing a Renewable Heat Obligation, which would be operated in a similar manner to the Biofuels Obligation Scheme, would kickstart a new era in our sector as more and more renewable fuels such as liquid biofuels are gradually introduced.

Nicholas Hayes, UKIFDA, commented: "We can do more, and reduce emissions by more, if we give households effective and affordable alternatives made up of a gradually-increasing percentage of renewable fuels. Our industry is determined to give Irish households the alternatives they need to dramatically reduce emissions from home heating, with the right support from Government.

Taking fleet innovation to the next level

LIZ BOARDMAN LOOKS AT THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN VEHICLE AND FLEET TECHNOLOGY, THE CHALLENGES FACING MANUFACTURERS AND FLEET MANAGERS AND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN VEHICLES, WHILE ALSO CONSIDERING WHY HYDROGEN COULD BE THE FUTURE FUEL FOR HGVS.

Moving away from tradition

Today's vehicles are looking very different to the more traditional ones that we have come to know and love. These days it's all about enhanced technology, complete systems and one-stop shops as Adrian Baskott, Alpeco's sales director highlights: "In years gone by a traditional tanker would've been equipped with a pump from one manufacturer, a meter from another and foot valves and basic faucets from others.

"Today, the entire delivery system – pump, meter system, tank valves, lids and overfill prevention equipment – is all supplied to key tanker builders by two or three companies, such as Alpeco.

A modern vehicle is equipped with a state-of-the-art flow meter (such as TEX), which not only records the fuel delivered, but monitors and controls all aspects of the tanker delivery system, i.e. valve control, flow and pressure, delivery modes and compartment contents. The smart register also prevents costly cross contamination, as well as recording and monitoring stock left on board."

For Dave Rowlands, Wincanton's fleet engineering director, a traditional vehicle is a "manual gearbox, fully driver-orientated vehicle" while a modern one "utilises a semi-automated geartrain and pre-autonomous systems". He explains: "These effectively optimise the vehicle driving parameters at all times, outside of the driver's direct control, while still allowing them to make finer adjustments and interventions."

Taking Control

The industry has seen big developments in vehicle and fleet management over the last few years, including some exciting new features and systems, which have accelerated the move from the traditional to the modern.

At Alpeco, it's all about control: "The development of pumps, valves and general tanker hardware is not as prevalent today as it was, say, 10 years ago, when operators were constantly striving for equipment which was lighter and gave the fastest delivery flow rates," comments Adrian. "These days, those features are a given and the emphasis is all about control, accuracy, product traceability, anti-contamination and delivery information including time, date, location and the compartment that the product was taken from etc. This requires the tanker to be equipped with a very sophisticated electronic meter register, often interfaced with an in-cab computer or data transfer and tracking device such as an iMeter."

Dave Rowlands agrees: "The 'connected truck' is the most innovative recent usable development, with the increasing ability to use truck data in real-time, whether it be driver behaviour feedback or service issues. This coupled with the progressive use of pre-autonomous driving technologies is making the truck increasingly more efficient, safer, and also enhances driver well-being.

The increasing use of these technologies – encompassing automated driving, predictive cruise and Automated Emergency Braking Systems – is probably the biggest development in vehicle and fleet management over the last two years and it makes a major impact upon safety and fuel consumption."

At Mechtronic, it's about responding to the market and offering complete solutions, as commercial director, Brad Wilkie, explains: "We've seen a shift in customers looking for a complete solution. OptiMate, our electronic metering system, was developed five years ago and has proved successful. Over the past couple of years, we have seen customers (new and existing) move to OptiMate as they like the additional safety measures it offers, and also that it provides full automation and prevents fuel contamination. Drivers no longer need to calculate a line change or worry about leaving a delivery part way through, OptiMate can be automatically controlled at the point of delivery without needing to return to the vehicle."

In the future Brad expects to see: "More development in terms of the electronic register, more automation of the loading and discharge system, monitoring of stock and more driver aids for the prevention of delivery to an incorrect tank and cross contaminations."

At Alpeco, the introduction of its new TEX Flow computer (electronic register) has also been key as Adrian highlights: "Housed in our stainless-steel CHECKMATE enclosure, the TEX provides a single operating system for the entire tanker discharge system. Its intuitive operating system is simple to operate and has been designed to minimise the chances of making costly errors during the set up and delivery process."

Technology on demand

Much of the recent innovation has been driven by customer demand.

"We are constantly asked by operators if we can make changes to our register software in order to give them unique features in terms of data transfer or system controls," says Adrian. "An example was the introduction of ACTICLEAR, which was added to our systems to ensure that the manifold was left empty at the end of a delivery, thus minimising cross contamination."

From the customer point of view, Dave believes that safety must come first: "Safety is the highest priority, with innovation always being sought in this area. Anything new must not compromise safety in use."

He also believes that efficiency/operating cost improvement and the enhancement of customer service and value are big considerations moving forward.

Leading the charge

One of the biggest areas of innovation and

change for the road transport sector is the use of future fuels and the drive towards net zero.

British bus manufacturer, Wrightbus, is one of the companies leading the charge when it comes to innovation, using hydrogen to power its vehicles. Last year it prevented one million kilograms of harmful CO2 emissions from entering the atmosphere. This huge reduction in emissions is equivalent to taking more than 230 cars off the roads for a whole year.

Last year Wrightbus launched its first zero-emissions bus – the Streetdeck Hydroliner, which emits only water from its tailpipe – and now operates fleets in London, Belfast and Dublin, with an additional 20 buses for Birmingham.

