# Fuel Oil News

November 2026




## DALSTON TERMINAL: FROM CLOSURE TO CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## RECRUITMENT INSIGHT: THE COST OF GETTING IT WRONG

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

## Back on the cut

I write this foreword from the cosy interior of a narrowboat back in one of my happy places. Cruising the cut at just 2-3mph, life slows to a pace that contrasts hugely with my off-water normality.

Away from screens, calls and emails, the world drifts quietly by as we meander through open countryside, slip unobserved beneath roaring motorways and navigate city centres – our floating home a strange contrast to the bustle beyond.

It's an escape, a breath and a reminder of a less cluttered life.

Not entirely without challenges, though. Storm Austen sent boaters to seek sheltered moorings, but gusty winds soon gave way to autumn sunshine, dramatic skies and peaceful cruising. Sadly, the storms experienced by our industry this year have proved less fleeting.

We head into the traditionally challenging winter period amid considerable uncertainty. Stocks and customers' tanks are worryingly low, prices alarmingly high. Global tensions continue to exert upward pressure on prices, discouraging customers from ordering winter fuel.

For distributors, it has been a relentless year, with little prospect of any immediate respite. UKIFDA has issued timely winter guidance for consumers and distributors, recognising the vital role the latter play in helping households prepare.

As ever, distributors will do all they can to help customers weather the storm.

As Nick Goodwin observes on pages 9–11: "We're a resilient bunch. We always find a way." But, with contingency removed and supply tight, he also warns: "all it takes is one supply issue."

The industry may have resilience in abundance, but with so much uncertainty already to navigate, let's hope it isn't tested too severely this winter.



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## On the cover

Dalston Terminal is reopening under new ownership. Pictured with Terminal Managers Darren and Johnny, Margaret Major paid a visit to this critical component of UK infrastructure to hear what Standard Fuels' innovative operational approach will mean for UK fuel supply. Read more on pages 9 – 11.



# Thomas Gregory Pearson




**18th December 1939 – 17th September 2026**

It is with great sadness that we report the peaceful passing of Thomas Gregory Pearson, known to most as Tom, on 17th September 2026, aged 86 years.

Thomas Gregory Pearson, known to most as Tom, was a devoted family man, a respected businessman and the founder, along with his wife Rachel.

In 1972, they founded Tom Pearson Oils from their home moving to a purpose-built depot on Sheepbridge Industrial Estate, Chesterfield in 1977.

By 1978, the company had become Peak Oil Products (Northern) Limited. From modest beginnings Tom and Rachel created a successful family business serving domestic, agricultural and commercial customers throughout Derbyshire and beyond.

Tom was forward thinking and entrepreneurial, investing in depots, modern vehicles and computer technology. The principles on which he built the company remained simple: loyalty, exceptional service and treating people well. He valued the people he worked with – customers, suppliers and employees – many of whom remained with the business for over 30 years.

Tom will be remembered with enormous affection by all those who knew him and had the pleasure of working alongside him.

Tom died peacefully at home on Thursday 17th September 2026, aged 86, surrounded by his family. He was laid to rest on Friday 16th October 2026, at St Swithin's Church, Holmesfield.

*Our thoughts are with the family at this time.*

# DTS rebrands to DeliverUP

**Energy logistics technology provider DTS is to operate as DeliverUP Technology Solutions as DeliverUP increases its stake to 90%.**

The investment strengthens an established partnership, with DeliverUP having been a significant stakeholder and technology partner since DTS was founded four years ago.

Mike Smith will retain a 10% shareholding and continue as Managing Director, leading the business across the UK and Ireland.

DTS provides delivery management and operational technology solutions to fuel, LPG and energy distributors, helping businesses improve delivery efficiency, operational visibility and customer service.

## Building on an established partnership

Commenting on the investment, Mike Smith said: "This marks an exciting new chapter for our business, our customers and our team.

"DeliverUP has been a significant stakeholder and technology partner since the very beginning, so this investment represents the natural evolution of a relationship that has already delivered significant success.

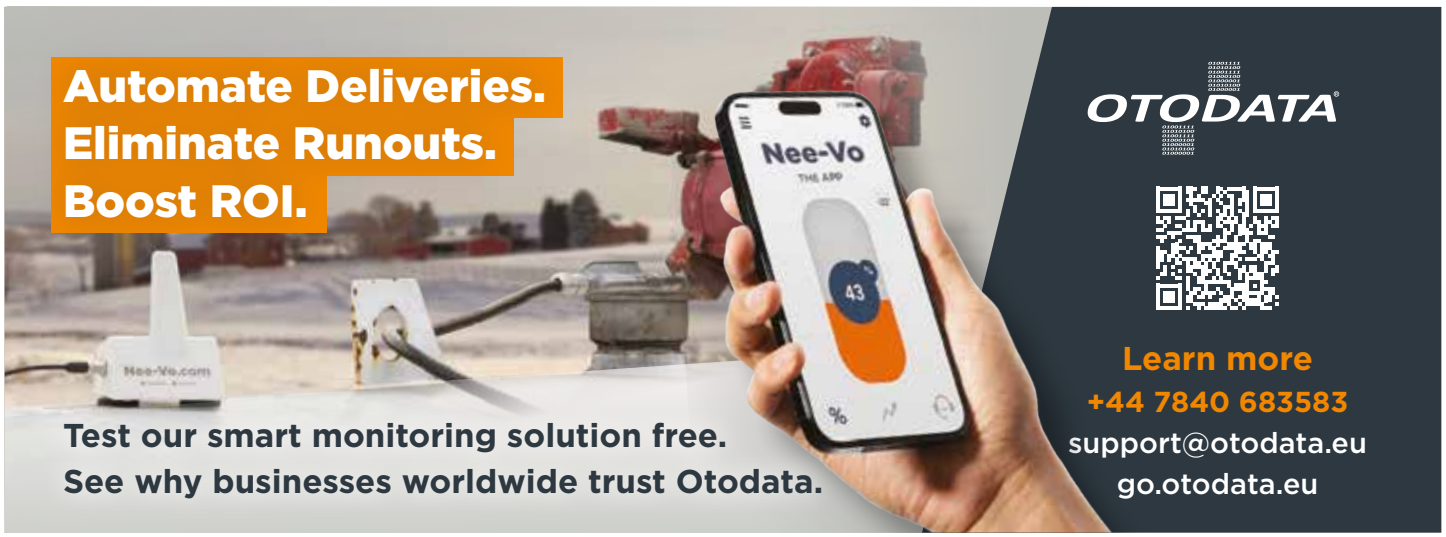
"By strengthening that relationship, we can accelerate innovation, increase our technical capability and continue providing the exceptional levels of service and support our customers expect."

