Fuel Oil News

September 2026

SUPPORTING FARMERS: BEYOND FUEL DELIVERY

KEHELLAND VOICES FIVE YEARS ON

INSIGHT: HOW DOES DROP SIZE AFFECT PROFITABILITY?

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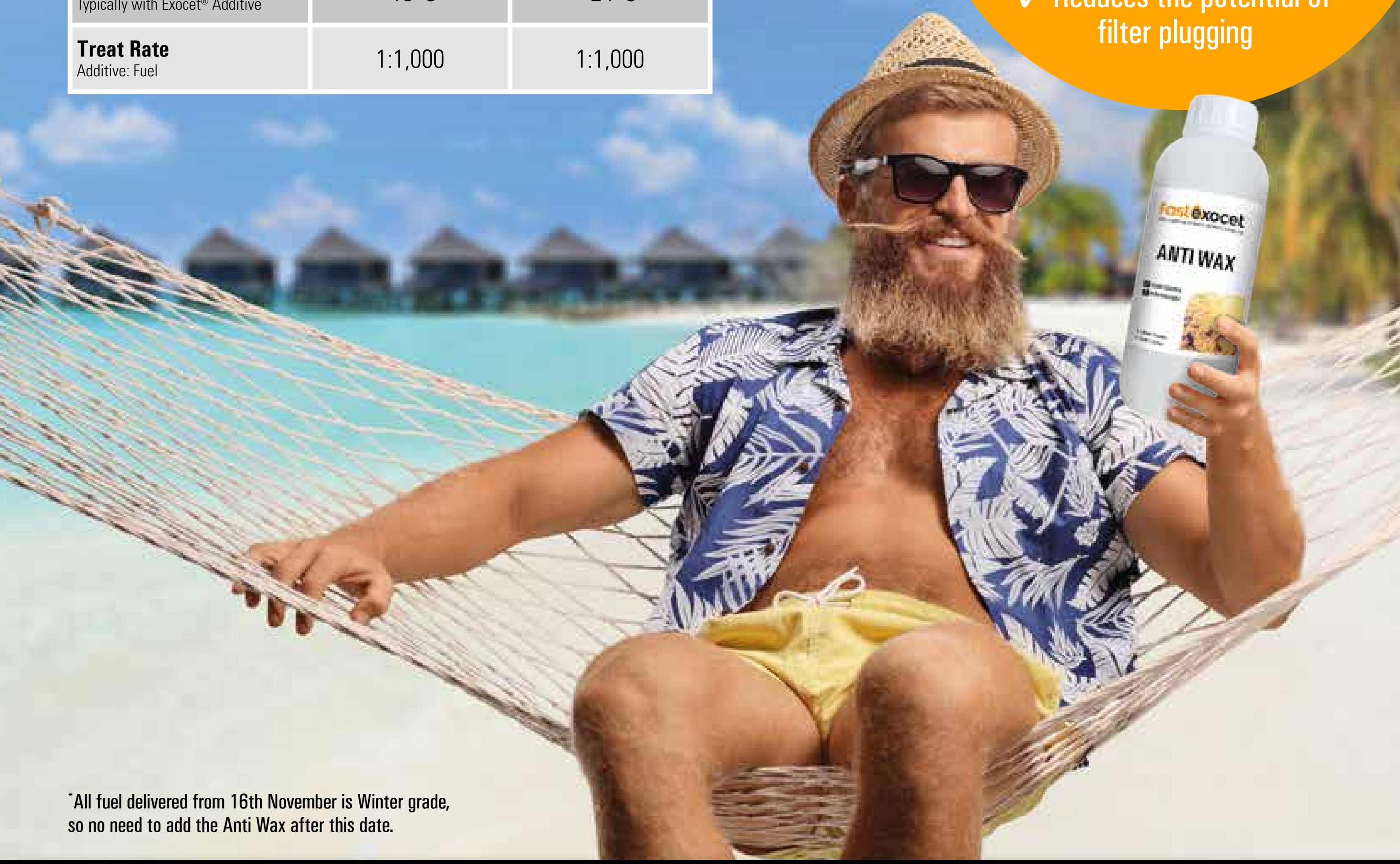
HE'S NOT WORRIED ABOUT HIS FUEL THIS SUMMER...

Because he ensures his Summer grade fuel stored in the Winter months is fit for the cold weather.

	EN590 Diesel Summer 16th March - 15th Nov	EN590 Diesel Winter 16th Nov - 15th March
CFPP* (°C) Specification	-5°C	-15°C
CFPP* (°C) Typically with Exocet® Additive	-18°C	-24°C
Treat Rate Additive: Fuel	1:1,000	1:1,000

Turns Summer grade fuel into Winter grade fuel

- ✓ Prevents fuel waxing and provides resistance
- ✓ Allows operation at colder temperatures
- ✓ Reduces the potential of filter plugging



*All fuel delivered from 16th November is Winter grade, so no need to add the Anti Wax after this date.

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Fuel Oil News
SUPPORTING TODAY I INFORMING TOMORROW

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

Mind your language

The mid-August heatwave peaked at 38.1˚C at Kew Gardens in London on 13 August, before cooler air brought the spell to an end.

While short-lived, it was the fifth heatwave to affect the UK this year, during an exceptionally hot summer.

In this issue we speak with someone who joined the industry in 1976, – a year frequently referenced this summer. Yet, while 1976 remains the benchmark for one relentless spell of hot, dry weather, 2026 has redefined extremes through successive spikes of record-breaking heat.

Record-breaking. A term used frequently in media coverage, and one usually associated with celebration. But, is this a summer to celebrate?

In 1976, the UK heatwave stood out against a much cooler global climate. The 2026 heat is part of a much wider pattern of exceptional temperatures. The peaks have been both more frequent and higher – particularly at night. 2026 has recorded more nights above 22˚C in one week than 1976 did during the entire heatwave.

Intense heat has baked fields and accelerated harvest, with this year's among the earliest on record. Yields for key crops are historically low, while shoppers are warned to expect smaller produce and higher prices.

The NFU says Britain's farmers are in financial crisis. On pages 18 & 19, you can read how one distributor is looking beyond fuel supply to offer broader support to their farming community.

It is very British to talk about weather – mundane and extreme. But for businesses serving communities increasingly affected by the extremes, it is becoming much more than a talking point. As records continue to tumble, perhaps it is time to think more carefully about the language we use. When "record-breaking" heat becomes commonplace, it is no longer a cause for celebration.

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On the cover

For Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels, a close relationship with the farming community means they are well placed to offer support beyond simply keeping fuel tanks full. On pages 18 & 19 you can read about the new partnership they have formed to extend this support.

How extreme heat impacts fuel handling, storage and delivery

One Friday evening in mid-August, after yet another long, hot week, a government-issued alert on our phones gave a clear but alarming message to not undertake "any activity that could start a fire".

July was the hottest on record, with over two thirds of the UK in drought, and the risk of wildfires high. With exceptionally dry conditions, those working with flammable liquids such as fuel, need to be more vigilant than ever. Stewart Ower, Risk Management & Spill Response Lead for Compass Environmental spoke with Fuel Oil News to share important insight into managing associated risks.

At the depot

With large volumes of flammable liquids stored on site, one event could bring disaster for human health, the environment, your assets and your reputation. Whilst some risks may be obvious and easily managed, such as prohibiting smoking and bonfires on site, others are less apparent:

- **Where you park matters:** Parking your fleet close together may be space efficient but it brings higher risks of low-speed collisions or manoeuvring incidents. Should one vehicle catch fire or be set alight, the others may fall in a domino effect, wiping out your entire fleet and putting your business off the road. Space the tankers, spread the risk.
- **Keep your boundaries clear:** Consider the positioning of trees and vegetation in relation to your tank farm – what would happen if a wildfire approached your site? Creating a fire break around your depot can limit the damage from neighbouring wildfire risks.
- **An empty tanker can be a safer tanker:** Fully loaded tankers parked at the depot overnight could mean disaster if an incident happens out of hours. Keep heating oil and DERV tankers empty when not in use to minimise the risk should an incident occur.
- **Limit high risk activities on site:** Always conduct a thorough risk assessment and limit work which could cause sparks, for instance hot works – have a hot works permit system in place.
- **Assess your office set up:** The office is not without risks and should a fire start, the damage could spread to your fuel storage. Ensure your electrical systems are compliant, inspections are up to date and fire extinguishers are regularly serviced.
- **Prepare your personnel:** Regular fire drills and training are essential and can save lives – don't skip them. Take this one step further and ensure the fire services are also familiar with your site layout and water supply points.

Some depot incidents are more unpredictable such as lightning strikes or even arson attacks. Having a fire risk management plan and DSEAR Assessment is a must, as is an environmental risk management plan with clear incident response strategies.

On the road

Leaving the depot comes with its own risks. During breaks, ask drivers to choose their spot wisely: with a tanker full of highly flammable liquid, be mindful of parking up next to woodlands, heathland or grasslands which may be extremely dry and vulnerable to wildfires.

Accidents can happen whatever the weather. With the recent New Forest wildfire starting from a van fire, even a breakdown could cause disaster in dry conditions. Should your drivers experience difficulties in transit, from major rollovers to minor breakdowns, ensure they act vigilantly and can identify risks to human health and the environment, avoid smoking near the vehicle and raise the alarm in the most appropriate manner.

Delivering to customers

Once your drivers have safely reached their destination, ensuring your team are trained and well versed in handling potential hazards is critical. Despite government limitations on risky activities such as bonfires and disposable barbecues, there is still a possibility these could have taken place. Watch out for hot embers when considering where to park or the path of the hose and be sure to prohibit smoking near the tanker, hose or oil tank.

When making deliveries, ensure tanks are filled no more than 90% as oil can expand in the heat causing overflow. Plastic oil tanks can be more likely to fail on the first fill following periods of hot weather due to the stress of high heat and sun exposure. With customers looking to fill their tanks over the coming months, brief your drivers to look for signs of damage and if in doubt, don't deliver.

Credit Sky News

What if the worst happens?

When a serious fire occurs, having the right support in place can make a significant difference to how effectively the incident and its aftermath are managed.

For fuel distributors in particular, a major fire can quickly develop into a complex event involving emergency services, regulators, neighbouring properties, business interruption and potentially significant financial and reputational consequences.