Wrightbus also recently unveiled its Streetdeck Electroline, the first double-decker EV bus and the fastest charging double deck EV on the market.

The company's executive chairman, Jo Bamford, is delighted: "When we set out on this journey our aim was to offer multiple zero-emission solutions, but to see this number on paper – one million kgs of CO2 saved – really puts our efforts into context. At Wrightbus we have been relentless in our commitment to zero emissions transport, but even though these figures are impressive, we cannot let up."

Similarly, BP and Daimler Truck AG recently announced plans to work together to help accelerate the introduction of a hydrogen network, supporting the roll-out of a key technology for the decarbonisation of UK freight transport. They intend to pilot both the development of a hydrogen infrastructure and the introduction of hydrogen-powered fuel-cell trucks in the UK – a big step forward for the freight industry.

Under their memorandum of understanding, BP will assess the feasibility of designing, constructing, operating and supplying a network of up to 25 hydrogen refuelling stations across the UK by 2030. These stations would be supplied by BP with 'green' hydrogen – generated from water using renewable power. In support of this, Daimler Truck expects to deliver hydrogen-powered fuel-cell trucks to its UK customers from 2025.

Dave Rowlands believes: "The move to EV and H2FCV will revolutionise the way the transport industry works and needs to be planned for now, especially in terms of permissions to load schemes etc where only a diesel vehicle is allowed into a terminal.

"HGVs will dramatically change with EV rigids and H2FCV artics, hence we will need to revise our engineering expectations and operational processes to suit. This will be one of the most dramatic changes to the road haulage industry for decades and we will need to prepare the ground now, given that the current safety and policies in place across the industry will not be applicable to the new vehicle designs and safety needs."

Overcoming sustainability challenges

The transition to net zero and the increased use of low-carbon fuels has been a major focus for Ingersoll Rand Transport Solutions (IRTS), a company launched earlier this year following the merger of Ingersoll Rand and Gardner Denver.

"IRTS has been formed to help the business focus on innovation specifically within the alternative fuel transportation segment," explains business line director EMEIA and Asia, Paul Pearson. "The entire industry is undergoing a period of unprecedented change as we migrate from fossil fuels to alternative energy sources. This brings fresh new challenges for our customers who need a partner to guide them through this new landscape.

"Our long-term strategy is to further this legacy and continue to design and develop innovative bulk and liquid transfer solutions, electrified compressor packages, fuel systems and dry break couplers, which help our customers overcome their sustainability, new mobility, and market challenges."

Moving with the times

Moving from hydrogen to another low-carbon fuel, Mechtronic is seeing an increase in customers delivering HVO, which is good news, but not without its issues: "This is great to see due to the reduced environmental impact, however, drivers now need to be aware of additional fuel line change procedures and how this can cause issues if they aren't followed correctly," says Brad. "Our electronic metering system, OptiMate, can be programmed to automatically perform a line change when delivering a new product, e.g. HVO, removing the need for the driver to manually calculate a line change."

He adds: "OptiMate is an electronic metering system that is future-proof and built to last. As our customers move towards delivering greener fuels like HVO, we can retrofit OptiMate and programme the metering head to recognise HVO and the necessary automatic line change volumes required to perform this line change efficiently and safely."

Trying Times

While there is much to celebrate in the freight industry, manufacturers and fleet managers also face major challenges that need addressing.

Dave Rowlands says: "The current most concerning issue is the long lead-time on vehicle build and availability of service components due to semi-conductor issues and post-covid delays affecting supply chains. This is unprecedented and is having a major impact with new build lead-times out beyond 12 months, and extended VOR due to parts supply delays."

Adrian Baskott agrees, citing: "The rising prices of raw materials and the current high demand, which has led to lead times for a new tanker being anything up to 18 months," as the industry's biggest challenges.

Challenges aside, there is much to get excited about when it comes to fleet vehicle innovation. As we head towards net zero, with the inevitable increase in the use of low-carbon fuels, there are sure to be big changes on the horizon for the whole road transport sector and, at Fuel Oil News, we will be following these with great interest.

The Five Horseshoes public house in Barholm achieves carbon neutral heating

A participant in the current OFTEC and UKIFDA HVO field trials, The Five Horseshoes, a South Lincolnshire pub, has become the first rural pub in the country to achieve net zero for its heating.

Converting to HVO for its heating fuel, as part of the trial, had already seen the 300-year-old pub's carbon emissions reduced by nearly 90%, and the Five Horseshoes has now achieved its net zero status by planting trees to offset the remaining carbon.

Alan Black, project consultant, explained: "The actual number of trees required to offset remaining emissions for the next 25 years at this site using the Crown HVO fuel was 13 as opposed to 207 with their old boiler on kerosene."

Alan confirmed that 15 trees were purchased by EOGB which will be planted at local primary schools as part of the Carbon Footprint emission offsetting scheme: (www.carbonfootprint.com).

At a recent event the landlord and landlady, Emma and Matt Freeman, were presented with a framed tree-planting certificate by Martin Cooke, managing director of EOGB Energy Products. To further improve the energy efficiency of the pub, EOGB replaced the old 1970s oil fired boiler with a fully modulating OpenTherm Sapphire boiler and installed smarter controls, greatly reducing fuel use.

Crown Oil also provided a new bunded steel oil storage tank to replace the life-expired old one. Simon Ellis of OTS, who fitted the tank, commented that: "There was nothing unusual about the installation compared to replacing the tank with a like-for-like oil one. For us, it was very straightforward."

Martin Cooke, of EOGB, talked to Fuel Oil News about what was involved in assisting the pub to achieve carbon neutral status.