The increased investment is intended to support faster development of new features and functionality, provide access to additional technical expertise and strengthen long-term customer support.

For existing customers, the company has emphasised continuity, with the same UK-based team remaining in place under Mike's leadership.

## Supporting future growth

Cédric Grangeon, CEO of DeliverUP, said: "Increasing our investment was the logical next step in a partnership that has already proven successful. Together we are creating a stronger technology business that combines local market expertise with DeliverUP's industry-leading capabilities, creating significant opportunities for innovation and growth."



# Jackdaw approved while Rosebank decision remains outstanding

**The Government's approval of the Jackdaw gas field has been welcomed by industry as a boost for domestic energy production but criticised by environmental groups concerned about its implications for the UK's climate commitments.**

Meanwhile, a decision on the significant Rosebank oil development remains outstanding.

Both were previously approved under the Conservative government, but their original consents were subsequently ruled unlawful following legal challenges over the failure to consider emissions from the eventual use of the oil and gas produced.

Following revised environmental assessments, Jackdaw has now secured approval, while Rosebank, one of the UK's largest undeveloped oil fields, remains subject to a separate decision.

The government estimates that Jackdaw could increase domestic gas production by around 6% at its peak, supporting energy security and protecting hundreds of jobs.

Sharing the announcement, James Spencer, Managing Director of Portland commented: "This is the right decision by the UK Government. Tax revenue and jobs are of course key factors, but energy security is also now far more important than it was five years ago.

"Whilst Shell and Equinor will be the (private) operators of Jackdaw, having indigenous energy production in British waters is vital in an unstable world.

Charandeep Singh BEM, Chief Executive of Scottish Chambers of Commerce, also welcomed the announcement, highlighting the importance of the North Sea industry to the wider UK supply chain and called for Rosebank to be "given that same approval to allow businesses across Scotland to plan with confidence rather than continued uncertainty."

INEOS also welcomed Jackdaw's approval but criticised the government's approach to North Sea taxation.

"Approving Jackdaw is the right decision, but this does not stop the damage being done to the North Sea. And it appears Rosebank remains stuck in political limbo."

The company called for changes to the Energy Profits Levy in the forthcoming Budget, arguing that the current 78% headline tax rate is deterring investment and contributing to declining domestic production.

### Climate groups question government's direction

Environmental organisations have expressed concern that approving further fossil fuel production sends the wrong signal about the UK's commitment to decarbonisation.

Tessa Khan, Executive Director of climate campaign group Uplift, warned that the government's climate credibility was now at stake, describing Rosebank as the defining test.

Sonya Bedford MBE, partner at law firm Spencer West LLP, also questioned the benefits of the decision for consumers, arguing that domestic production does not shield households from international gas prices.

"Jackdaw should not be presented as a solution to high energy bills. We should be reducing our exposure to fossil fuels through renewables, storage, stronger electricity networks, warmer homes, and electrification."

### Rosebank decision still awaited

With the Jackdaw decision now made, attention turns to Rosebank.

Bedford cautioned against assuming that approval of Jackdaw should lead to a similar outcome for Rosebank: "Jackdaw's approval increases the political pressure to approve Rosebank, but it should not become an automatic green light."

She called for Rosebank to undergo its own assessment of the climate implications.

The contrasting responses highlight the competing pressures facing the government as it seeks to balance energy security, industrial investment and employment with its climate commitments.

Labour's commitment is to issue no new oil and gas exploration licences, whereas Jackdaw and Rosebank are developments under existing licences.

For the North Sea industry, Rosebank represents a significant investment and future production opportunity. For environmental campaigners, its approval would raise further questions about the compatibility of new oil and gas developments with the UK's decarbonisation ambitions.

Media reports have suggested that the government may be considering refusing consent for Rosebank, although no final decision has been announced.

# Terrafa shortlisted for award for real-time fuel monitoring technology

**London-based engineering company Terrafa has been shortlisted for an APEA Innovation Award for technology designed to monitor fuel quality in real time and improve operational decision-making.**

The company's Sense sensor uses infrared technology to continuously monitor changes in fuel condition within storage tanks, including potential water accumulation, contamination and changes in biodiesel blends.

Unlike conventional sampling methods, Sense provides continuous readings directly from the tank and can be installed through an existing opening without requiring infrastructure modifications or shutdowns.

Readings feed into Terrafa's Continuum Core software platform, which combines fuel condition data with operational information including stock levels, deliveries and costs. The platform aims to help operators identify potential quality issues before they affect operations and predict when fuel may fall outside specification.

Orsell Biokou, Terrafa co-founder, said: "Distributors already know how much fuel is in their customers' tanks. The next question is what condition that fuel is in, and what it costs sitting in the tank.

"We built Sense and Continuum Core to answer both, so a team can see a problem early and decide what to do while the fix is cheap."

Co-founder James Parkinson highlighted the importance of reliability: "Our approach is to use AI to configure and present operational data, while keeping human oversight of decisions."

Terrafa is shortlisted in the Innovation category at the APEA Live Awards 2026, with the winner to be announced in Milton Keynes on 12 November.

# Government backs CMA heating oil recommendations – but details remain unresolved

**The Government has accepted the Competition and Markets Authority's recommendations for stronger consumer protection in the domestic heating oil market. However, the timetable and practical requirements remain unclear.**

In its response, published on 13 October, the Government backed the CMA's call for greater consumer protection, including a potential authorisation regime for heating oil distributors, stronger support for vulnerable households and improved access to independent dispute resolution.

However, the report is more policy direction than implementation plan, with the Government yet to establish a timetable, detailed requirements or likely implications for distributors.