A sector-specific insurance policy, such as Compass Environmental's Oilshield Insurance and Risk Management scheme, can help manage the aftermath of a serious incident. With 24/7 incident support, this includes the coordination of elements such as arranging specialist contractors, liaising with regulators and other third parties, coordinating investigations and remedial works, and helping to move the incident through from the initial emergency response towards recovery and resolution.

However, effective risk management starts long before an incident occurs. Good site housekeeping, appropriate fuel storage, effective separation of ignition sources, suitable fire precautions, clear emergency procedures and regular staff training can all help to reduce both the likelihood and potential severity of a fire.

No business can remove risk entirely, but understanding where the vulnerabilities lie, putting sensible controls in place and having a clear plan for what happens if those controls fail can make a considerable difference when the worst happens.

New UKIFDA CEO appointed

UKIFDA has appointed Ken Mackness as its new Chief Executive Officer, as the industry body begins its planned transition to a new leadership structure.

Ken will join UKIFDA on 1 September 2026, ahead of the transition to the new structure from12 October 2026.

Following a comprehensive handover, outgoing Chief Executive, Ken Cronin, will remain with UKIFDA in the newly created role of Director of Public Affairs, ensuring the association continues to benefit from his extensive industry knowledge, policy expertise and established relationships across government and regulatory stakeholders.

Extensive leadership experience

Announcing the appointment, Stephen Rhodes, President of UKIFDA, said: "I am delighted to welcome Ken Mackness to UKIFDA as our new Chief Executive Officer.

"Following a thorough recruitment process, the Board identified Ken as an outstanding candidate with significant experience of leading membership organisations, delivering strategic change and representing members' interests at the highest levels. His track record of strengthening organisations, building stakeholder relationships and navigating complex policy environments makes him exceptionally well placed to lead UKIFDA through its next phase of development.

"I would also like to recognise the significant contribution made by Ken Cronin during his tenure as Chief Executive. We are particularly pleased that he will continue to play an important role within the association as Director of Public Affairs. This arrangement provides continuity for our members while creating a strong leadership team that combines strategic organisational leadership with dedicated policy and public affairs expertise.

"The Board is confident that this new structure will further strengthen UKIFDA's ability to represent and support members as they respond to evolving market, regulatory and energy transition challenges."

Ken Mackness joins UKIFDA with extensive executive leadership experience across membership organisations, regulated bodies, charities, public sector organisations and commercial enterprises.

He has spent the last seven years serving as a Chief Executive of national membership organisations and trade bodies.

Most recently, Ken was managing director of the Independent Doctors Federation, where he led the development of the organisation's first three-year strategy, modernised its operating model, expanded its membership proposition, delivered its inaugural national conference and increased organisational turnover. He also played a leading role in representing members' interests with government and policymakers on a range of nationally significant issues.

Throughout his career, Ken has developed a strong reputation for strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, governance, advocacy and the commercial development of membership organisations. He is particularly recognised for helping organisations remain relevant, influential and sustainable in rapidly evolving regulatory and policy environments.

Supporting members through transition

Commenting on his appointment, Ken Mackness said: "I am honoured to be

appointed Chief Executive Officer of UKIFDA and excited to have the opportunity to work with such a respected association and its members.

"The liquid fuels distribution sector plays a vital role in supporting homes, businesses, industry and critical infrastructure throughout the United Kingdom. UKIFDA has a proud track record of representing its members, promoting high standards and helping the industry respond to both opportunities and challenges.

"Throughout my career I have enjoyed helping organisations grow, strengthen their voice, and adapt successfully to changing political, regulatory and commercial environments. I look forward to working closely with the UKIFDA Board, members, industry partners and government stakeholders to ensure the association continues to be an influential advocate for the sector and delivers real value to its membership.

"The energy landscape is evolving rapidly and UKIFDA has an important role to play in supporting members through that transition. Together, we will build on the association's strong foundations, champion the contribution our members make to communities across the UK and help shape a successful and sustainable future for the industry and its customers."

OilMaxx announces new Middlesbrough depot

OilMaxx says the expansion of its depot network will strengthen its ability to serve domestic and commercial customers across the North East.

Acknowledging the value of local knowledge and customer relationships, this latest depot team has been recruited locally.

Ian Craven, Area Director at OilMaxx Middlesbrough, described the depot opening as "an exciting step forward for OilMaxx" and one which "demonstrates our commitment to customers across the North East".

"By establishing a dedicated local presence, we're able to provide faster response times, local expertise and the dependable service that our customers expect," Ian says. "Our focus remains on delivering reliable products with outstanding customer service."

Continued expansion

Part of the wider Oilfast Group, OilMaxx has continued to expand its footprint across England since launching in 2021 with the new Middlesbrough depot in line with that growth strategy.

The latest step in Oilfast's ongoing investment in regional supply infrastructure, the new site launch comes just seven months after the official opening of its Dumfries depot.

PEOPLE MOVES

Lindsay Southall has recently joined **Greenergy** as Commercial Account Manager for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Lindsay spoke with Fuel Oil News about her new industry role.

"I've spent the last eight years with Petroineos as an Account Manager, working closely with customers and building strong relationships across the industry. I've really enjoyed getting to know the market, the people within it and understanding what matters most to customers day to day.

"I've now joined Greenergy as Commercial Account Manager, looking after customers across Scotland and Northern Ireland. While the role is familiar territory for me, moving to Greenergy gives me a fresh challenge and the opportunity to bring my experience and relationships into a new business.

"My focus is very much on getting out there, meeting customers, listening to what they need and building long-term partnerships. I'm looking forward to growing Greenergy's presence across Scotland and Northern Ireland, developing new opportunities and, most importantly, becoming someone, our customers know they can pick up the phone to and rely on."

Lynne McGuigan, Sales Manager Scotland and Northern Ireland said: "Lindsay knows the industry, the market and most importantly, how to build good relationships with customers. She brings experience, energy and personality to the role and I am really pleased to have her on board."

Rogerio Lopes has joined **DCC Energy** as Managing Director for Great Britain. The appointment is described by the company as "an important step in the continued evolution of the business and its ambition to be Great Britain's leading multi-energy partner."

With more than 25 years of international leadership experience across the energy, industrial and consumer goods sectors, Rogerio brings a proven track record of driving sustainable growth, enhancing customer experience, delivering operational excellence and leading complex business transformation programmes.

Rogerio will lead a broad portfolio of brands – including Certas Energy and Flogas – serving customers across Great Britain. He will be responsible for accelerating the development of DCC Energy's integrated multi-energy offering, in line with the company's commitment to helping customers navigate an increasingly complex energy landscape.

Commenting on his appointment, Rogerio said: "I am excited to join the business at such an important time for the energy sector. Our customers are looking for trusted partners who can help them navigate change with confidence, and I look forward to working with colleagues across the organisation to build on our strengths, accelerate growth and further develop our multi-energy offering."

Harry Boxall has joined **CDS** as Onboarding & Customer Success Lead.

A spokesperson for the industry software solution provider commented: "Harry brings extensive downstream fuel distribution experience to the business, taking the number of CDS employees with first-hand industry experience to 11.

"His appointment further strengthens CDS' ability to help customers adopt the next generation of CODAS, combining software expertise with a deep understanding of the operational challenges faced by fuel distributors."

Ben Firth has taken up a new role as sales executive for **Road Tankers Northern Ltd**.

Ben brings over 19 years of fuel oil industry experience and is "keen to continue improving and learning as the industry evolves."

Speaking about his new role, Ben said: "I'm looking forward to reconnecting with people across the industry, building on strong relationships, and helping businesses find the right tanker solutions."

Logistics UK has appointed **Brenda Maguire** as its Northern Ireland Policy Lead.

With over 16 years' experience working in policy and campaigning roles, Maguire brings a strong track record of representing major organisations and industries across Northern Ireland. In her new role, Maguire will lead Logistics UK's policy activity in Northern Ireland, working closely with members, political stakeholders and industry partners to champion the priorities of the logistics sector.

Maguire said: "I look forward to working with our members across Northern Ireland to understand their priorities, represent their interests and help ensure the sector can continue to operate safely, efficiently and sustainably in our unique trading position."

Logistics UK's Chief Executive Ben Fletcher said: "Northern Ireland has a unique and important role within the UK supply chain… Brenda's appointment will strengthen our ability to champion the sector, support our members and highlight the essential role logistics plays in driving economic success."

Alicia Greenhalgh has joined **Greenarc Fuel Cards** as Finance & Operations Assistant. In her new role, Alicia will be supporting customers and helping to keep operations running smoothly.

From transformation to growth: Watson Fuels one year on

TWELVE MONTHS AFTER FUEL OIL NEWS SPOKE TO WATSON FUELS CEO **MATT WHITTON** AS THE BUSINESS EMBARKED ON LIFE UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP, WE RETURN TO FIND A COMPANY THAT SAYS THE TRANSFORMATION IT SET OUT TO ACHIEVE IS LARGELY COMPLETE. SPEAKING WITH MARGARET MAJOR, MATT SHARES HOW THE FOCUS IS NOW ON WHAT THAT NEW PLATFORM MAKES POSSIBLE.

When Fuel Oil News spoke to Matt Whitton last summer, Watson Fuels was only months into a significant new chapter.

Following its acquisition by Inspirit Capital, the business faced the considerable task of becoming fully standalone from its former parent while building a new leadership structure, maintaining operational performance and establishing what independence would mean in practice.

Matt was clear about the immediate priorities. Watson Fuels needed to be profitable, independent and operationally sound by the end of 2025. Beyond that lay what he described as a period of enablement, followed by growth.

A year later, he is able to mark those first objectives as achieved.

"We've achieved everything we wanted to, perhaps a little bit more," he says.

Only with the benefit of looking back, he suggests, is the scale of what has happened fully apparent.

"It's only when you take breath and look back that you realise what's been achieved."

The sale completed on 9 April 2025, leaving less than nine months for Watson Fuels to become completely standalone. At the same time, the company needed to complete its senior leadership team and ensure the newly independent business was operating profitably.

There has also been a rebrand, the establishment of a new head office, changes to the organisational structure and development across areas including wholesale, fuel cards, lubricants, national accounts, specialist fuels and new business streams.

"It was definitely easier said than done," Matt acknowledges. "We've had to work some hard yards to achieve what we've achieved."

Local where it matters

One ambition from our previous conversation was particularly memorable: for Watson Fuels to become a local distributor that just happened to have national coverage.