Martin Cooke (centre) presents a tree-planting certificate to Emma and Matt Freeman.

L to R: Malcolm Farrow, Paul Rose (OFTEC), Martin Cooke (EOGB Energy Products), Matt and Emma Freeman and son, Simon Ellis (the Oil Tank Company), Martin Trollope Bellew (Barholm Estate), Alan Black (project consultant).

Demonstrating the benefits of bio liquids in home heating

The 300-year-old public house, in the village of Barholm in Lincolnshire, is involved in the forefront of innovation of the liquid fuel industry by converting its old inefficient oil boiler and controls to a Sapphire fully modulating liquid fuel boiler, manufactured by UK based EOGB Energy Products Ltd, running on HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable oil).

"The Five Horseshoes is the subject of an OFTEC industry-led 3-year demonstration site, to prove that rural properties such as these are far better being treated with bio liquids than with electrification for heat and hot water due to the almost impossible task of insulating walls, floors etc.," Martin explained.

Additional fuel-saving benefits

"The Sapphire Low NOx fully Modulating condensing boiler is the 1st boiler on the market to have OpenTherm certification which indicates that the boiler passes the strict protocol to enable it to be fully operational with OpenTherm smart control systems and therefore will deliver considerable fuel saving to end users," Martin continued.

"For this project a Genius Hub multi zonal controls system was also chosen to enable the Landlords of the establishment to control each area of the pub for maximum comfort including occupancy sensors in the living areas that build an occupancy profile and optimises the heat up times.

"Each radiator is fitted with motorised thermostatic radiator valves that not only measure air temperature they also have a unique secondary flow temp stat inbuild to calculate the heat load requirements more accurately.

"The Genius Hub is a wireless device that is located by the boiler and controls the system via Wi-Fi and calculates the exact heat load required. The information is sent to the boiler to modulate the heat load accordingly to eliminate overshoot of temperature or any possible short cycling of the heating system. This also has huge benefits and allows the boiler to condense constantly with lower return temperatures.

"Along with internet-based weather compensation, given time, the system self learns the building characteristics with a look to increase efficiency as much as possible."

A 90% reduction in emissions

Martin stated: "By using our Sapphire boiler with HVO, rather than kerosene for the fuel, the public house will reduce its CO2e emissions by 90%. The kerosene emissions would be 8.26 tonnes of CO2e per annum but, with HVO being used, this reduced massively down to just 0.72 tonnes of CO2e per annum"

The final step to carbon neutrality

Taking it a step further, EOGB then donated 15 broad leaf English trees as a carbon offset for the remaining emissions as Martin explained: "The 15 trees will offset the remaining emissions for a 25 year period, as per the Crown Oil calculated SAP CO2e emissions, so the Five Horseshoes can be satisfied they are really doing their part in being as environmentally carbon neutral for heating and hot water as possible, yet still provide the same level of warmth and comfort."

Delighted landlady, Emma Freeman, said: "For us, the conversion ticks two boxes. From an energy point of view the place will be much warmer thanks to a better heating system and improved controls, and environmentally, we know we are doing our bit to make a difference."

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Factors affecting the removal of fossil-based fuels from the UK home heating sector

WITH THE CLEARER PICTURE OF THE INTENDED FUTURE ENERGY PROVISION FOR HOME HEATING AFFORDED BY THE PUBLICATION OF THE HEAT AND BUILDINGS STRATEGY, WE HEAR FROM **COLIN SUTHERLAND**, A CHARTERED ENGINEER WITH A LONG CAREER IN THE ENERGY SECTOR, AS HE HIGHLIGHTS SOME FACTORS THAT NEED DEEPER CONSIDERATION AS WE LOOK TO PHASE OUT THE USE OF FOSSIL FUELS.

The general picture

It is overwhelmingly important that fossil fuels are phased out of use at the earliest opportunity.

This is important in every sector but none more so than that of fuel for home heating. It is one of the more difficult sectors to work with because it directly affects individual members of the public and will involve them accepting significant changes to the ways in which their homes are heated.

It is very important, therefore, that the measures proposed to deal with this sector are well thought out and costed and will show the public that every attempt has been made to reduce to a minimum any disruption to their homes and way of life whilst still attaining the elimination of fossil fuel use.

Given the clear preferences of the strategy document this article serves to draw attention to some factors which have had little discussion but will need to be borne in mind by those involved in making policy decisions for this aspect of decarbonisation.

Home heating decarbonisation policy

The plans being made to decarbonise home heating in the UK mainly revolve around the installation of electric heat pumps to replace gas and liquid fuelled boilers.

The importance of the higher aim of reducing dependence on fossil derived fuels can result in the minimisation of the complication of heat pump installation in a standard UK type low pressure hot water heating system. However, there are a number of matters which have to be allowed for when changing the flow temperature of the water in such a system from the 60 to 70C produced by most standard boilers to the 40C produced by a heat pump.

This article covers most of these and, although they will not all apply in each individual installation, they all need to be considered in any overall assessment of the cost, and practicability, of conversion to heat pump use on a national or regional scale. They are also major factors in the public acceptability of the conversion process, and the willingness of the public to accept disruptive works in their homes also needs to be considered. People who have made their home comfortable and presentable are naturally suspicious of works that will be disruptive to their enjoyment of their home and not give them any service which they do not already enjoy.

INSTALLATION FACTORS AFFECTING HEAT PUMPS

Space heating

Although the cost of installing a heat pump is presently in the £10k range, an assumption of the recently published Strategy is that this will fall to around £5k with mass production. Problematically, this does not fully incorporate the cost of conversion of the connected heating system, which will need to be met, in addition to the cost of the pump installation and enhanced insulation. This is a cost that will not reduce as the market gets underway.