Importantly, the Government also acknowledged the CMA's finding that the heating oil market is generally competitive and that the sharp price increases experienced earlier this year largely reflected rising wholesale costs rather than excessive supplier profits.

It also recognised that regulation must not become so burdensome that it drives smaller distributors out of the market and confirmed that it is not proposing to introduce a heating oil price cap comparable to that operating in the gas and electricity markets.

## Consumer protection consistency

The CMA proposed a mandatory code of conduct, access to alternative dispute resolution, arrangements to identify vulnerable customers and regulatory monitoring and enforcement. The Government has agreed in principle, arguing that greater consistency in consumer protection is needed.

However, it also recognises the need to avoid imposing disproportionate burdens on businesses, acknowledging that fewer suppliers operating in the market could weaken competition.

The detailed structure of the framework, its potential costs and the timescale for implementation remain undecided.

## Working with industry

While the longer-term regulatory framework is developed, the Government has agreed to work with UKIFDA, Ofgem and other industry organisations to strengthen existing codes of conduct, consumer protection initiatives and access to dispute resolution.

The CMA also recommended clearer signposting of available payment plans, minimum delivery volumes and the reasons for those minimums.

The Government has accepted this recommendation, although the requirements are yet to be translated into a revised code of conduct.



## Minimum delivery volumes under review

The Government has also agreed to review whether smaller heating oil deliveries are unnecessarily restricted in the current market.

The Government will consider whether the application of existing rules limits consumer choice and whether any changes would be appropriate. For distributors, smaller deliveries could provide greater flexibility for customers struggling with upfront heating costs, but may also have implications for delivery efficiency, route economics and operating costs.

No specific regulatory changes have been announced.

## Price transparency and regional differences

The CMA's suggestion of a temporary heating oil price comparison service for Great Britain, modelled on the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland's price checker, remains under consideration.

The Government acknowledged that commercial comparison services generally provide useful price transparency but may offer less consistent coverage during periods of market volatility or in remote areas. It intends to undertake further assessment before deciding whether a government-supported service is necessary.

The Government has also agreed to consider regional pricing and supply data when designing future consumer support measures, particularly for households facing higher costs or limited supplier choice.

These proposals do not currently impose new pricing or reporting obligations on distributors.

## Industry response

Responding to the announcement, UKIFDA said it stands ready to work constructively with ministers, officials and other stakeholders on implementing the CMA's recommendations.

The association reiterated the CMA's conclusion that the market is generally competitive and that distributors had not materially benefited from the significant price increases experienced during the period of energy market disruption.

It also emphasised the industry's exposure to international markets, with distributors generally purchasing fuel frequently at prevailing wholesale prices.

UKIFDA said: "We welcome continued dialogue with Government and other stakeholders to ensure that any future measures are evidence-based, proportionate and deliver tangible benefits for consumers."

The association reaffirmed its commitment to high standards of customer service, transparency and consumer protection.

Following the announcement, Tim Buckman, Chief Executive of BoilerJuice, emphasised the importance of strong consumer protection but suggested the main problem is that heating oil is twice as expensive as it was before the war: "Just putting regulation in place is not going to reduce the price for customers. What we would like to see is the VAT off heating oil."

## What happens next?

Although the Government has accepted the direction of the CMA's recommendations, significant questions remain about their implementation. There is no timetable for the introduction of any formal regulation and no explanation of how existing industry arrangements might be incorporated into a new framework.

Further clarity is also needed on the handling of vulnerable customer information, practical requirements for smaller deliveries and the scope of any additional compliance or reporting obligations.

The Government has committed to further engagement with regulators, industry bodies and consumer organisations before determining the way forward.

For distributors, the extent and timing of any resultant operational changes remain uncertain.

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# THE LATEST UPDATES FROM OUR DISTRIBUTOR COMMUNITY





## Morgan Webb celebrates five years with Barton Petroleum

**Morgan Webb**, Depot Assistant at Northamptonshire-based fuel distributor Barton Petroleum Ltd, has marked five years with the company.

Reflecting on his career to date, Morgan said: "I've had the opportunity to learn, develop, take on new challenges and work alongside some fantastic people along the way. Looking back, I'm proud of how much I've grown, both professionally and personally.

"A huge thank you to everyone I've worked with over the last five years for the support, laughs, challenges and memories. Five years down – plenty more to go!"

### Making his mark

For Barton Petroleum Managing Director Clive Morin, Morgan is a great example of the younger generation making its mark on the fuel industry.

"A few years ago, there were many conversations about how the fuel industry needed an influx of good young people to form the next generation and shape the future of the industry. It certainly looks like we are making progress now.

"I enjoy turning the pages of Fuel Oil News and reading stories about young people doing well and making a name for themselves. For us at Barton Petroleum, Morgan is in that bracket – a real asset for our Wellingborough Depot and the company as a whole."

### A bright future

"From day one, you could see that he had a desire to do well. Always keen to gain knowledge and willing to learn different roles within the company, which will serve him well in the future.

"A team player, great at problem solving and he has a wonderful rapport with our customers. The future looks bright for Morgan!"

## Par Petroleum donates defibrillator to local community

**Par Petroleum**, the North-East based fuel distributor has donated a lifesaving defibrillator to Biddick Woods Residents Group, helping to improve access to emergency equipment for the 300 households it supports.

### Lifesaving support

The defibrillator has been installed in a central location within the Biddick Woods community, providing easy access for residents, visitors and volunteers. Par Petroleum purchased the equipment at the Red Sky Foundation's Red Sky Ball earlier this year, with the intention of donating it to a local community.

Following nominations through the company's social media channels and website, Biddick Woods Residents Group was selected as the recipient. The Biddick Wood Residents Group supports families with young children, older residents and people living alone, while working to strengthen connections and promote a safer and more caring community.



### A personal connection

For residents group member Vicki Kennedy, the new defibrillator has particular significance.

"This is deeply important to us. Our own daughter has needed CPR, so we know first-hand how frightening it is when every second matters," she said.

The group has also experienced the loss of residents to cardiac arrest, reinforcing the importance of having lifesaving equipment readily available within the community.