Matt believes that is now becoming reality. "As of 1 July, Watson Fuels now has local distributors that happen to have national coverage," he says. "We have local teams that are empowered to make quick, effective and ultimately local decisions."

Watson Fuels has a relatively small central function that provides support across finance, technology, marketing, customer experience, supply, operations and people, while commercial responsibility and customer relationships increasingly sit closer to its depots.

In the traditional "red truck" business, which operates around 200 vehicles nationally, depot-based teams are bringing selling, planning and delivery together locally. The objective is to combine national capability and governance with the ability to respond differently to customers in different markets.

"We create the ability to be more entrepreneurial and to be different and to react differently depending on what the customer wants," Matt explains.

It is an interesting model at a time when businesses across the sector are taking differing views on the balance between centralisation and local decision-making.

For Matt, the reasoning comes back to a fundamental challenge facing any distributor: "We are selling a commodity," he says. "There's not really a differentiator within any commodity. The differentiator comes in the service."

From customer service to customer experience

That focus has prompted another change in language which Matt believes reflects something more substantial.

"I think 12 months ago I was quite possibly talking about customer service," he says. "It feels like a nuance, but it's a very clear change. We have moved from customer service towards customer experience."

The distinction is between dealing effectively with an issue when it occurs and considering the entirety of the relationship. "It's not just about responding when something goes wrong. It's about making every interaction with Watson Fuels easier and more valuable."

Asked whether customers are experiencing the difference, Matt acknowledges that there is still work to do before Watson Fuels can demonstrate this conclusively.

Many of the structural changes are relatively recent, and Matt describes current feedback as encouraging but largely anecdotal. The company is putting measures in place to provide more objective evidence.

"Come back in 12 months and I'll be able to demonstrate the positive changes," he says.

That willingness to put another marker in the ground echoes our conversation a year ago.

Choosing the path

Perhaps the most significant evolution in Matt's thinking is the move from being good at reacting to disruption towards becoming less dependent on events outside the company's control.

The past year has provided plenty of practice in reacting.

Macroeconomic events, disruption in the Middle East and domestic supply challenges have unfolded while Watson Fuels has simultaneously been reshaping its own business.

Matt is keen to stress that this level of responsiveness is not new. "Watson Fuels has always had an excellent team that, when events happen, reacts really well."

What has changed is the ambition to complement that capability with greater control over the direction the company takes. "We can't be reliant on events, whether it be a conflict in the Middle East which affects global pricing or, frankly, whether it's the weather. We have to have more control of our own destiny."

He repeatedly returns to a simple philosophy: comply, mitigate risk, take opportunity.

It has informed Watson Fuel's response to recent market challenges, but increasingly, it is also shaping the growth strategy.

The goal, Matt says, is to be "a proactive business, one that chooses its path rather than simply reacting to events".

There is a striking parallel here with changing customer expectations. As businesses seek to anticipate and manage risks within their own supply chains rather than simply respond when something fails, Watson Fuels is attempting to apply the same principle to itself.

Growth – but not at the expense of the core

For Watson Fuels, greater control of its destiny means growth and diversification, but Matt is careful to distinguish that from moving away from the company's traditional markets.

"We're still there to support our loyal customers who need kerosene in the winter and gas oil for farming, who we've worked alongside for many years."

Growth includes using greater local entrepreneurial freedom to develop the red truck business, while continuing to grow areas such as fuel cards, specialist fuels and wholesale.

The wholesale business is one area Matt highlights as having developed significantly, providing continuity of supply not only for Watson Fuel's own distribution operation but, where appropriate, for other distributors.

Alongside that organic development are new propositions.

WatsonOne, launched to offer a more integrated approach to fuel assurance and resilience for customers with business-critical energy requirements, is one example.

For Matt, its significance extends beyond the service itself. "Through WatsonOne we've created something from scratch. It's already underway. It didn't previously exist."

It is, in other words, evidence of what Watson Fuels believes its new structure can enable.

There will be other opportunities, although Matt remains deliberately non-committal on exactly where those might take the company.

"I don't think anything is ever off the table," he says.

There are, however, boundaries. Any new proposition must meet a customer need and, importantly, "feel like something that a distributor would do".

That qualification matters. The ambition is not diversification for its own sake, but to broaden the value a distributor can provide around its existing capabilities, infrastructure, relationships and expertise.

People behind the platform

For all the emphasis on structure and process, people repeatedly return to the conversation.

Matt describes Watson Fuels as now having a "right-sized" and simplified structure with fewer layers between decision-makers and those closest to customers. Governance remains important, but its purpose is to allow expertise to translate more quickly into action.

The people proposing change are increasingly expected to own its delivery too and the theme of empowerment also extends to recruitment.

Overall colleague numbers have reduced since the transformation journey began, but Watson Fuels has been recruiting into the new structure. Matt sees particular value in combining experienced industry people with those arriving from outside the sector.

"We're getting that really healthy mix of new views as well as the understanding of how the industry operates."

What does he want those people to experience?

Fulfilment, rather than simply enjoyment, is the word he now chooses. He wants colleagues to bring curiosity to their roles, make decisions and approach challenges pragmatically.

Those characteristics are increasingly important as distribution businesses face a market in which agility and judgement can matter as much as scale.

Part of the energy solution

That uncertainty is especially apparent in the longer-term energy transition.

Despite the events of the past year, Matt says his view of the trajectory has not changed. "I've for quite some time now been a believer that our industry is firmly part of the solution."

Rather than identifying a single technology or fuel as the answer, he advocates what he calls the "and" word.

"We need liquid fossil fuel and liquid renewable fuel and hydrogen and electricity and wind power and solar."

For the liquid fuel distribution sector, he sees existing infrastructure as a significant advantage.

Much of it is currently moving fossil liquid fuels but, he argues, can also provide a route to market for renewable liquid alternatives without requiring the scale of infrastructure investment seen in some other parts of the energy system.

That flexibility also reduces the risk of making major investment decisions against an uncertain policy backdrop.

It is another example of the wider theme running through his thinking: retain what works, create flexibility and remain ready to respond when opportunities emerge.

A wider industry role

Matt now has an additional perspective from which to consider those opportunities, having recently become Vice President of UKIFDA.

The appointment came, he says, after a call from UKIFDA President and Highland Fuels Managing Director Stephen Rhodes.

"It took him about three minutes to convince me that I should put my name forward."

Although still early in the role, Matt says it is already providing "a different lens through which to see the sector".

He believes UKIFDA has become an increasingly important and effective industry voice and sees an opportunity for the association to be central both to protecting customers and to demonstrating the sector's role in energy transition.

The same philosophy he applies within Watson Fuels could, he suggests, apply more broadly.

"The sector needs to be ready to be fleet of foot. The philosophy of comply, mitigate risk, take opportunity doesn't have to apply just to businesses, but to the sector in general."

Only just getting started

A year ago, Matt ended our conversation with the tantalising warning: "Spoiler alert – there's more to come."

Some of it has now arrived.

But when asked whether Watson Fuels has finally reached the point he was describing then, the answer suggests this is less an ending than another beginning.

"We've only just got started," he says.

The platform is now in place to grow the traditional distribution operation, fuel cards, specialist fuels and wholesale, while creating the ability to move into new areas.

And when Fuel Oil News comes back in another twelve months?

Matt hopes the anecdotal evidence of a successful transformation will have become measurable. "I'd like to be able to demonstrate that we have a fulfilled colleague base and that the experience of doing business with Watson Fuels makes our customers happy."

Then comes a familiar smile in his final words: "And, obviously, there might be more to come."

KEN'S CORNER

"Dae Ye Ken?"

How many times over the past six years have I started this column by referring to a new government, a new Prime Minister, a new Secretary of State, and the hope that perhaps this time things might be different?

It would be easy to become cynical, but I firmly believe that every change brings a new opportunity.

Pragmatism and listening are good things

In recent months, we have heard increasing debate about the electricity grid and whether it can realistically cope with the additional demands that electrification of transport and heating will place upon it.

I am not here to criticise anyone. Ensuring that energy is available in the right place, at the right time, and in sufficient quantities is an immensely challenging task. Our industry understands that better than most.

We have also heard about pragmatism, ensuring that the cost of living is the number one priority, and listening to communities that have been ignored.

Those are principles we can all support. Indeed, they are principles that are urgently needed.

Regular readers will know this is an argument I have made before.

Today, the UK consumes around 2.3 billion litres of heating oil across domestic and non-domestic premises. Converting that demand to heat pumps, using industry-standard rates, results in 7 billion kWh, or c.7% of current domestic electricity consumption. This would be a substantial increase, particularly as much of the demand would come from some of the most remote parts of the country. It would also add to the additional electricity required to support the transition to electric vehicles.

A pragmatic approach must therefore include increasing electricity generation, strengthening grid capacity and, where possible, reducing demand on the grid itself.

Removing a significant proportion of this liquid fuel demand through renewable liquid fuels would be a practical and cost-effective step in that direction. It would also demonstrate that rural communities are being listened to rather than simply being expected to adapt.

Unwelcome anniversaries

On 21st August 2021, the Irish Government launched its consultation on introducing a Renewable Heat Obligation. The proposal received support from our industry.

In its response, the Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating stated:

"It is of paramount importance that this becomes part of the policy landscape within the fuel sector at the earliest possible time."

Five years on, we are still waiting.

Five years of potential carbon savings have been lost. Ireland is forecast to miss its 2030 carbon budgets by a considerable margin, while its electricity grid faces many of the same challenges evident in the UK.

Once again, pragmatism is needed.

The title of this column: "Dae Ye Ken?"

I must confess, I couldn't resist it.

The phrase has many different meanings.

For those unfamiliar with Scotland, "ken" is a word used liberally across parts of the country, particularly in Fife, where I found myself living some 30 years ago. Everywhere I went I seemed to hear my own name.

"A ken" (I know).

"Ah dinnae ken" (I don't know).

"Dae ye ken whit a mean?" (Do you know what I mean?)

It was, at times, one of the more confusing periods of my life.

As many of you will know, around a year ago I informed UKIFDA that, after six years as CEO, I intended to step down from the role. Following productive discussions, we agreed that while I would relinquish the CEO position, I would continue working on the political and policy issues affecting our industry across the UK and Ireland.

I am delighted to say that UKIFDA has now appointed a new CEO, and I will formally step down later this year. What amused me greatly was discovering that his name is also Ken.