Assuming that there are 24 million homes in England with 13 million of them pre-1965 (the point at which early forms of insulation started to be used) then considerable work is going to be required to reduce the heating loads of older buildings to the point where low temperature heat, as from a heat pump, would maintain a comfortable temperature in cold weather. An important consideration given that global warming forecasts including some very cold future winters in the UK.

Estimates from BEIS and the English Housing Survey indicate that to prepare a gas or liquid fuel heated home for heat pump operation and then install the heat pump would cost over £25k.

Further ancillary work is also likely to be required, in addition, to ensure satisfactory operation such as replacing heat emitters with larger output ones suitable for the lower water temperature. This, in turn, requires installation of larger bore circulation pipework which usually means lifting floors.

Even if the pipework is of adequate size much of it has traditionally been run in underfloor voids with very inadequate or no insulation. An uninsulated pipe carrying water at 40C through a drafty, underfloor area is not going to deliver much heat to the radiators in the rooms above so these pipes would have to be accessed to be insulated which would, again, involve floor lifting. If the pipes are buried in the concrete floor screed, as many are, the problems are different but very expensive to deal with.

A move over to underfloor heating would be very disruptive in the average radiator-heated building involving significant floor lifting and provision of space for the headers.

This is the likely disruption of a space heating change-over that needs careful consideration in terms of the potential impact on the consumer decision to switch.

The domestic hot water heating system

Even if the house has an existing domestic hot water storage cylinder, this may have to be replaced with something larger.

If, as in many cases in the UK, the hot water is supplied instantaneously through a combination boiler, a location for a new hot water storage cylinder must be found. This would need to be in a position where the outlets, particularly those in the kitchen, could be served by short lengths of draw off pipe which makes positioning a potential problem. There is also the cost (both financial and in terms of loss of space) of creating a cupboard to conceal the cylinder.

Rapid heat up, instantaneous, electric

water heating systems suitable to provide a service to a whole house are becoming available but they are expensive to operate and add significantly to the electrical loading. Older homes are unlikely to have sufficient power capacity for them.

Microbore pipework

Another consideration relates to the hundreds of thousands of microbore pipework heating systems installed, where developers have used plastic microbore pipes of 6, 8 and 10 mm diameter to circulate water to the radiators. These pipes are normally buried in concrete floor screeds or in walls, with continuous lengths going to the individual radiator valves from a header. To carry the same amount of heat at a lower temperature they would have to be replaced with larger diameter pipes.

Given that most of these installations are in modern housing – the properties that have been viewed as an 'easy win' for conversion – it means that a significant proportion of the houses considered as suitable for a straightforward conversion would, in fact, be almost impossible to convert without what could amount to a complete rebuild.

THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL AND PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE FACTORS

Noise nuisance

When several heat pumps are installed in close proximity, such as on a housing estate or in a street of terraced houses, the overall noise produced by their fans could become more of a problem. This should be fully reviewed by acoustic engineers before assuming that large urban areas can be converted to heat pump operation.

Experience of fan noise from boilers and air conditioning units indicates that this can cause nuisance and little consideration is being given to it at the moment. The selection of outside areas for the location of heat pumps should not assume that they are quiet in operation.

Local heating networks

A consideration for overcoming the noise issue has been to connect large amounts of older housing to a local heating network.
This involves finding a suitable site for the heat generation and a major undertaking to lay the common connecting pipework.
With the community nature of this solution there either has to be compulsion or an acceptance that some house owners would not join which could render any such scheme uneconomic.

THERE ARE, OF COURSE, PROBLEMS WITH ALL OF THE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE WAYS OF DECARBONISING THE HOME HEATING SECTOR

The impact of insulation

Installing insulation on the inside of walls can be an effective way to insulate an older solid-walled building but normally involves losing a 100mm deep length of floor from a room. For a room with two outside walls this can be a major problem as the residents have to accept not just the resultant space loss but also the costly refitting of the carpets or flooring.

There will be additional costs for redecoration and refitting electrical small power and lighting switchgear. The alternative approach of insulating the outside of the walls is very expensive and, unless all the homes in an area are dealt with together, it can negatively impact the appearance of an area which is not popular given the reduction of property values.

Electricity supply

The national electricity supply is going to have to be considerably upgraded to meet the increased heating load as well as the move over to electric vehicles. This will not be an easy task. Fitting in additional cabling and sub-stations in urban and city areas where the space under the streets is already crowded with services is an engineer's nightmare. The cost of undertaking this work and the energy and materials that it will absorb must mean that the current estimates that electricity will be fossil free by 2035 have to be rather optimistic.

As the UK has seen recently, solar and wind power need a reliable back up for the times when they cannot produce electricity. The only non-fossil alternative to produce power at the scale required is nuclear. When one then considers the length of time required to carry out a public consultation, plan, design and build a nuclear power station it is difficult to believe that electricity will be fossil free by 2035. By the time that aim has been reached, however, the upgrading work will have done a huge amount of damage to the environment.

Future policy

There are, of course, problems with all of the currently available ways of decarbonising the home heating sector and we are going to need to overcome these problems and to use all of the tools available to us in an intelligent manner, suiting the method to the task.

The hydrogen and non-fossil liquid fuel routes do not require internal changes to the heating system or home insulation. The costs of adapting the presently used heating boilers to alternative fuels are very minimal. The better insulation of the house has to be undertaken but this can be left to the owners to carry out in their own time using the government grant schemes available. Methods such as requiring homes to have a satisfactory level of heat retention and generation efficiency when they are sold would be far more effective and acceptable to the public.