"As a resident's group, we are well placed to raise awareness of the defibrillator, make sure local people know where it is and how to use it," added Vicki. "This defibrillator makes Biddick Woods a safer and more prepared place and reflects the very purpose of our group: neighbours looking after neighbours."

### Supporting local communities

Par Petroleum Managing Director Leanne Hardy said: "As supporters of the Red Sky Foundation for many years we know how important responding quickly to a cardiac emergency is.

"We wanted to make sure a local community was given the opportunity to save lives and Biddick Woods Residents Group is a very worthy recipient. As a group of volunteers, they work hard to improve the wellbeing of people in their area and now have the reassurance and potentially life-saving support for both residents and visitors."

## Mission complete for Ben at MechTronic!

Ben Wilkie, Production, Health, and Safety Quality Manager at **MechTronic Ltd**, has taken on the challenge of climbing Ben Nevis to raise money for three charities. The challenge was organised to raise vital funds for Mind, Parkinson's UK and Dementia UK, with Ben joined by friends for the fundraising adventure.

Ben reflected: "As someone used to covering 100-mile road rides on a bike, taking on Ben Nevis on foot tested entirely different muscles and a totally different mindset. 10.5 miles and over 33,000 steep steps later, reaching the top with my friends was an incredible reward.

We took on this trek to raise essential funds for Mind, Parkinson's UK, and Dementia UK – causes that mean a great deal to all of us. I'm incredibly grateful to everyone who supported us along the way."

Congratulations to Ben and the team on completing the challenge!






# From closure to critical infrastructure: the return of Dalston

WHEN DALSTON FUEL TERMINAL CLOSED FOLLOWING THE LOSS OF ITS GRANGEMOUTH SUPPLY ROUTE, STANDARD FUEL OILS INITIALLY HAD LITTLE INTEREST IN OWNING IT. LESS THAN TWO YEARS LATER, THE DISTRIBUTOR IS PREPARING TO RETURN THE CUMBRIAN SITE TO OPERATION UNDER AN UNUSUAL NEW MODEL. MARGARET MAJOR, EDITOR FOR FUEL OIL NEWS, VISITED DALSTON TO DISCOVER WHAT CHANGED – AND WHAT ITS RETURN COULD MEAN FOR FUEL SUPPLY ACROSS NORTHERN ENGLAND AND SOUTHERN SCOTLAND.

**"I laughed it off. Literally laughed it off."**

Nick Goodwin, Managing Director for Standard, is recalling his reaction when Standard Fuel Oils was first asked whether it might be interested in buying Dalston Fuel Terminal.

"My first thought was: 'Why would we want to buy this site?'"

It was a reasonable question.

Standard knew Dalston well. Before its closure, the distributor had tankers based there, loading product from Petroineos to serve an existing customer base across the region.

When the terminal closed, those vehicles simply returned to Liverpool and Manchester.

"It was a minor inconvenience," Nick says. "We're still delivering to the same customers."

While it had been convenient to base tankers there, buying the terminal itself was another proposition entirely. For several months, Standard did little with the sale prospectus. Then a leadership team conversation in the office changed the way the company looked at it.

"We just said to ourselves: are we looking at this too deeply? The reality is it's a site with offices, tanks and loading facilities. All the infrastructure is already there.

"We don't have to use 100% of it."

Rather than asking whether Standard wanted to become a terminal operator, the team stripped the proposition back.

"We can use a couple of tanks. We can use the office, the parking space and the loading skids and just open it as a wet depot ourselves.

"That was our intention."

## An opportunity created by change

Nick is reluctant to characterise Dalston as an asset that simply became economically unviable. In his view, its closure needs to be understood in the context of the changes at Grangemouth.

Dalston had been entirely rail-fed, receiving product from the Scottish refinery. With that established supply arrangement no longer viable, the terminal lost the operating model around which it had been built.

Recent significant investment in key areas of the site also suggested to Nick that closure had not necessarily been part of a long-term plan.

Having reconsidered the opportunity, Standard submitted an offer.

It was accepted.

What followed was six to nine months of

environmental, financial, tax and legal due diligence before the acquisition completed. Even then, the scale of Dalston took some adjustment.

"The site was intimidating," Nick admits. "It is intimidating. You look at all the infrastructure and think: what have we bought?

"But everyone kept saying to me: it's intimidating, but we know what we're doing here. If you strip it down, it's a wet depot."

The company has retained experienced terminal knowledge while bringing in two new operators to train alongside it.

There are currently four operators at Dalston, with numbers expected to increase as activity grows.

Bringing almost 19 years of experience, Darren has joined Standard as joint Terminal Manager working alongside Johnny. Being responsible for the decommissioning phase, Johnny, who has been 16 years in the industry, has remained on site. Delighted to be bringing back into operation a terminal they have clear pride in; they are looking forward to instilling the same values in their recently recruited team members Liam and Simon who are both new to the industry.

That level of commitment was evident, Nick shares, with Standard finding Dalston an asset that had continued to be maintained during its period out of operation.

"The lads here are proud of the site," he says. "They haven't just sat here waiting for things to open. They've been maintaining it, painting, jet-washing and sticking to the maintenance schedule."

## Re-engineering the route in

The largest practical challenge has been changing the way product arrives as Dalston had been designed around rail.

"We couldn't have taken a litre of product in here by road," Nick explains.

Standard has therefore invested significant capital to re-engineer the terminal to receive road tanker deliveries, including in loading bays and the systems that support them.

The initial business case did not depend on bringing the whole terminal back into use. Standard had already demonstrated that it had customers in the area and was prepared, if necessary, simply to use Dalston as another of its own depots.

It's an approach Nick says reflects the company's broader expansion philosophy: "Go and get the work, prove it's sustainable and then figure out where you're going to park the trucks."

What happened after the decision to buy Dalston, however, gave the site the potential to become something significantly bigger.

## "It snowballed into something else"

During the acquisition process, Standard began talking to its major supplier EET Fuels about the possibilities offered by Dalston.

"That's where it snowballed into something else," says Nick.

Under the model now being developed, Standard owns and operates the terminal while EET Fuels, as its supply partner, supplies the principal fuel stock and manages commercial sales from it.