I am sure many of you will have the opportunity to meet him over the coming months, and I look forward to working with him and, indeed, for him.

You have my assurance my message to every politician I meet will remain the same: *"Dae ye ken?"* (Do you understand?)

The voices of Kehelland:
Five years of decarbonising rural heat

FIVE YEARS AFTER A CORNISH VILLAGE BECAME A REAL-WORLD TEST BED FOR RENEWABLE LIQUID HEATING FUEL, FUEL OIL NEWS PAID ITS FIRST VISIT TO KEHELLAND. THIS TIME, RATHER THAN REVISIT THE TECHNOLOGY OR THE CAMPAIGN AROUND IT, **MARGARET MAJOR** WENT INTO THE HOMES OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED WITH THE CHANGE TO HEAR WHAT FIVE YEARS OF DECARBONISING THEIR HEATING HAS MEANT TO THEM.

There were two birthdays being marked in the Cornish village of Kehelland on the day of my visit. One was the fifth anniversary of a project that has seen local households and community buildings use renewable liquid fuel in place of conventional heating oil.

The other belonged to a boiler.

In the home of long-time Kehelland resident Dave Biggs sits an oil boiler that has just turned 30. It has spent the latter part of its life participating in a project intended to explore a very different future for rural heating.

Opening it up on the anniversary visit revealed a boiler still running cleanly. Dave's verdict on its prospects was characteristically succinct: "It'll outlive me!"

A light-hearted moment, but one that suggests a much bigger question.

If a heating system is still working effectively after three decades, what should decarbonising that home look like? Does reaching net zero necessarily mean replacing existing equipment, or can changing what goes into it also have a role?

Kehelland has spent five years exploring that question.

The project began with homes converting from kerosene to 100% hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO). The majority of the participating households subsequently moved to a 20% HVO blend for the latter three years of the trial.

Fuel Oil News has followed Kehelland throughout that journey. We have reported on politicians and policymakers visiting the village; on residents taking their case to Westminster; on consultations, legislation and repeated calls for a policy framework that could enable renewable liquid heating fuels to play a role in reducing emissions from off-grid homes.

Five years on, however, perhaps the most interesting evidence is not contained in reports or policy submissions. It is in the homes of the people who have actually lived with the change.

"We want to decarbonise"

Spend time talking to Kehelland residents and

Residents of Kehelland have been trialling HVO for 5 years.

one thing quickly becomes clear: this is not a community resistant to change.

Solar panels are visible on roofs. Electric vehicles sit on driveways. Batteries store locally generated electricity.

Several of the residents involved in the HVO project had already invested their own money in reducing their environmental impact before the trial began. Others had investigated heat pumps and considered what further changes they could make.

They are not questioning the need to decarbonise.

They are questioning whether every home can – or should – be expected to follow exactly the same route to get there.

Dave is particularly candid about his own motivation: "We want to decarbonise, but we're also motivated by self-interest," he says.

Malcolm Farrow OFTEC and John Weedon Mitchell &Webber admire the cleanliness of the HVO-fuelled boiler.

For him, that means considering the sizeable investment that would be required to make his home suitable for an air source heat pump alongside the likely period over which that investment would deliver a return.

"I don't want to spend my life savings to fit an air source heat pump," he explains.

The issue is not simply financial. At his stage of life, Dave also questions the disruption involved in significantly altering the fabric of a home in which the existing heating system continues to perform its job.

His experience with HVO has been entirely different. There was no wholesale alteration of the house and no change required to the way the couple lives.

Over the five years, Dave believes his fuel consumption has fallen by around 25–30% while achieving the same level of comfort – an observation based on his own consumption rather than a controlled efficiency comparison.

"We get more bang for our buck," he says.

He also highlights the absence of the familiar kerosene smell.

There is currently a premium for using HVO and Dave says that is a price he is prepared to pay to reduce the impact of heating his home.

Doing more, not less

A short walk through the village brings us to the home of Steph and Nigel.

Their story is perhaps the clearest rebuttal to any suggestion that choosing a renewable liquid fuel represents an unwillingness to embrace other low-carbon technologies.

Approaching retirement, the couple decided to use money they had saved to reduce their environmental impact. First came an electric vehicle. Then solar panels. They were sufficiently impressed with the solar installation that battery storage followed, with electricity generated on the roof helping to charge the car.

Heating was the next consideration.

The couple looked seriously at an air source heat pump, but the practical implications for their older bungalow quickly mounted.

They were told significant retrofit work would be required. Radiators would need replacing and their concrete floors presented further challenges. On top of the building work, their single-phase electricity supply would need upgrading to three-phase.

That electrical upgrade alone was quoted at around £10,000, with the required retrofit adding tens of thousands more. For them, it became financially unrealistic. Then they heard about the Kehelland project and the change required to use HVO was minor by comparison.

Five years later, their environmental ambitions have not diminished. Their home combines renewable liquid fuel, solar power, battery storage and an electric vehicle.

Steph's assessment of the HVO element is not a technical one.

"It's a damn good idea," she says.

More importantly, perhaps, theirs is a home that demonstrates why the debate does not always divide neatly into competing technologies. Different solutions are already working alongside one another.

"Why would you throw away something that works?"

At the home of Claire and Andrew Waterhouse, another working boiler has remained in place.

Involved with the Kehelland project from its earliest days, they initially used 100% HVO before moving to the 20% blend, in their 26 year-old boiler.

They too report using less fuel than when they heated with conventional kerosene. They have also noticed the lack of smell during deliveries and the cleanliness of the boiler.

Asked what disadvantages they had encountered from making the change, their answer was simply: "Nothing."

For Claire, there is another sustainability question. "Why remove a functioning heating system, with all the materials and waste that entails, if there is an alternative way to reduce its carbon impact?" she asks.

The couple recycle, minimise waste where they can and want to live as sustainably as possible. Ripping out a working system was difficult for them to reconcile with those aims.

Andrew also brings another perspective. Having spent more than two decades working in the electricity sector, he is conscious of the demands that widespread electrification could place on rural networks.

Again, his argument is not against electrification. It is for recognising the practical constraints that may determine how quickly – and how affordably – different homes and communities can adopt it.

Steph and Nigel Urens

Homes built for another age

Those constraints become particularly tangible at another of the homes we visited.

Stephen and Nicky Thomas live in a property built in 1865. Its Cornish granite walls are around two-and-a-half feet thick. It has concrete floors and the characteristics of a house built more than 150 years before anyone contemplated low-temperature heating systems or national net zero targets.

For two years they ran their boiler on 100% HVO and for the past three have used the 20% blend.

They estimate that their fuel consumption has fallen by around a third compared with their previous kerosene use and, like the others, comment repeatedly on the absence of smell and how cleanly the boiler has run.

Stephen, an accountant, has also looked closely at the economics of alternative options. For their particular property, he says, the numbers simply did not stack up.

Yet the motivation to take part in the project was environmental from the outset.

"It was a no-brainer to get away from burning fossil fuel," he says. "If nobody does something, nothing gets done."

Nicky is equally emphatic about the need to act.

Their frustration is that a technology they have used successfully for five years still does not have a clear route to wider deployment.

"We've got the proof that it works," they say. "It's staring people in the face."

That is their conclusion from five years living with the fuel. It doesn't establish that renewable liquid fuel is the answer for every property or determine its role in national decarbonisation.

But it is their real-world experience that they believe deserves to be considered.

Beyond the front door

The Kehelland project has never been confined to individual homes. The village school is using HVO, providing not only heat but a welcome opportunity to talk to pupils about reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

The local church provides another, very different, example. Community buildings are often used intermittently. They can sit empty for long periods before suddenly needing to be brought up to temperature for a service, meeting or event.

For those responsible for such buildings, the ability to produce heat quickly and only when required matters.

During our visit, the church boiler was being serviced. Its design includes around 30 baffles which would, ordinarily, take time to remove and clean. Kevin King, the Mitchell & Webber technician working on it, described how, since the boiler had been operating on HVO, they have emerged remarkably clean.

Elsewhere in the village, residents make the same observation in less technical terms: cleaner boilers, less soot and no kerosene smell. Five years of those small, everyday experiences have shaped their views every bit as much as carbon calculations.

Five years of being heard — but are they being listened to?

If enthusiasm for the fuel remains strong, so too does frustration.

Residents recall a steady stream of visitors to Kehelland over the five years. MPs have come. Government officials have come. Select Committees have come. Representatives from local and national government have listened to their experiences.

Residents have written letters, answered questions and travelled to Westminster to submit their evidence personally.

The pattern, as they see it, has become familiar. Visitors arrive interested and leave sounding positive. Then very little appears to change.

"We've had so many visits and from all levels of government," Dave comments. "They all say how good it is. They all go away very positive.

"We continue decarbonising our homes and village and nobody seems to be listening."

That frustration should not obscure the unresolved questions around greater use of renewable liquid heating fuels.

Affordability matters. So does sustainable feedstock availability. Decisions around where limited renewable fuels deliver greatest value across heat, transport and aviation are legitimate policy considerations.

The experience of one village cannot determine national energy policy. But neither should the wider questions make the experience of Kehelland and all those participating in this national project, irrelevant.

Evidence, not a verdict

Perhaps that is the real significance of reaching the five-year milestone.

Kehelland does not prove that every oil-heated home should switch to HVO. Neither does it settle questions about future supply, price or the best allocation of renewable fuel resources.

It also does not undermine the important role heat pumps and electrification will play in decarbonising UK heating.

What it does provide is something much harder to recreate in a model.

It offers five years of experience from people who genuinely want to reduce their carbon emissions, but whose homes, finances and individual circumstances have shaped what is practical for them.

Some are enthusiastic adopters of electrification in other aspects of their lives. Some live in properties where extensive retrofit would be difficult. Some are thinking about the length of time over which a substantial investment would pay back. Some simply question the sustainability of removing equipment that still has years of useful service ahead.

Dave Biggs with his 30 year old oil boiler

Their reasons differ, but there is remarkable consistency in one respect – they want to decarbonise.

What they are asking for is a choice of credible ways to do it.

There is an understandable temptation in debates around heat to look for a single winner: electrification or renewable liquid fuels; replacement or adaptation; one technology versus another.

The lived experience in Kehelland suggests the transition may be considerably less tidy.