A move to the use of hydrogen in the gas network would require a great deal of work and investment but does not impact in the same way on the consumer given that it is not carried out inside people's homes.

Non fossil liquid fuel is going to be required in the long term for the aviation industry and as well as growing current use, world-wide production capacity is increasing at speed. In the UK and Ireland this is the same fuel as is used in domestic heating boilers. Such non-fossil liquid fuel conversions would bring an immediate significant level of instant carbon emission reduction with no cost to the national exchequer and minimal cost to the homeowner.

The message

The implications highlighted in the above, suggest, perhaps, that the present policy focus on electric heat pumps and the belief they will provide a 'magic bullet' for decarbonisation of the home heating sector is an assumption too far and that we should, instead, have a much broader consideration of all of the low carbon fuels and technologies available to us on an equal basis.

COLIN SUTHERLAND, a chartered engineer, has had a long career in the energy sector with a particular focus on the technical aspects of industrial and domestic oil and solid fuel utilisation, and now runs The Energy Consultancy.

PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

FESTIVE SPECIAL

A SPECIAL FESTIVE EDITION MONTHLY REPORT OFFERS A GLIMPSE INTO THE DIARY OF MRS CLAUS, DECEMBER 2021

1st December; Busy season starts badly. Resignation letter from Dasher. Offered £10,000 "Golden Handshake" from rival reindeer delivery company. No questions asked on experience apparently. Won't give HR reference if asked. Was happy when Blitzen followed his long-held dream of becoming DJ, but not giving references for reindeer who want to do sleigh-work elsewhere.

2nd December; Spent day getting to grips with staffing problems. With Dasher and Blitzen gone, plus the ongoing investigations into Cupid's inappropriate behaviour with other reindeer (#RETOO), we could be 3 down this Christmas.

4th December; Voicemail from Greta Thunberg. Accuses North Pole Inc. of the usual "blah, blah, blah" on climate change. Remind Mr Claus that this all stems from the present mix-up back in 2011. Greta got Prince Abdullah Junior's Mini-Ducati (with stabilisers), whilst the young Prince got the hemp building kit. Massive consequences on both sides.

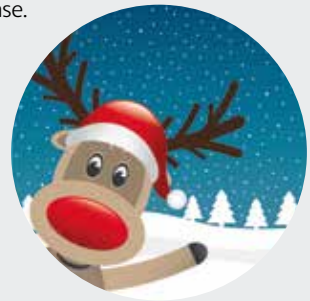
5th December; Call from Cousin Krampus down South. Even grumpier than usual. Seriously worried about outcome from COP26 and the agreed "phase-down" of coal. Apparently, his online delivery service (Kramazon Inc.) has massive carbon footprint, because of all the coal / cinders he delivers to all the naughty girls and boys. Give me a break. Must be so tough delivering one product only, without any meaningful competition and with zero-rated Antarctica Corporation Tax. Slammed phone down. Angry.

7th December; Good news from British Government. Green light given for foreign sleigh drivers (including reindeer) to deliver throughout December. Will allow us to fill the 2-3 vacant reindeer positions. Will probably go Polish. Good workers – solid reputation. Plus, most of them already members of the RHA (Reindeer Haulage Association). Slightly worried how the likes of Jaroslaw and Wojciech will scan in the "Night Before Christmas" poem though.

9th December; Really up against it. Product shortages beginning to bite and Present Prackers showing unusual discipline and refusing to increase output. Elves now rationed to only 3 slivers of sellotape per toy. Easy enough on boxed goods, but very tricky on bikes and balls.

10th December; Update from shipping agents. Still no progress on Ever Given / Suez Canal lost containers. 600,000 virtual reality headsets and 1.5m fidget spinners still unaccounted for – somewhere in the Indian Ocean. Compounding present shortage situation. Might have to pass this one to Krampus.

11th December; More bad news. Court proceedings taken up against North Pole Inc. by Eco-Vego-Yogo campaigners. Case will go ahead in the new year. Accusation is that young children were forced to unknowingly increase their carbon footprint over the last 1,000 years via Christmas present delivery. New child opt-in clause will be required going forward. 2bn children on earth, so big admin job and GDPR nightmare. Told Santa. Full-on "gammon" response.



12th December; Increasingly worried about Rudolph's attitude. Very distracted by social media profile. Surely there are only so many red nose selfies that a reindeer can take? Other reindeers are also beginning to laugh at him, call him names and not let him join in any reindeer games. Worrying and bad for sleigh morale.

13th December; Running low on heating oil for the boiler. Rang around a few local suppliers. WTF (What the Fuel)?! Unbelievable prices. Migraine.

16th December; Struggling tbh. Turned out to be a 2-day migraine. Santa had to see in fuel delivery. Asked driver (Gaz Oil) if there were any green alternatives for the boiler. Company CEO (Keir O'Sean) rang back and suggested HVO (Hydrocombobulated Vegemite Oil). Very popular in Australia, but even more expensive apparently.

17th Dec; Present shortage now alleviated. Intervention from OPEC (Organisation for Present Exporting Countries).

18th December; Email from HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue for Christmas). Confirms that duty on red wrapping paper will be quintupling in the new year. Big impact on members of UKIFDA (United Kingdom & Ireland Festive Decoration Association). Chief Elf Ken Groanin absolutely raging. Says DECC (Department of Eating Christmas Cake) won't be able to enforce this one without affecting the CSO (Christmas Stocking Obligation).