Standard's responsibilities include the physical operation of Dalston: receiving deliveries, driver inductions, loading access, site systems, health and safety and the wider operational requirements that come with running the terminal.

For Nick, it is distinct from the company's established depot operations.

"At Liverpool, we'll be loading our own trucks, using our own product and delivering it to our own customers. Here, we're enabling them to operate from the terminal and sell the product."

His description is simple: "It's a hybrid."

It also represents a new level of responsibility for the distributor.

Specialist contractors and advisers have supported areas including equipment recommissioning, environmental requirements, health and safety and liaison with local emergency services, while the supplier relationship brings another layer of terminal and refinery experience.

But Nick repeatedly returns to the philosophy that made Standard consider Dalston in the first place.

"You just have to break it down."

## A terminal for distributors

The hybrid arrangement also addresses a question that comes naturally when a fuel distributor owns infrastructure that its competitors may use.

Nick is adamant that Dalston is not intended simply to strengthen Standard's own supply position: "What we're keen to put out there is: it's a terminal for distributors."

Companies wanting to base vehicles at Dalston can deal with Standard, while commercial arrangements for fuel supply are made independently with EET Fuels.

It is an important separation.

Standard will use Dalston for its existing customers and sees scope to grow its own business locally, but third-party throughput is fundamental to its ambitions for the site.




It's an unusual reversal: commercial success for Standard as terminal owner depends partly on making Dalston useful to other distributors.

## Bringing product closer to the market

The wider access is important because, while the impacts of Dalston's closure were relatively easily managed by Standard, Nick believes the impact across the regional supply chain has been very different.

The loss of local infrastructure has significantly increased the distance some tankers travel to source product.

"When you're driving up the motorway from Stanlow towards Carlisle, the amount of road tankers you're seeing up and down the M6 is incredible."

Those extra miles mean additional driving time, cost and pressure on logistics.

Historic activity at Dalston also gives an indication of local demand.

Nick says the terminal's combined kerosene tanks held around half a million litres and recalls being told by its previous manager that, in the middle of winter, that volume could turn over in a single night, with the following day's rail delivery ordered to replenish it.

"There's still that element of undersupply in the area," he says. "We're going to be plugging a hole."

The ambitions for overall throughput are significant. Nick estimates that Dalston handled around 380 million litres annually at its historic peak. The target for its first year back in operation is around 150 million litres, with an ambition to build from there towards 250–300 million litres.

He is deliberately cautious about how quickly that can happen.

"How realistic that is, I don't know, because of the fact that it is going to be road-fed."

But road supply may not be the final chapter. While pumps have been removed from the rail sidings, much of the infrastructure remains. Nick says returning to rail would require planning and investment but believes it remains

technically possible if sufficient throughput establishes the commercial case.

The immediate priority is simpler: make Dalston work, build volume and demonstrate the demand.

## Capacity or contingency?

The return of Dalston comes against a backdrop of significant change in the UK's downstream infrastructure.

Nick's assessment of what recent closures tell us about resilience is notably pragmatic: "I think, if you isolate Dalston itself, no, it didn't say there was an issue."

He acknowledges that the loss of major pieces of infrastructure without widespread interruption to fuel supply suggests there had been surplus capacity within the system.

"For two refineries to close and for supply to be hardly impacted suggests an element of oversupply," he suggests. Although, he does note the importance of the industry's response and the inherent risk of tight supply.

Capacity that appears surplus under normal conditions can also represent contingency when circumstances are not normal.

"If something does happen drastically, there is a lack of contingency.

"For all the times that it goes right, the one time that it goes wrong, you need to have the contingency in place."

Nick says the Department for Energy Security has sought updates from Standard on when Dalston will reopen, suggesting wider interest in the return of the site's capacity.

For distributors themselves, resilience has often meant adapting quickly when infrastructure or supply disappears.

"We're a resilient bunch of distributors," Nick says. "We always find a way. That's why I think it's important not to have all your eggs in one basket.

"All it takes is one supply issue and you're scratching around for product."

Restoring Dalston does not reverse the wider consolidation of the UK's downstream infrastructure. It does, however, return one source of capacity to a region that has been travelling further to replace it.

## Infrastructure for whatever comes next

Dalston is being brought back into operation at a time when the longer-term mix of fuels moving through the UK's distribution network is increasingly uncertain.

That does not concern Nick in quite the way it might have done when the terminal was built.

Existing tanks can be reassigned and currently unused capacity brought back into service as demand changes.

HVO is not among the initial product slate discussed during the visit, but the physical asset is not tied indefinitely to the products it holds today.

For Nick, that reflects a wider evolution in how distributors should view themselves.

"Look at the other niche products that have come out of the industry in the last five, ten or 15 years. Five years ago, who knew what renewable diesel was?"

And, he suggests, more will change.

"I've said it before: whatever energy we're delivering in 20 years' time, we just hope it will be us delivering it as a distributor. You've got to see yourselves as an energy company primarily.

"Whatever products we're going to be delivering – who knows?"

For a terminal that was facing either sale or demolition, that flexibility may ultimately prove as significant as the fuels that pass through it when the loading bays restart.