The people I met were not demanding that heat pumps disappear from the solution. In fact, one resident summed up the mood by arguing that, given the urgency of reducing emissions, "we need to throw everything we can at decarbonisation".

It is difficult to disagree with the principle.

Five years after Kehelland first became a testing ground for renewable liquid heating, its residents are still heating their homes, still looking for ways to reduce their environmental impact and still waiting to see how their experience will be reflected in the future of off-grid heat.

They don't speak in the language of energy models and policy frameworks. They talk about granite walls and concrete floors; savings and payback periods; warm homes, working boilers and the disruption they can live with.

They talk about wanting to decarbonise – and wanting some choice about how they do it.

After five years, perhaps the most important evidence to come out of Kehelland is not simply what has happened inside its boilers.

It is what the people living alongside them have to say.

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

Mike Parker
WCF Ltd

WELCOME TO OUR FEATURE WHERE PEOPLE FROM MANY DIFFERENT ROLES IN THIS INDUSTRY WILL TAKE YOU THROUGH A TYPICAL DAY IN THEIR WORKING LIFE. THIS MONTH, FUEL OIL NEWS SPEAKS WITH **MIKE PARKER**, HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGER, WCF LTD, TO DISCOVER HOW MIKE SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.

My alarm goes off at...I have rarely used an alarm throughout my working life. I have the knack of waking up for the time I need to be up for the day ahead. I normally wake up naturally between 4.00am and 5.00am. I would say I'm a bit of a morning person.

The first thing I do is...if my daughter is with me, I check her glucose levels to make sure she's within the safe range. She has type 1 diabetes and although she is sixteen, she has only had the condition a few years and occasionally needs some help managing it.

I prepare for the day ahead by...as soon as I'm awake, work is at the forefront of my mind but most days I force myself to do some form of exercise, even if it's 15 minutes using weights, or quick jog round the block.

By the time I've finished I feel positive and ready to tackle my priorities for the day. If I miss out this routine, I don't feel as good.

I can't leave the house without...checking my family are okay and that I haven't left the dog out in the garden.

My typical day –

I like to start the workday early. As a Health and Safety Manager, my days are usually planned out and structured, but there are times when I've got to be reactive to situations around the business and I enjoy the challenges they bring.

WCF has several sites and different business activities, not just fuels and this set up gives my role some diversity.

I feel it's important to keep in touch with the people in our businesses, preferably face to face, or with regular remote catch ups.

I'm continually looking at risk and whether it's through auditing, accidents or near misses my aim is to learn continuously to improve safety and compliance within the business.

My most memorable work moment...I've had many memorable moments throughout my career, but when I look back, I think taking on the Health and Safety role would be up there.

I'm not sure whether I thought about it too deeply at the time, but on reflection, it has given me a lot of satisfaction. Although it's not always portrayed as such, you are helping people by keeping them safe.

The worst part of my job...I think it's that I can't switch off from thinking about the role. It's just the way I am. I've always been a bit of a worrier.

The best part of my job... It's working with my colleagues. They're really supportive and make WCF a great company to work for.

I relax after work by... there is nothing better than some light exercise to relax you after work and if I'm not back too late, I enjoy walking, cycling, or very short runs.

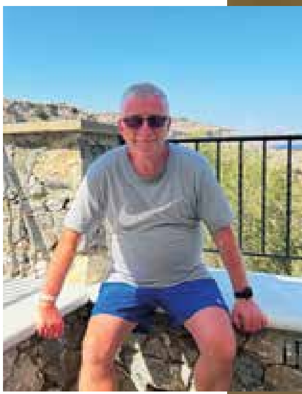
There are no time constraints at the end of the day and sometimes I'll have a pint or two afterwards.

My favourite meal...I don't think I have a favourite meal, but I eat and enjoy a variety of food but I think eating and relaxing with people whilst eating is important. I love trying new dishes, but still enjoy a good steak pie, occasionally.

The last thing I do each day is...let the dog out, check my daughter's levels and my emails in case I've missed anything.

I'm normally in bed by...I try and stick to a regular sleeping pattern throughout the week. I like to be in bed for about 10.00pm and aim to get six or seven hours sleep if I can.

Mike Parker: Celebrating 50 Years in the industry



MIKE PARKER, HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGER AT WCF LTD, IS CELEBRATING AN INCREDIBLE 50 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY – ALL SPENT WITH WCF. FOLLOWING ON FROM HIS 'A DAY IN THE LIFE', FUEL OIL NEWS CAUGHT UP WITH MIKE TO FIND OUT HOW HIS CAREER AND THE INDUSTRY HAVE EVOLVED OVER THE LAST HALF A CENTURY.

You joined WCF in the summer of 1976 as a 17-year-old. If you could go back and give that young Mike one piece of advice, what would it be?
Have the confidence to believe in yourself – and make the most of every opportunity that comes your way.

What has been the biggest change you've witnessed – and what has surprised you most?
When I started at WCF, the company had a small fleet of tankers operating from a couple of locations. At the time, my perception was that the market was largely controlled by the major oil companies.

Over the years, however, the market became much more decentralised, with smaller businesses taking greater control of supply.

One of the positive surprises for me has been seeing how smaller businesses have responded to increased regulation and continued to move forward, embracing new technology and finding new ways of working.

Over the last 50 years, which role challenged you the most?
Looking back, payroll certainly provided plenty of challenges. I experienced the transition from cash to cashless pay, the introduction of a four-weekly payroll for drivers, and continual changes to legislation covering pensions and tax. There was always plenty to understand and process!

Whatever role I have been in, I hope I have made a positive contribution and helped to raise standards along the way.

What's one thing you don't miss from the 'old days', and what's one traditional way of working you think we've lost?
In my current Health and Safety role, I have to say I welcome advances in technology with open arms.

Technology can make a real difference to safety within a business, and that is incredibly important.

What do you think has stayed the same about the industry's people, despite all the change around them?
I think it is their dedication to the industry and their willingness to accept change and move with the times. That has certainly been my experience at WCF.

You joined WCF in 1976 – the year of the famous summer heatwave. With weather in the headlines once again, does the increasing level and frequency of extreme heat create additional health and safety challenges for the business?
Yes, we need to be mindful of the health and safety of all our staff who work both inside and outside during periods of extreme heat.

Over the years, we have introduced additional controls to help manage the risks, and it is something we continue to monitor and discuss as conditions change.

What makes someone stay with one company for 50 years?
I think it has a lot to do with the people you work with and whether they inspire you. I have worked for and alongside some great people over the last 50 years.

I also believe that whatever job you do, you need to be challenged. Overcoming those challenges gives you a real sense of achievement and job satisfaction. From my perspective, WCF has continually given me those challenges, and that has been a big factor in why I have stayed with the company for so long.

A few quick-fire questions to reveal the man behind the 50-year career:

Tea or coffee?
Coffee – black.

One word to describe WCF?
Diverse.

Biggest workplace change since 1976?
When WCF started the change from being a cooperative to an employee-owned company in 1988.

One invention you couldn't do your job without?
Probably the internet!

If not the fuel industry, what career do you think you'd have chosen?
When I was at school, I was attracted to the

insurance industry. For work experience, I spent a week in the offices of General Accident, which was a big player in the market at that time.

One thing people would be surprised to know about you?
When I was at school, I ran for the county in athletics and cross country.

A thank you from all at WCF Ltd

Phil Murray, Chief Executive Officer for WCF Ltd, was keen to thank Mike for his incredible service to the business:

"Fifty years! It's a number that is almost impossible to comprehend in today's world of work. In the summer of 1976, a 17-year-old Mike Parker joined WCF. Half a century later, Mike is still making an important contribution to our business and, we believe, has become the longest-serving colleague in WCF's 115-year history.

"Mike's career has taken him through Payroll, Pensions, HR and now Health and Safety. His story reflects something I believe is very special about WCF: we don't expect people to stand still. We encourage them to grow, develop new skills and embrace new opportunities throughout their careers.

"What strikes me most about Mike's achievement isn't simply the longevity. It's what it says about commitment, trust and shared purpose."

An extraordinary contribution

"At WCF, we often talk about being custodians rather than owners," continued Phil. "Our responsibility is to leave this business stronger for the generations that follow us, balancing the needs of today's colleagues and customers with the opportunities of tomorrow. That philosophy has helped WCF thrive for 115 years, and colleagues like Mike have been instrumental in making that possible.

"In a world that often celebrates short-term results, Mike reminds us of the value of consistency, loyalty and quietly making a difference every single day. As a partly employee-owned business, every colleague has a stake in our future. Mike has lived that ethos for 50 years, helping shape the culture and values that make WCF such a special place to work.

"Mike, thank you for your extraordinary contribution, your wisdom, your humility and your unwavering commitment. On behalf of everyone at WCF, congratulations on an achievement that is truly exceptional. Here's to the next chapter."

From all of us at Fuel Oil News, a huge congratulations to Mike on this truly impressive milestone!

Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels pledge long-term support for farmers with new partnership

Sister employee-owned companies Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels, which provide domestic, agriculture and commercial fuel services to customers across the North West, Yorkshire, Devon and Cornwall, have announced a long-term partnership with mental health and wellbeing charity, The Farming Community Network (FCN).

Committing to support the FCN for a minimum of three years, Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels will play a key part in extending the reach of the charity to remote rural communities and farms across the North West and South West regions.

The partnership will involve training teams to understand the daily challenges faced by the farming community they serve, providing vital support to struggling individuals when they need it most.

Supporting farmers beyond fuel deliveries

Agriculture is a central part of the customer base for both companies, with farms relying on fuel and lubricants to keep everything from tractors and grain dryers to livestock buildings running.

For Abby Turner, Director at Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels, that close relationship with the farming community means the companies are well placed to offer support beyond simply keeping fuel tanks full.

“Agriculture is central to our customer base – not a peripheral market,” began Abby. “With tight seasonal windows, a delayed delivery isn’t just an inconvenience – it can disrupt harvests and, in some cases, affect animal welfare.

“That’s why our partnership with the Farming Community Network made such good sense. We already support the sector at scale, and we wanted to go further – providing support that goes beyond simply keeping the fuel tanks full.”

Founded in 1995, the FCN supports farmers, farming families and people in rural communities across England and Wales through difficult times and periods of change. It provides free, confidential, pastoral support to anyone who seeks help, regardless of whether the issue is personal or business related.

The FCN runs a confidential national helpline (03000 111 999) and e-helpline (help@fcn.org.uk), open every day of the year from 7am to 11pm.