19th December; Letter reading department has returned correspondence from a de Pfeffel Johnson (aged 57½) at 10 Downing Street in London. Lots of crossings out and smudges. Letter checkers have also written in red marker at top "not clear what this child wants". Yours truly reads through indecipherable writing 4 or 5 times. Lots of long-words, Latin quotes and a pencil sketch of Wonder Woman. But, sure enough, no actual requests for presents. Very absent minded and not a problem we often deal with. Will send letter back.

20th December; Another call from Krampus. Wants to diversify away from cinders and has offered to take over delivery of cheap plastic toys that break by 11am on Christmas morning. Not a bad suggestion actually. Has always been a PR nightmare for us and is much more aligned with Krampus' values.

21st December; Flyer through from Club Dazzle in Weston-super-Mare. Blitzen now resident DJ for the Christmas Party season – spinning the desks as "DJ Flash". Good luck to him. Always liked him. Professional.

23rd December; Things beginning to come together now. Complete and intense focus from Santa. Totally different to how the media present him.

25th December; Job done. Another triumph. Honestly don't know how we do it year after year. Santa watching the Bond film. I'm going to treat myself to a big bottle of Buckfast. Happy Christmas one and all!

For more pricing information, see page 26

Portland
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The Heat and Buildings Strategy

FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF THIS LONG-AWAITED AND KEY STRATEGY WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AMBITIONS OF THE POLICY DOCUMENT AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF DOMESTIC HEATING.

At last:

After what seemed like an interminable delay, the Government unveiled its Heat & Buildings Strategy on 19th October in a report running to just over 200 pages. This a key component part of its over-arching Net Zero Strategy for decarbonising the economy – an even more compendious document of 368 pages – unveiled in readiness for COP26.

Its role in the success of the wider transition is to stem the GHG emissions contribution from the way in which we heat the places where we live and work, which contributes almost 25% of total UK emissions and, of which, around 75% is attributable to domestic residences.

Funding of £3.9 bln has been earmarked for the period 2022-25 to support the strategy, which aims to ensure that running more energy-efficient heating technology is no more expensive, and potentially cheaper, than current carbon-intensive gas boilers. More immediately, the government has unveiled a £450m boiler upgrade scheme, which will allow homeowners to apply for £5000 grants to fund the installation of low carbon heating systems, such as heat pumps. This, it is assessed, will enable the installation of 90,000 heat pumps over three years.

We will now look at the ten point plan ambition to develop the markets and consumer choices required to achieve net zero heating and some of the technologies identified to play a part in facilitating this.

Ten point plan ambition:

This will be delivered through the following actions:

- **To signal the intention to phase out the installation of new natural gas boilers from 2035**. Given the lifetime of a natural gas boiler is around 15 years, in order to reach net zero in a cost-effective, consumer-friendly way, the aim is to phase out the installation of new, natural gas boilers beyond 2035, once costs of low-carbon alternatives have reduced.
- **To set a clear ambition for industry to reduce the costs of installing a heat pump by at least 25-50% by 2025 and to ensure heat pumps are no more expensive to buy and run than gas boilers by 2030.**
- **To improve heat pump appeal by continuing to invest in research and innovation.** Together with industry, there is a need to continue to innovate to reduce the barriers to installation, making heat pumps tastefully designed, smaller, and easier to install and use.
- **To ensure affordability by providing financial support to meet capital costs.** The ambition is to ensure that the costs of decarbonising heat and buildings fall fairly across society. Consumers who choose to switch to a heat pump will be supported in making that transition.
- **To rebalance energy prices to ensure that heat pumps are no more expensive to buy and run than gas boilers.** Clean, cheap electricity is an everyday essential. Overreliance on gas has pushed up prices; the plan to expand domestic renewables will result in reduced electricity wholesale prices.

- **To significantly grow the supply chain for heat pumps to 2028.** Current annual installations will increase from around 35,000 heat pumps a year to a minimum market capacity of 600,000 per year by 2028. This will be supported by the introduction of a market-based mechanism to establish the incentives for industry to take the lead in transforming the consumer market in low-carbon heating.
- **To ensure that all new buildings in England are ready for net zero from 2025.** The Future Homes Standard will be introduced, with consultation on the Future Buildings Standard for new-builds in England. Government's ambition is to build 300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s. It is anticipated that at least a third of the 2028 heat pump target will be installed in new-build domestic properties annually.
- **To start by phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating systems in properties not connected to the gas grid.** Alongside this strategy, there is consultation on ending the installation of high-carbon fossil fuels to heat homes that are not connected to the gas grid in England from 2026 and non-domestic buildings not connected to the gas grid from 2024. Households will not be forced to remove their existing boilers, instead an approach will be aligned to markets and consumer behaviour to minimise costs and disruption.
- **To grow UK-manufactured technology**

and capabilities. The Govt. wants manufacturers to scale-up UK production to help meet UK demand, with the aim of achieving a 30-fold increase in heat pumps manufactured and sold within the UK by the end of the decade.

- **To ensure that the electricity system can accommodate increased electricity demand and heat pumps can be quickly and affordably connected to the network.** The Govt. will work with Ofgem, distribution network operators, and other local actors, on the approach to planning the network in Great Britain and delivering smart, secure, cost-effective solutions.

Hydrogen:

As for the role for hydrogen the Govt. will work with interested parties to evaluate its potential as an option for heating homes and workplaces, aiming to complete the assessment by 2026.