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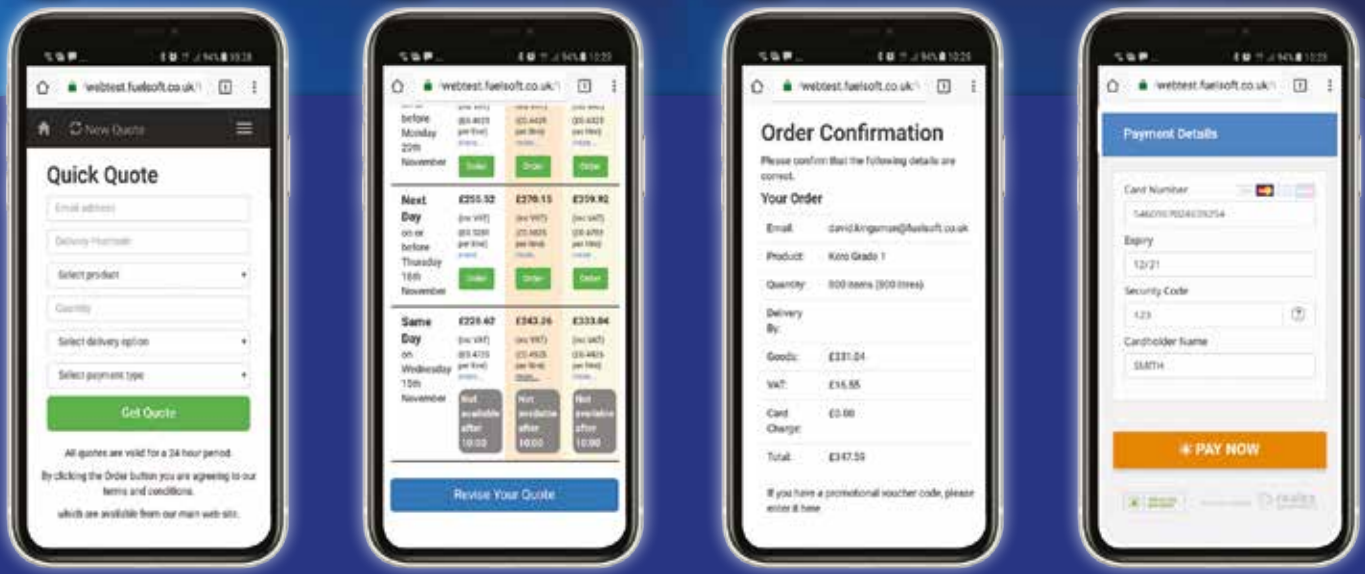
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# A DAY IN THE LIFE...

## Emily Yates
## RSM Fuel Delivery

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 **EMILY YATES**, DEPOT MANAGER, RSM FUEL DELIVERY, TO DISCOVER HOW EMILY SPENDS A TYPICAL DAY.



**My alarm goes off at...**5:50am. I won't lie…I do struggle with an alarm, even more so now we're heading into Autumn. There are usually a couple of snoozes until 6am, before I accept that I really do need to get up.

**The first thing I do is...**give my boyfriend Ben and Beasley (my sausage dog) plenty of kisses and cuddles before getting myself ready for the day.

**I prepare for the day ahead by...**the usual shower, face wash, teeth and hair routine, followed by trying to find something to wear that still fits during pregnancy. Then I make sure I've got the important things covered: coffee, food and everything I need for the day.

**I can't leave the house without...**FOOD, my phones, coffee and my work bag with the essentials in!

**My typical day –**
I head straight to RSM HQ in Halifax for around 7am. I start with a visit to the fuel depot, before heading into the office to get stuck into the day. As Depot Manager, no two days are quite the same and I love that!

There's always a plan, but in the fuel distribution industry, as you all know…that plan can change so fast!

A big part of my role is keeping everything moving…managing drivers and vehicle schedules, coordinating stocks and deliveries, dealing with customers and suppliers, and making sure the day-to-day operation runs as smoothly as possible. There's also plenty of paperwork, planning and compliance to keep on top of.

Communication is a big part of the job too, whether that's with the sales team, drivers out on the road, customers or suppliers.

Then there are the things you can't really plan for…breakdowns, traffic, delays and deliveries that don't quite go to plan. You can start the day thinking you know what you're dealing with and find yourself doing something completely different a couple of hours later.



Come 3:30ish, I'm hopefully wrapping things up and getting ready to head home. Although, as anyone in operations will know… "wrapping things up" and actually walking out of the office at the planned time can sometimes be two very different things! But…we love it!

**My most memorable work moment...**there isn't really one moment I could pick. I think working in this industry, you end up with a lot of stories rather than one memorable moment!

I've had quite a few noticeable moments and achievements throughout my time in the industry. I've been fortunate enough to win the UKIFDA Young Person of the Year Award, appear on a live podcast, and feature both inside and on the front cover of Fuel Oil News and Downstream Magazine.

**The worst part of my job...**vehicles! And all the usual haulage issues that come with them… breakdowns, traffic, delays and all the knock-on effects they can have on the day. You can have everything planned and then a vehicle decides otherwise!

**The best part of my job...**I think it's the variety. I like the fact that a lot of the time I don't know what I'm going to be dealing with when I walk through the door each morning, which keeps it interesting.

I also enjoy the people side of the job. There's a lot of communication and problem-solving involved, and I like being in the middle of it all and getting things sorted.

**I relax after work by...**there's nothing better than a nice hot bubble bath, candles lit and a lovely home-cooked meal on the go. That's my idea of switching off after a busy day. If the weather is being kind, then we do enjoy a nice walk after tea before we sit down to chill for the night.

**My favourite meal...**anything to be honest! I LOVE crunchy cereal and freezing cold milk at any point of the day! BUT you can't go wrong with anything Italian! Spag Bol Wednesdays are a tradition in our home, and I genuinely look forward to it each week!

**On my bedside table is...**probably wayyyy too much! But the essentials are my Kindle, ice-cold water in my Stanley, lip balm and, thanks to pregnancy, Rennies because the heartburn is very real!

**The last thing I do each day is...**prep our breakfast and lunch for the following day. Then it's time for a brew and a biscuit – Yorkshire Tea and a chocolate digestive, of course. Ready to snuggle up with Ben and Beasley and read my Kindle.

**I'm normally in bed by...**about 9pm. By that point, after a 5:50am alarm – a full day at the depot and everything else that comes with it – I'm more than ready for bed. Early nights, sausage dog cuddles and a Kindle… that's usually me done for the day!

# Emily Yates: Learning, leading and looking ahead

FROM APPRENTICE TO DEPOT MANAGER, **EMILY YATES** HAS BUILT A CAREER ACROSS CUSTOMER SERVICE, SALES, OPERATIONS AND TRANSPORT – GAINING EXPERIENCE OF MANY DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE FUEL DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRY ALONG THE WAY.

NOW DEPOT MANAGER AT RSM FUEL DELIVERY, EMILY HAS TAKEN ON GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING AND CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPOT, WHILE MAINTAINING THE PRACTICAL, HANDS-ON APPROACH THAT HAS CHARACTERISED HER CAREER TO DATE.