A challenging time for farming

The partnership comes at a time when many farming businesses continue to face considerable financial and operational pressures.

“Farmers have had to absorb several significant shocks in a relatively short period,” continued Abby. “After the exceptionally wet conditions of recent years, 2026 has brought severe drought and extreme heat, putting further pressure on crops and yields.

“For arable farmers it’s been another difficult growing season, which has made planning, budgeting and managing cash flow increasingly tough.

“Livestock farmers are also facing their own challenges, with warmer conditions contributing to a rise in bluetongue cases and adding another layer of uncertainty for those keeping animals.

“At the same time, input costs remain high, while changes to traditional farm payments and Agricultural Property Relief have added further uncertainty for some businesses, particularly around succession and the future of family farms.

“Of course, there are successful and resilient farming businesses,” Abby adds. “But margins are under pressure, and farmers have had to absorb several significant shocks in a relatively short period.”

The pressures facing farms can also have a wider impact on the rural economy, affecting agricultural contractors, machinery suppliers and local businesses, including fuel distributors.

“For us, supporting farmers with reliable service and helping them manage their fuel needs is an important part of strengthening the resilience of the wider rural community,” stated Abby.

A long-standing partnership

Over the next few weeks, representatives from the FCN will visit Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels to talk to teams about the charity's work and how they can support the farming community, which can often feel lonely and isolated.

Drivers, sales teams and credit controllers will undertake training on mental health and wellbeing, helping them recognise when a farmer may be struggling and could benefit from the support available through the FCN.

As the face that farmers see on a regular basis, drivers will also be able to hand out FCN contact cards, helping to spread awareness of the charity's services and providing a friendly point of contact within the farming community.

"Farming can be an incredibly isolating industry," said Abby. "The financial, physical and emotional pressures facing farmers are often invisible to people outside the sector, and this year has been particularly tough.

"Through our long-standing relationships with farming customers, we've seen first-hand just how important it is to have someone to turn to when things get difficult."

Abby believes the relationship between fuel suppliers and their agricultural customers is changing, with farmers increasingly looking for more than competitive pricing.

"Farmers increasingly expect suppliers to understand the realities of running a farm – from seasonal cash flow and unpredictable weather to long working hours and the pressures of getting the job done within tight windows," she explained.

"The best suppliers recognise that agricultural customers aren't simply commercial accounts. They need a service that is flexible, reliable and responsive to the way farming actually works."

Practical advice and a changing energy landscape

As part of the partnership, Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels will also provide the farming community with practical fuel and oil tank advice to help improve fuel efficiency and reduce issues such as contamination or degradation.

The advice will be shared through the FCN's daily communications with farmers, as well as through the charity's website and social media channels.

The companies also see an opportunity to support farmers as they consider the changing energy landscape.

"There is genuine interest in reducing carbon emissions and preparing for tighter regulation," explained Abby. "The uptake in HVO is definitely growing as a practical stepping stone since it can be used in existing diesel engines with minimal disruption."

However, Abby acknowledged that the transition will not be the same for every farming business: "Cost remains the biggest barrier for many businesses, and full electrification of heavy agricultural machinery is still some way off.

"We see our role as helping farmers explore the options and transition at a pace that works for their business, rather than pushing a one-size-fits-all solution."

A partnership with a personal connection

The companies' commitment to the FCN will extend beyond financial support and awareness raising, with both Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels attending regular FCN and Farmwell events.

Craggs Energy sponsored the FCN's President's Reception at the Great Yorkshire Show (14–17 July 2026) and joined the FCN at the Halifax Agricultural Show on 8 August. Moorland Fuels, meanwhile, supported the FCN in the West Country, attending the Okehampton Show on 13 August.

Georgina Lamb, Head of Partnerships at FCN, welcomed the collaboration: "We are delighted to partner with Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels, both of which are well-respected in the farming sector. As well as providing vital funds for the charity, it has given us the platform to promote our work to the wider agricultural community and will help support farming families at the grass roots level. We look forward to working with the team in the coming years."

Supporting a community we know

For Abby, the partnership has a particularly personal connection: "We're part of the rural communities we serve, so for us this is about giving back – not simply supplying fuel and moving on.

"We understand that sense of isolation, too. Our drivers spend long hours working alone, particularly through the winter. We also have members of the team that come from farming backgrounds, or who have seen the positive impact that the FCN has made to friends and family.

"That's why this partnership feels personal. It's about supporting a community we know, value and depend on – and helping ensure that when farmers are facing difficult times, they know there is someone there to listen and help, including our team."

A proud partnership

Lisa Bennett, CEO of Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels, added: "We are proud to announce our partnership with FCN for the next three years. The farming community has and always will be a core part of our business. Many of our team have been raised in rural communities while others have been brought up on farms themselves. They know just how challenging running a farm can be and what a difference a friendly and familiar face can make.

"By joining forces with FCN, we can play our part in lending an ear and providing support when it's needed most, either when our drivers are out delivering heating oil, fuel and lubricants, or when our customer service team are chatting to our customers."

With a three-year commitment in place, Craggs Energy and Moorland Fuels are looking to make their relationship with the farming community count for more than fuel deliveries. By combining their existing knowledge of the sector with the FCN's specialist support, the companies hope to help ensure that farmers know where to turn when challenges become difficult to face alone.

There is also a wider context to the pressures being felt by farming businesses. The UK's last four years have all ranked among the five warmest on record, while climate change is increasing the likelihood of the heat, drought and extreme weather that can directly affect crop yields, livestock and ultimately food prices.

For farmers, this creates a dual challenge: building resilience to changes that are already being experienced while also reducing the emissions that will determine how severe those changes become. That makes support for the sector, such as that being given by Craggs and Moorland, increasingly important – not only in helping farming businesses withstand today's pressures, but in ensuring they have access to practical, affordable decarbonisation solutions that enable them to play their part in the transition without compromising their viability or our food security.

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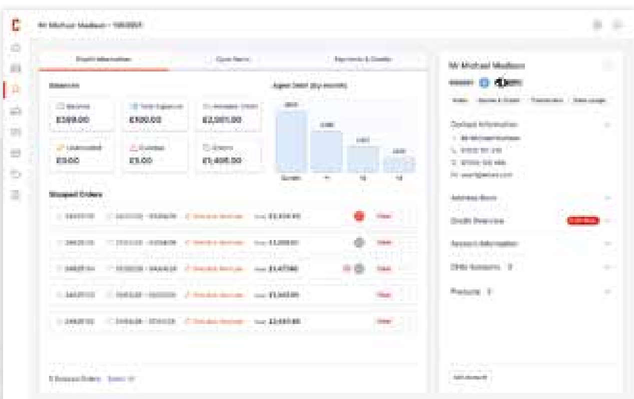

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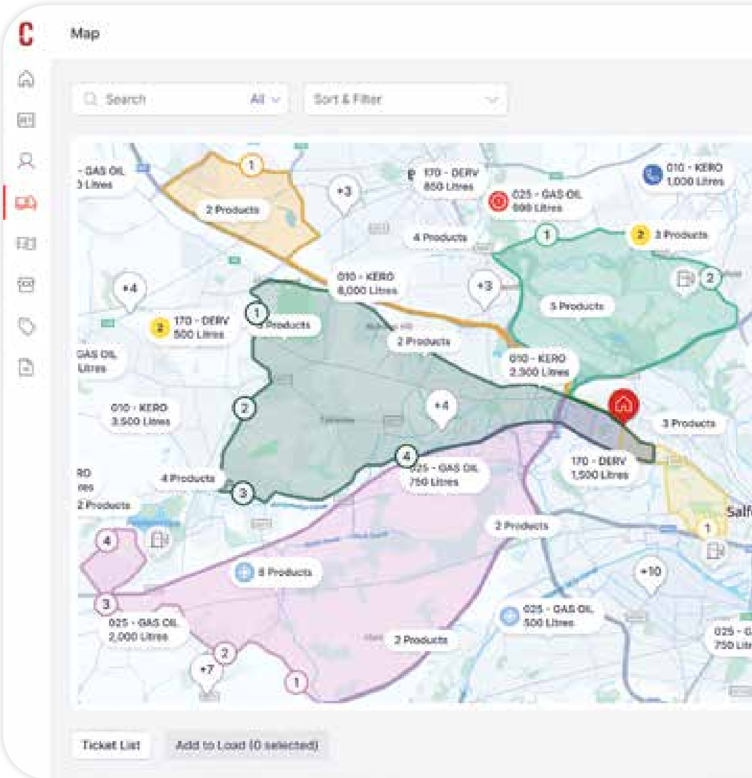

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Delivering Insight

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

Delivering Insight is your monthly business-critical briefing. Designed to give SME distributors clear, actionable guidance to work smarter and more profitably. Although larger distribution groups may have in-house HR teams, fleet managers, compliance officers and analysts, many SME FODs operate without those resources. Delivering Insight is your virtual support team – a growing knowledge base that builds into a valuable reference library for your business, helping you make informed decisions that safeguard your business today and strengthen it for the future. This month, we continue the journey from terminal to customer as we consider how order volume impacts the true cost per litre and what that does to your margin.

The economics of delivery: how much does drop size affect profitability?

Smaller deliveries can mean higher costs per litre – but could better planning, telemetry and automatic top-ups change the equation?

Last month, Delivering Insight followed the litre from the terminal to the depot, asking whether ex-rack collection or delivered-in supply offers the better business model. This month, we follow that litre on the next stage of its journey – from depot to customer.

Every delivery a fuel oil distributor makes incurs many of the same underlying costs, whether the customer takes 400 litres or 1,400. Driver time, vehicle costs, administration, route planning and depot overheads do not fall proportionately with the volume delivered. As a result, the size of each drop can have a significant impact on the true cost per litre – and ultimately on the margin that remains.

That matters particularly if customer buying behaviour is moving towards smaller, more frequent orders.

In this month's Delivering Insight, we look at the economics of delivery size, how FODs can calculate the point at which smaller drops become commercially unattractive, and whether minimum orders, differentiated pricing, automatic top-ups, telemetry and better route planning can help protect profitability.

1. Why does drop size matter?

As discussed in our previous Delivering Insights article: *Ex-Rack Terminal Collection or Delivered-In Supply: Finding the Right Model*, many of the costs associated with putting a tanker on the road are incurred regardless of the volume being transported.