Other hydrogen-related initiatives to be pursued will be:

- To establish large-scale trials of hydrogen for heating, supporting industry to conduct first-of-a-kind 100% hydrogen heating trials, including a neighbourhood trial by 2023 and a village-scale trial by 2025.
- To enable blending of hydrogen in the gas grid, engaging with industry and regulators to develop the safety case, technical and cost-effectiveness assessments of blending up to 20% hydrogen (by volume) into the existing gas network.
- To consult on the case for enabling, or requiring, new natural gas boilers to be easily convertible to use hydrogen ('hydrogen-ready') by 2026, in line with the timelines to take broader strategic decisions about the role of hydrogen in heating buildings.
- To develop the evidence base necessary to take strategic decisions on the role of hydrogen for heating buildings in 2026.

Technologies:

The strategy acknowledges that to transform the national heating system, there will be a need for a variety of energy efficient, low-carbon technologies to replace many of the existing sources of heat.

It envisages that the following will potentially play a pivotal role in decarbonising heat:

- **heat pumps** – including hybrid heat pumps, combining an electric heat pump with a combustion boiler (using low carbon fuel)
- **heat networks** – using hot water in pipes to deliver heating (and, in some cases, cold water for cooling) to consumers from a centralised heat source. As this pipe infrastructure can be used to deliver heating from a range of different heat sources, heat networks can be decarbonised by switching to a low carbon source of heat
- **hydrogen**

However, there is also recognition that certain other technologies may be a more viable alternative in some cases, such as –

- **bioenergy** – which could play a valuable role in reducing emissions in difficult-to-treat properties not connected to the gas grid and where a range of bioenergy sources could be used, such as biogas / biomethane, bioliquids and solid biomass (e,g. wood pellets)
- **geothermal heat**
- **storage heaters**

The strategy cannot be faulted for lack of ambition, but implementation will present daunting challenges, in particular as a result of the 'front and centre' role envisaged for heat pumps. Transitioning from a current annual installation rate of around 35,000 per year to 600,000 by 2028 could be classified as an 'heroic' target!

Assessments suggest that achieving this will require circa 60,000 trained installation technicians to be in place vs. around 1,200 now. Further, in a report published back in April, the Energy & Utilities Alliance, in partnership with gas distribution companies, assessed that between 8 and 13 million homes with gas boilers, out of the 22.7 million total, either lack sufficient outside space for a pump or are inadequately insulated.

Then, of course, there is the continuing conundrum around the desired policy option(s) to be pursued / adopted for off-grid properties and the possible role for a low carbon liquid fuel as a drop-in replacement for heating oil.

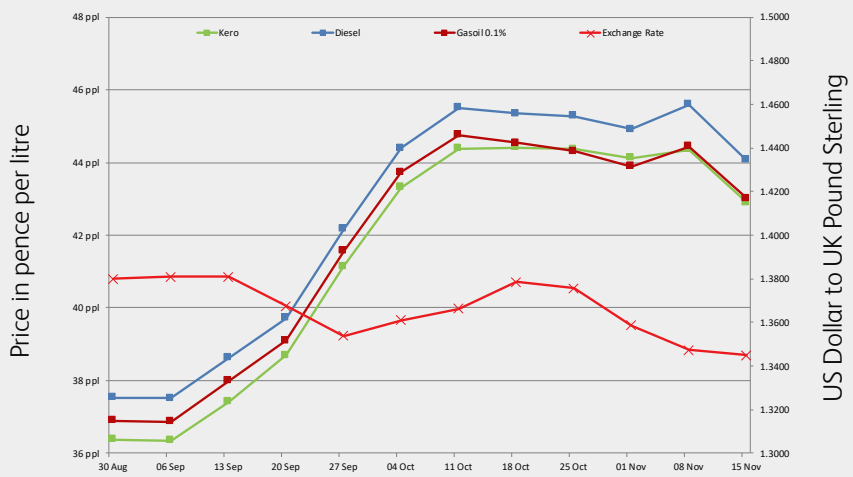
We finally have the strategy but there is a lot of work still to be done and signifcant funding support will be required to deliver it!

ROD PROWSE, worked for 30 years across the full spectrum of the downstream oil sector, in both the UK and USA, which has included leadership positions in both retail and wholesale fuels businesses. Rod draws on his extensive knowledge of this global industry to bring us 'Industry Insights'.

Wholesale Price Movements: 19th October 2021 – 18th November 2021

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	44.08	45.08	44.08
Average daily change	0.57	0.62	0.59
Current duty	0.00	57.95	11.14
Total	44.08	103.03	55.22

All prices in pence per litre



Portland

Kerosene

Highest price	Biggest up day
45.20 ppl	+0.89 ppl
Mon 25 Oct 21	Tue 16 Nov 21
Lowest price	**Biggest down day**
42.52 ppl	-1.18 ppl
Thu 18 Nov 21	Wed 03 Nov 21

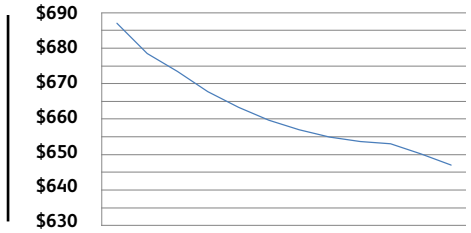
Diesel

Highest price	Biggest up day
46.21 ppl	+0.94 ppl
Wed 10 Nov 21	Tue 16 Nov 21
Lowest price	**Biggest down day**
43.67 ppl	-1.31 ppl
Thu 18 Nov 21	Wed 03 Nov 21

Gasoil 0.1%

Highest price	Biggest up day
45.23 ppl	+0.94 ppl
Mon 25 Oct 21	Tue 16 Nov 21
Lowest price	**Biggest down day**
42.60 ppl	-1.27 ppl
Thu 18 Nov 21	Wed 03 Nov 21