FOLLOWING ON FROM HER 'A DAY IN THE LIFE', EMILY SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON CAREER PROGRESSION, LEADERSHIP, DRIVING TANKERS, THE CHANGING FACE OF FUEL DISTRIBUTION AND WHAT THE NEXT GENERATION CAN BRING TO THE INDUSTRY.

**You've been in the industry over a decade, what made you decide it was time for this new challenge?**

"I liked the idea of being a lot more involved in the daily running of a depot and I was especially interested in continuing within the operational and transport side of the industry. It felt like a role where I could bring a lot of the experience to the table that I'd gained over the years and continue to learn.

"When the opportunity came up to join the team at RSM I was very keen to take on new challenges. By that point, I had built up a lot of experience across different areas of the industry. I felt that the Depot Manager role gave me the opportunity to take on more responsibility and develop that experience even further."

**How different is the role – and what have you learned about yourself?**

"Taking the leap into this role has given me a much broader level of responsibility and a real insight into the operational side of the business. There are a lot of moving parts to keep on top of including drivers, vehicles, deliveries, stock, customers, suppliers, compliance and so much more. More often than not, several of those things need dealing with at the same time!

"Since joining RSM Fuel Delivery, I have also been given the chance to help expand and grow the depot and the fuel delivery team. A lot has changed since the first day I walked into the yard: bringing new drivers into the team, adding new tankers to the fleet, brand new fuel tanks with larger capacities and a loading skid along with so much more.

"It's been really rewarding to see the operation grow as quickly and efficiently as it has and to know I've played a part in that is something I am proud of!




"I've learnt that I really enjoy that side of the industry. I like being busy, solving problems and having to think on my feet when things don't go to plan. Also, I have learnt that I'm probably more capable of juggling everything than I sometimes give myself credit for. There's always something new to deal with, but I enjoy the challenge. And I look forward to the continued growth and success of the RSM group!

**How did winning UKIFDA's inaugural Young Person of the Year Award affect your career?**

"Winning the very first UKIFDA Young Person of the Year Award was an extremely proud moment for me and my family. I always go above and beyond and to see that being recognised was just what I needed to give me a massive confidence boost at a relatively early stage in my career.

"It also gave me more opportunities to get involved in things outside of my day-to-day role and really progress into the person I have become today.

"It's been nice to be able to use my experiences and achievements to talk about the industry and hopefully encourage other people, particularly younger people and women, to consider joining the fuel industry as a career option."

**You have become something of an ambassador for the industry. Do you think it has become more welcoming and diverse?**

"For me, it's so important that young people can see other young people that they can relate to, working in different roles and realise that this is an industry they can build a brilliant career in.

"I honestly do think there has been a noticeable change within the industry when it comes to more young people, both male and female, coming through and joining the many different areas of the industry.

"When I first joined the fuel industry, I don't think I saw as many women in some of the operational and transport roles, whereas now I think there's a lot more awareness out there, that there are opportunities out there for everyone.

"Fuel distribution is a lot broader than people might realise, and there are so many different career paths within it. There is still work to do, though. I think the industry needs to keep showing people what the opportunities look like. And keep broadcasting the achievements and successes of the upcoming youngsters in the industry to really get the word out there."

**What kind of manager do you want to be?**

"I have always tried to be approachable and someone that people feel comfortable coming




to, whether they've got a problem, a question or just need a second opinion. I may be young, but I do have a lot of knowledge and experience to share that I have gained through the past 11 years.

"I have always appreciated the people who were willing to take the time to explain things to me rather than just expect me to know everything, so that's something I want to do for other people.

"I also think it's important to listen to the people doing the job. Especially in operations, the people on the ground often have the most practical understanding of what's happening. If you don't know, ask! That is how you learn!"

### How important is it to understand life on the road?

"I think it's so important and I absolutely love having the ability and the skillset to be able to drive our fuel tankers!

"Having the qualifications to drive fuel tankers means I've been able to understand the job from the driver's perspective, which is highly important, rather than only seeing things from an office.

"There are so many things that drivers must deal with out on the roads that you don't necessarily appreciate until you've done it for yourself…traffic, access issues, customers, weather, time pressures and everything else that comes with the role.

"I think having that understanding really does help when you're managing the operation because you have a much better idea of what is realistic and what your drivers are dealing with. It also helps, when things don't go to plan, that I have the option to get my uniform and boots on and get stuck in if needed!"

### What do people outside the industry misunderstand about fuel distribution?

"I think a lot of people probably don't realise how much goes into getting their fuel from A to B…despite what people might think, it isn't just as easy as driving a tanker from one place to another!

"From the planning and logistics to compliance, vehicle maintenance, stock management and coordinating drivers and customers, there's a huge amount happening behind the scenes. They'd be surprised by how much problem-solving is involved. Things rarely go exactly to plan, so you must be able to adapt quickly and find a solution."

### What does the energy transition look like at the depot rather than in the headlines?

"There's a lot happening across the industry, from alternative fuels such as HVO to new technologies and different ways of approaching transport and energy.

"On the ground, it's about understanding how those changes actually work in practice. From where I sit, the energy transition is more of a gradual change rather than everything changing overnight.

"Day to day, my role is still very much about keeping the operation running safely and efficiently.

"The energy transition means us all staying informed, being open to new ways of working and making sure we all understand what these changes mean operationally, as well as for our customers.

"The industry is evolving, but there's still a huge amount of knowledge and experience that needs to come with it, and I think that's where the real change happens."

### What skills will the next generation need?

"For young people coming into the industry, I think giving them a broad understanding of the business and the industry is extremely valuable. Don't just teach someone one job – give them the opportunity to understand how the different parts of the industry fit together.

"There will always be new skills that become more important as the industry changes, particularly around technology, data and understanding new fuels and systems. But I don't think the basics will change. Communication, problem-solving, organisation, safety and being able to work well with people will always be important."

### What are you proud of that people might not know about?

"Gaining my fuel tanker driving qualifications! It's something I funded myself at a young age and really pushed myself to gain my Class 1 and 2 HGV licences and finally go in for my ADR qualification to allow me to drive fuel tankers.