Most of the delivery cost is incurred on a per-visit basis rather than a per-litre basis.

Fixed costs include:

- Driver time/wages
- Vehicle costs and depreciation.
- Insurance
- Administration: Order processing; invoicing; customer communication; compliance requirements are relatively unaffected by delivery size.
- Route planning: Delivery scheduling and route optimisation.
- Depot overheads: Staffing, premises, IT systems and operating overheads are spread across all deliveries.

Variable/semi-variable costs include:

- Fuel consumption / cost varies with mileage, vehicle type, route and delivery activity.
- Overtime.
- Vehicle maintenance/repairs.

What about driver productivity?

Delivery time is a fixed cost that does not increase proportionally with the volume delivered.

The delivery process – travel, siting the vehicle, safety checks, setup and paperwork – is also largely independent of volume.

As a result, a larger volume can be delivered without a proportionate increase in total delivery time, making more efficient use of driver and vehicle time.

Conversely, smaller drops may reduce the number of deliveries possible within a working day, potentially resulting in increased left-behind volumes or extended driver hours.

It is therefore important to consider not only the cost per delivery, but also how drop size affects driver productivity, vehicle utilisation and the number of deliveries that can be completed each day.

A cost analysis should therefore focus on costs that can be reasonably attributed to each delivery, while recognising that actual costs will vary by FOD, fleet, route and operating model.

2. What does a delivery actually cost?

There are four elements to consider in calculating your delivery costs.

i. **What does getting the tanker to the customer actually cost?**
This is calculated by adding your total fixed operating costs to an estimate of your total variable costs and dividing by the total number of drops.

ii. **What is the cost per litre delivered?**
Divide the delivery cost by the volume ordered to establish your cost per litre for any drop.

iii. **What is the contribution?**
Calculate the gross margin for the number of litres delivered and subtract the delivery cost.

iv. **What is the contribution per driver hour?**
This gets interesting when you start to compare multiple small drops with fewer larger ones. A small drop may generate a positive contribution, but it could still be a poor use of driver / tanker capacity.

Let's use an illustrative example to consider how this works in practice:

Assume the attributable cost of making a delivery is £40.

Then:

Drop	Delivery cost	Delivery cost/litre
300L	£40	13.33ppl
500L	£40	8.00ppl
900L	£40	4.44ppl
1,500L	£40	2.67ppl
2,000L	£40	2.00ppl

Replace the arbitrary £40 with your own attributable delivery cost and the calculation becomes specific to your business.

Is it a profitable drop?

Illustrative example: Suppose, again purely illustratively, that at the price sold you have 8ppl available to cover delivery cost and contribution.

For a 900l drop:
900 litres × 8ppl = £72 available contribution
£72 – £40 attributable delivery cost = £32 remaining contribution
However, let's look at how that changes with delivery volume:

Drop	8ppl generates	Delivery cost	Remaining contribution
300L	£24	£40	–£16
500L	£40	£40	£0
900L	£72	£40	£32
1,500L	£120	£40	£80
2,000L	£160	£40	£120

BUSINESS QUESTION: What is the minimum economically viable drop for your business at your normal margin?

Increased cost to serve – the impact of smaller deliveries

The effect compounds. Smaller drops not only increase delivery cost per litre; if average drop size falls, more delivery events are required to move the same annual volume. That can increase driver hours, vehicle utilisation, administration and route-planning activity – while reducing contribution per delivery.

Business impacts

Here's another illustrative example you can apply to your business:

For a business that delivers 4.5 million litres per annum.

At an average 900l drop = 5,000 deliveries.

At an average 500l drop = 9,000 deliveries.

That's 4,000 additional deliveries to move exactly the same amount of fuel. That's potentially £160,000 of additional delivery activity, assuming our arbitrary cost of £40 per delivery.

While the cost increase is not a linear one, the reduced drop size would require the business to accommodate 80% more deliveries to move exactly the same volume.

Changing customer behaviour

What is creating this pressure to reduce drop volumes and how can it be mitigated?

Our previous Delivering Insight article *"Are Fuel Buying Patterns Changing in the UK and Ireland Domestic Heating Sectors?"* addressed this question.

It considered evidence that domestic heating customers are moving from larger seasonal orders towards smaller, more frequent 'top-up' deliveries. Historically, a 500l minimum order volume was a common industry approach. Now, increasing numbers of customers are searching for smaller delivery volumes.

These changing buying patterns are driven by:
- Price and cash flow pressures
- Online price comparison
- Climate changes
- Shifting seasonal demand patterns
- Automatic ordering
- Telemetry / automated replenishment

Changing customer behaviour is impacting business cost. But is a smaller delivery always a worse delivery?

Top-up services – good or bad for profitability?

At face value, automatic top-up services may appear challenging for FODs because they can involve smaller average drop sizes and more frequent deliveries.

In reality, the profitability of an automated top-up model depends not only on the litres delivered per visit, but on how efficiently those deliveries can be planned and completed.

Benefits

- More predictable delivery schedules and improved demand visibility.
- Reduced risk of emergency deliveries and last-minute call-outs.
- Better route planning and improved fleet utilisation.
- Increased customer retention through a more convenient and reliable service.

Route optimisation

There are various providers of sector-specific route optimisation software that can improve the efficiency of top-up deliveries.

- Smaller average drops increase the importance of route density and efficient scheduling.
- Planned top-up deliveries can be grouped geographically, reducing empty mileage and improving vehicle utilisation.
- Practicalities will depend on customer location and access requirements, with some sites requiring smaller vehicles or alternative delivery approaches.

Telemetry

A range of specialist telemetry providers supply remote tank monitoring hardware and software to domestic and commercial fuel distributors. These solutions can:
- Help FODs assess whether a top-up model can be operated profitably.
- Support top-up services by providing visibility of customer fuel levels and enabling proactive delivery scheduling.
- Allows FODs to move from reactive to planned deliveries.

The combination of telemetry and route optimisation can help offset some of the additional delivery activity associated with smaller average drops.

Back to our question: Is a smaller delivery always bad for profitability?

The answer is more nuanced than it would first appear.

A spontaneous 400L order 15 miles away might be commercially poor. A planned 400L telemetry-triggered drop to a customer on a route where the tanker is already passing might be perfectly attractive.

So, the real equation isn't simply: bigger drop = better.

It's closer to: drop size + route density + predictability + delivery frequency + customer lifetime value = commercial viability.

Summary

What have we learned?

Bigger drops usually cost less per litre to deliver, because many delivery costs arise per visit rather than per litre.

There is no universal minimum profitable drop. It depends on your delivery cost, margin, route and customer.

Smaller doesn't automatically mean unprofitable. Predictable, geographically clustered drops can be more attractive than larger reactive deliveries. Know your number. Every FOD should understand the minimum economically viable delivery under its own operating model.

Remember:

- Reducing minimum order quantities may help meet changing customer expectations but can increase the cost of servicing each customer.
- It is essential to balance customer flexibility

with the impact on delivery frequency, fleet utilisation and contribution.

Review your delivery economics

1. Calculate

Establish:

- Your average domestic drop size
- Average deliveries per customer per year
- Attributable cost per delivery
- Delivery cost per litre
- Average gross margin/contribution per litre
- Average time per delivery
- Deliveries per driver day
- Litres delivered per driver day
- Frequency of emergency deliveries

Then calculate the contribution generated by different delivery sizes using your own figures.

2. Compare

Model the effect of different drop sizes.

What happens to cost per litre at 300L, 500L, 900L, 1,500L and 2,000L?

What happens to the number of delivery events required to move the same annual volume?

Which customers consistently order below your economically preferred drop size?

Then compare manual ordering with planned or automatic top-up customers. Does greater predictability allow smaller deliveries to be incorporated into existing routes more efficiently?

3. Decide

If smaller drops remain commercially viable:

Customer flexibility may be worth retaining, particularly where deliveries can be efficiently incorporated into existing routes.

If smaller drops significantly reduce contribution:

Consider whether minimum order quantities, small-load premiums or delivery charges are appropriate.

If top-up customers generate smaller but more predictable drops:

Assess the whole customer relationship rather than individual delivery size alone. Improved route planning, retention and fewer emergency deliveries may compensate for a lower average drop.

If your minimum viable drop is higher than customers increasingly want to buy:

Review whether the answer is minimum order quantities, differentiated pricing, greater delivery efficiency — or a combination of all three.

THE BUSINESS QUESTION

Do we know the smallest delivery we can make profitably – or are our minimum order quantities simply what we've always offered?

With geography impacting delivery economics, the next stage is to understand what distance and customer location add to the cost.

NEXT MONTH

We will be delivering insights on route economics: what impact do remote customers have on your cost of delivery – and should they pay more?

PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

AUGUST IN VIEW

HOW PRICE COUPLING IS HAMPERING SAF'S ABILITY TO DISPLACE ITS FOSSIL EQUIVALENT

Last month we looked at conventional jet fuel and considered why this grade of fuel was so susceptible to price volatility. At the end of the report, we posed the intriguing question as to whether Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) might actually solve this problem – an issue that has very much come back to the fore, with the renewal of hostilities between Iran and the USA.

SAF is basically jet fuel that is not made from crude oil. Governments around the world have mandated its use in their attempts to decarbonise, but its introduction has not been without its critics. Many point out that aviation accounts for less than 3% of worldwide emissions and as such, is hardly the biggest problem when it comes to climate change. Others have questioned the feedstocks used to make SAF and the potential impact on the food-chain. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that SAF is here to stay, and most major airlines have made commitments to use the grade in increasing volumes going forward.

"AVIATION ACCOUNTS FOR LESS THAN 3% OF WORLDWIDE EMISSIONS."

In theory, the current crisis in the Middle East offers SAF a golden opportunity. Here we have a domestically sourced and regionally produced fuel, that can displace a fossil fuel (jet) and most importantly at the current juncture, has no reliance on Middle Eastern supply. Furthermore, when it comes to production costs, whilst the price of jet fuel doubled in the second quarter of the year, the price of the main SAF feedstocks (Fats, Oils and Greases = FOGs) barely moved. Surely this would make finished grade SAF cheaper than conventional Jet Fuel?