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	46.63	58.84	106.81	53.16	62.87	110.99
North East	45.58	57.47	105.89	54.64	61.22	108.96
North West	47.15	60.07	108.28	53.43	63.58	111.03
Midlands	45.65	58.00	106.35	51.77	61.69	109.69
South East	45.75	57.96	106.33	58.39	64.40	109.22
South West	46.10	57.80	106.17	54.26	61.48	108.82
Northern Ireland	46.21	59.17	n/a	52.24	63.70	n/a
Republic of Ireland	59.97	64.60	107.75	65.55	68.42	111.16
Portland	43.96	55.52	103.04			

The price totem figures are indicative figures compiled from the Portland base rate using calculated regional variances.
Buying prices are ex-rack. Selling prices are for 1000 litres of kero, 2500 litres of gas oil and 5000 litres of ULSD (Derv in ROI). Prices in ROI are in €.

Wholesale prices are supplied by Portland Analytics Ltd, dedicated providers of fuel price information from refinery to pump.
For more information and access to prices, visit www.portlandpricing.co.uk

WELCOME TO DECEMBER'S EDITION OF OUR SPECIAL MONTHLY FEATURE WHICH GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO 'MEET' AN INDUSTRY FIGURE AND, HOPEFULLY, TO DISCOVER ANOTHER SIDE TO THEM BEYOND THE WELL-KNOWN FACTS.

WE CHAT WITH **RICHARD WALLACE**, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT CRAGGS ENERGY, WHO OFFERS SOME GREAT LIFE INSIGHTS AS WELL AS SHARING HIS PASSIONS AND HOBBIES THAT MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO MANY.

Richard Wallace

A proud Richard in his Royal Marines days

"REVENUE IS FOR VANITY. MARGIN IS FOR SANITY."

RICHARD WALLACE

Give your career history in 25 words or fewer.
Warehouse operative, Royal Marines Commando junior rank, Royal Marines Commando senior officer and group managing director of Craggs Energy Group.

Describe yourself in 3 words
Professional. Trusting. Detailed.

What were your childhood / early ambitions?
Originally, I wanted to become a vet, but the call of the Royal Marines was too great. My family had a history of serving in the military and I wanted to join what I perceived to be the best unit in the British forces.

Describe your dream job (if you weren't doing this?)
Working in the Scottish mountains teaching people about how to live / survive in the wild. I love the outdoors and miss the opportunity to disappear into the mountains for a couple of days carrying everything you need on your back (whiskey compulsory).

What's the best business advice you've ever received?
When I first started with the business just over 4 years ago I had very little 'business' experience but understood how to run organisations and work with people. Our chairman summed up some of the noise being generated by telling me one thing about any business performance: "Revenue is for vanity. Margin is for sanity!"

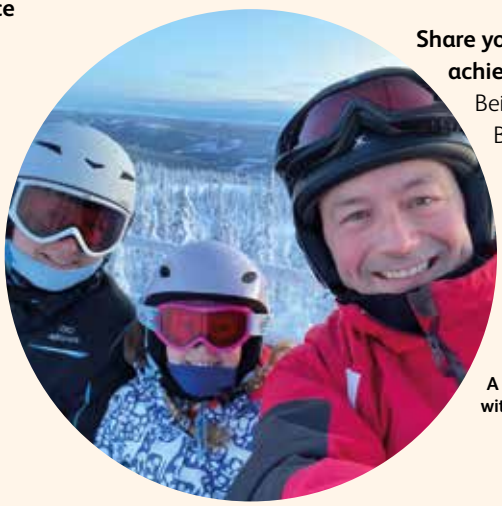
Share your top tips for business success
Look after your people, do the basics brilliantly, operate as a cohesive team and empower your people to make decisions / take responsibility.

What's your most recent business achievement of note?
Shaping a team that has delivered success across all our businesses.

Tell us your greatest fear
Complacency – if you or your team rest on their laurels there is a risk you will miss an opportunity or damage everything you have achieved.

Which is most important – ambition or talent?
Talent – this can be shaped to get the best potential out of everyone.

What's the best thing about your job?
The people – we have some fantastic people in the businesses, and their passion and drive are the reason why the businesses are so successful.



A shared pleasure – relaxing with the family on a ski trip

Which is the quality that you most admire?
Integrity – this is a fundamental – and extremely important to me.

What are you most likely to say?
What can I do to help?

What are you least likely to say?
It is not my problem.

Describe your perfect day
Skiing with my family followed by some après ski in a fantastic bar at the bottom of the slope (drinking and skiing is just as bad as drink driving in my eyes).

Do you have a favourite sports team?
Ireland rugby team

What's the biggest challenge of our time?
The environmental risks associated with climate change. What does the future look like for our children / their children?

Cheese or chocolate?
Cheese – something potent and not just cheddar!

Share your greatest personal achievement
Being awarded the Green Beret for completing Commando training.

What's your pet hate or biggest irritant?
Laziness.

If you were on 'Mastermind' what would your specialist subject be?
The Mulberry Harbour – this was my dissertation when I completed my master's degree.

If you were elected to government what would be the first law you'd press for?
I am not sure if conscription would go down so well, but I look at the opportunities the military presented me and countless others.

If your 20-year-old self saw you now what would they think?
You are still alive – I was not expecting that!

What is number 1 on your bucket list?
Skiing a full season would be amazing.

What 3 things would you take to a desert island?
Survival kit (practical), family photo (morale) and a kindle loaded with books (this will need to be solar powered)!

Tell us something about you that people would be very surprised by
I love musicals!

Who would you most like to ask these questions of?
An old friend who is no longer with us.

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