So goes the theory, but this is not what has happened. The commercial reality is that finished grade SAF is priced against Gasoil Futures and / or Crude Oil Swaps. Therefore, if the price of oil goes up, so does SAF. Airlines are forced to buy the product at higher prices, because their contracts are based on conventional grades of fuel. In short, even though the SAF supply-chain is wholly different to the oil supply-chain, the pricing mechanisms are the same. So, in the second quarter of this year, the SAF price simply followed the chaos on jet fuel markets. When Jet Fuel increased to $1,850 per tonne ($234 / bbl), SAF had also increased to around $2,630 / t (~$334 / bbl).

Why is this the case? Well, the simple answer is that not enough SAF is being sold. For increasingly hopeful 2050 net zero targets to be hit, approximately 500bn litres of SAF will need to be sold per annum. The current annual run-rate is circa 500m litres! Because of limited demand, there is no usable SAF market benchmark, something that all traded liquid fuels require to ensure buying contracts are not open to market manipulation. In the absence of a benchmark, SAF is simply thrown in with Brent, Jet A1 or Gasoil. The exact same thing happened with Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) 20 years ago. In its early days, LNG was Brent-indexed because there was insufficient LNG volume to create a benchmark. So, traders went for the next best thing which was Brent. This LNG-Brent relationship only ended in the 2020s, when the massive increase of US LNG exports helped create a defacto LNG benchmark. If SAF is to make the same price evolution, then volume growth has to be very consistent and significant for many years to come.

Accepting the huge challenge of effectively creating a new market, governments have adopted different methods to try to grow SAF volumes. The USA introduced taxpayer subsidies via Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), whilst Europe took a different approach in adopting the polluter-pays principle. This placed the burden of SAF mandates on fuel suppliers and therefore by extension, on airlines and their passengers. Sadly, neither approach has been particularly successful. The American solution fell down because Trump scrapped the IRA tax incentives in 2025, (leaving only state-wide subsidies) and in Europe, targets have been so small (for fear of upsetting customers through higher ticket prices) that very little SAF is being sold.

This only leaves the "third way" of getting SAF off the ground (ha ha), whereby highly scrutinised or "brand-conscious" companies engage in partnerships with airlines to increase production. The most recent example of this was in June, when Google and American Airlines announced a three-year agreement to purchase SAF certificates to the value of 65m litres per annum. Google will not actually buy the fuel directly, but the litres will be purchased by American Airlines from Valero at Chicago's O'Hare Airport. The State of Illinois will issue the certificates via a fuel tax credit.

"IF THE PRICE OF OIL GOES UP, SO DOES SAF."

As impressive as this latest deal is (and whilst complicated, it is fundamentally workable), it is still only one deal. Many more such arrangements will be required, alongside further aggressive volume mandates, if a material and benchmarkable SAF market is to be created.

Until that point, the compelling strategic argument for SAF (providing energy supply diversification independent of fossil fuels) and any possible commercial advantage will be lost – because the finished grade will remain anchored to oil market pricing.

For more pricing information, see page 26

Portland
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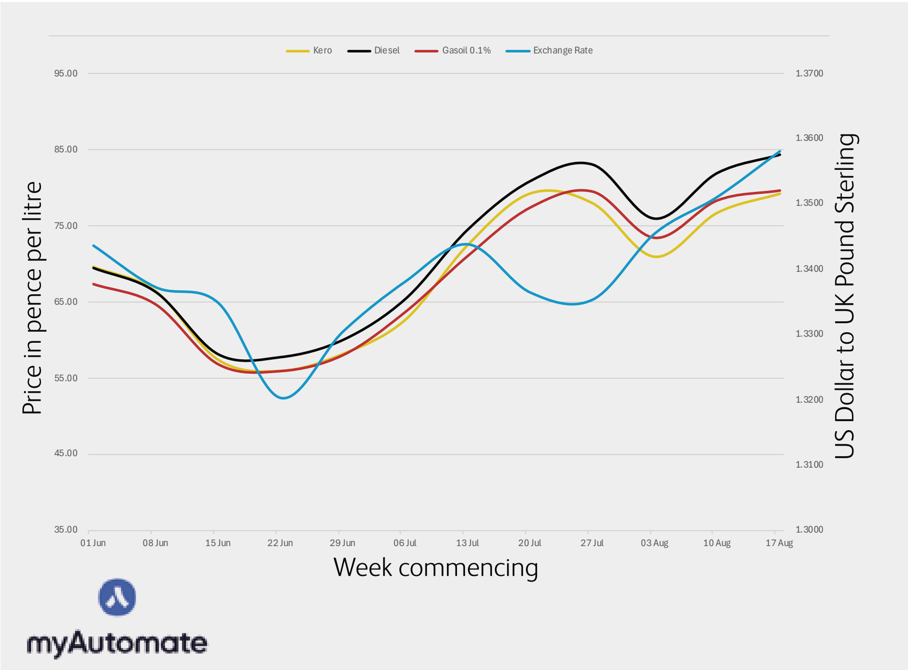
Wholesale Price Movements: 23rd July 2026 – 20th August 2026

	Kerosene	Diesel	Gasoil 0.1%
Average price	76.77	81.20	77.80
Average daily change	2.09	1.96	2.09
Current duty	0.00	52.95	6.48
Total	0.00	134.15	84.28

All prices in pence per litre



Kerosene

Highest price	Biggest up day
84.18	+5.11
Thu 23 Jul 26	Thu 23 Jul 26

Lowest price	Biggest down day
69.62	-6.01
Thu 06 Aug 26	Mon 03 Aug 26

Diesel

Highest price	Biggest up day
85.98	+5.96
Wed 29 Jul 26	Wed 29 Jul 26

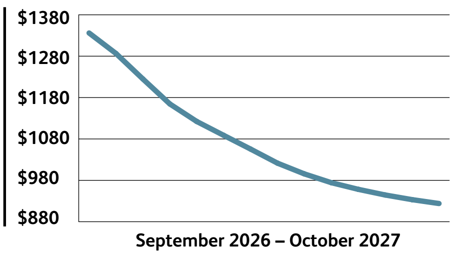
Lowest price	Biggest down day
74.62	-5.89
Tue 04 Aug 26	Mon 03 Aug 26

Gasoil 0.1%

Highest price	Biggest up day
82.23	+5.90
Wed 29 Jul 26	Wed 29 Jul 26

Lowest price	Biggest down day
71.90	-5.68
Tue 04 Aug 26	Mon 03 Aug 26

Gasoil forward price
in US$ per tonne



The Fuel Oil News Price Totem

	Trade average buying prices			Average selling prices		
	Kerosene	Gasoil	ULSD	Kerosene	Gasoil	ULSD
Scotland	78.53	88.45	138.38	89.53	94.50	143.80
North East	77.48	87.08	137.46	92.89	92.76	141.45
North West	79.05	89.68	139.85	89.58	94.92	143.40
Midlands	77.55	87.61	137.92	87.95	93.19	142.25
South East	77.65	87.57	137.90	99.10	97.30	141.65
South West	78.00	87.41	137.74	91.81	92.98	141.17
N. Ireland	78.11	88.78	n/a	88.30	95.58	n/a
Republic Of Ireland	91.87	94.21	139.32	100.42	99.78	143.73
Portland	75.86	85.13	134.61			

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 SEPTEMBER'S EDITION OF OUR SPECIAL MONTHLY FEATURE WHICH GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO 'MEET' AN INDUSTRY FIGURE AND, HOPEFULLY, TO DISCOVER ANOTHER SIDE TO THEM BEYOND THE WELL-KNOWN FACTS. THIS MONTH WE CHAT WITH **SHAUN GALVIN**, CHIEF SALES OFFICER, WATSON FUELS.

"HAVE CUSTOMERS AND COLLEAGUES AT THE CENTRE OF YOUR DECISION MAKING."
SHAUN GALVIN

Sum up your working life in 25 words or fewer.
I've always been in sales and leadership roles. After joining the fuel industry in 2009, like many I've never looked back.

Describe yourself in 3 words.
Determined. Enthusiastic. Personable.

What were your childhood / early ambitions?
Music has always been a passion of mine, so dreams of headlining Glastonbury and touring the world no doubt.

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
Teleportation. I love to travel the world but not all that keen on actually going to airports.

The best advice you've ever received?
Surround yourself with the best people… I've found that has served me well both in my personal and professional life.

Your top tips for business success?
Have customers and colleagues at the centre of your decision making. Without either, you will struggle to have a successful business.

What's the last photo you took on your phone?
A picture of me and my daughters.

If you could have dinner with any person, living or dead, who and why?
Noel and Liam Gallagher. They are childhood heroes but if nothing else, it would be an eventful evening I imagine.

You can only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what is it?
Protein these days… so probably a perfectly cooked steak.

The best thing about your job?
Cliché perhaps but it really is the incredibly talented people that I have the pleasure to interact with daily whether that's colleagues or industry partners.

The quality that you most admire?
Honesty and transparency.

What are you most likely to say?
Living the dream.

What are you least likely to say?
We can't do that.

Describe your perfect day.
Setting foot in a destination somewhere in the world that I know nothing about ready to explore and become an expert by the time I leave it.

Your favourite sports team?
Chelsea Football Club but I have also recently become an avid baseball fan and follow The New York Mets.

If you could be any fictional character, who and why?
Tony Stark. High tech lifestyle by day and Iron Man by night sounds fun.

Share your greatest personal achievement.
My amazing wife and children are without question what I am proudest of.

Share your pet hate or biggest irritant.
Tardiness. Don't be late.

What would your Mastermind specialist subject be?
The music of the 90s.

If you were PM what would be the first law you'd pass?
I'm no legal genius but I would certainly put UK energy security and independence towards the top of the agenda.

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

What is number 1 on your bucket list?
To travel across South America.

If you were Editor of Fuel Oil News magazine, what's your first article?
The role of liquid fuels in a lower carbon world.

What 3 things would you take to a desert island?
Record player. Guitar. Comfortable chair.

Something about you people would be surprised by?
Every year for the last 20 years I travel to a UK airport to meet the same lifelong friend with no knowledge of where I am going or who with.
I am handed a boarding pass to our destination and we head off on our next voyage… We set sail in September this year, so feel free to ask me where after that!

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Owner: Nick Smith

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Annual subscription for the UK & Republic of Ireland is priced at £130 or €150 inc. p&p.
Overseas: £150 or €175 inc. p&p.
UKIFDA members 25% discount
Back issues: £8 per copy.

Published by
Ashley & Dumville Ltd
01565 653283
www.fueloilnews.co.uk