"It wasn't something I had to do, but something that I wanted to do, to get the experience and the understanding that comes with getting behind the wheel. I pushed myself to do these because I wanted to understand another side of the industry and not just manage things from behind a desk and as my mum would say…add another string to my bow!

"I'm proud of the awards and opportunities I've had, but I'm probably just as proud of the things I've challenged myself to do along the way."

### What would you tell the Emily who started in the industry in 2015?

"I'd probably tell her to enjoy it, don't overthink too much, say yes to every opportunity, keep learning, keep asking questions and don't be afraid to try things that are outside her comfort zone.

"Some of the opportunities I've had have come from simply putting myself forward and seeing what happens. When you're just starting out, you don't necessarily know where your career is going to take you and the unknown can be very scary – I wouldn't have predicted where I am now!"

*Emily's career so far has taken her from an apprenticeship to depot management, while giving her experience across many different aspects of fuel distribution. Her message for those coming into the industry is equally relevant to those already established within it: stay curious, keep learning, get involved and don't be afraid to take the next opportunity.*

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320 / 500 UK depots – UKIFDA states there are approximately 500 fuel distribution depots in the UK. CODAS customers report operating across at least 320 UK depots.



# Preparing for the unexpected: The value of spill response training

BARTON PETROLEUM AND COMPASS ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY

**A fuel spill can escalate quickly, with potentially serious consequences for people, property and the environment. For fuel distributors, ensuring depot staff and drivers know how to respond effectively is an important part of operational preparedness.**

Barton Petroleum's experience of Spill First Responder training, delivered by Compass Environmental Consultancy through the Oilshield scheme, highlights the value of combining practical instruction with the right equipment and support.

## Building confidence through practical training

For Howard Marriott, Group Transport Manager at Barton Petroleum, the decision to arrange Spill First Responder training for depot operational staff was prompted by both previous experience and the opportunity offered through Oilshield.

"We had an incident in one of our depots a few years ago and, although it was handled well, we wanted to ensure all depot operational staff across the company were aware of the actions needed to minimise the impact of a spillage," he explained.

Joining the Oilshield scheme provided a further incentive, with the training offered as part of its risk management programme. Barton welcomed the opportunity to strengthen its spill preparedness across the business.

The course combined a theory session in the training room with a practical exercise in the depot, using water to demonstrate spill response techniques. For Howard, this hands-on element was particularly valuable, helping staff understand how quickly a seemingly minor incident can escalate.

He added that one of the biggest lessons was recognising how limited the consequences of a spill can be when it is tackled early and correctly.

## Recognising the risks and acting quickly

Effective spill response starts with understanding the potential hazards



and taking appropriate action without delay. From a depot and transport management perspective, these include identifying the product involved, assessing the presence of vapours, preventing fuel from entering drains or watercourses, and managing slip and skid risks. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is also essential to reduce the risk of skin contamination.

Stewart Ower, Risk Management and Spill Response Lead for Oilshield, explained that spillages can occur during fuel deliveries for several reasons, including driver error, equipment failure or problems with the receiving tank or associated infrastructure.

Drivers are often well placed to take the initial emergency measures needed to limit the impact. Shutting down the delivery, where safe to do so, and using spill kit materials to contain the loss close to its source can help bring the situation under control.

"Prompt and effective action can prevent or minimise damage, protect

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company reputation and avoid a large insurance claim," said Stewart.

He stressed that one of the most important rules is not to hose down a spill or flush it into drains, onto lawns or elsewhere, as this simply spreads the contamination. Instead, the priority is to stop the source of the spill where safe, contain it and prevent it from reaching vulnerable areas.

Where oil has affected soil, gravel or grass, visibly contaminated material may need to be removed promptly. Particular care is needed where a spill threatens a property, as contaminated soil close to a building can increase the risk of damage and oil vapour entering living spaces.

Any spill should be reported immediately to the Depot Manager so that further advice and support can be obtained. Stewart confirmed that Oilshield's support is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### A proportionate response

While acting quickly is essential, Stewart emphasised that an effective response must also be appropriate to the circumstances. Among the common misconceptions is the belief that a spill will eventually disappear or that covering contaminated ground with topsoil will resolve the problem.

At the other extreme, excessive use of spill kit materials can generate unnecessary volumes of contaminated waste and increase clean-up costs.

"An appropriate response is proportionate to the circumstances and identified risks," he explained. "It should be safe, timely, proportionate, effective and cost efficient. No two spills are the same, the spill setting can change the picture completely."

Training helps employees assess the situation, understand the risks and make informed decisions rather than relying on assumptions. It also reinforces the importance of acting promptly while ensuring that the response remains safe and proportionate.

### Supporting a wider safety culture

Barton Petroleum's commitment to safety and environmental responsibility is reflected in its platinum status across all depots under the UKIFDA Depot Certification Scheme. For Howard, however, maintaining high standards also means ensuring staff are prepared to deal with incidents should they occur.

He said: "Although we hold platinum status in all our depots as part of the UKIFDA Depot Certification Scheme, which demonstrates our commitment to environmental responsibility and best practice, we feel that spill response training is something that should still be conducted, but hopefully never needed!"

The training provided to Barton's depot staff is accredited by the International Spill Accreditation Scheme (ISAS), which Stewart explained supports the development of in-house spill first responder capability.

As joint owners of Oilshield, Compass provides the training as part of the scheme's risk management offering. Spill First Responder training is available at no cost to Oilshield customers, who also receive ADR-compliant spill kits for use on tankers.

Stewart believes this combination of training and equipment can deliver significant benefits. Preventing just one major spill could more than offset the investment, while helping to protect customers, the environment, insurers and distributors' claims experience and reputation.

### Training beyond the depot

Spill preparedness also extends to drivers, who may be the first to encounter an incident during a delivery. Compass delivers Driver CPC training that includes the same Spill First Responder module, alongside online training resources designed to address risks associated with liquid fuel deliveries.

These initiatives are developed in response to the types of claims encountered by Oilshield, many of which Stewart said are behaviour-driven and therefore avoidable. The aim is to help drivers assess delivery risks, respond appropriately to spills and avoid injury during the delivery process.

The training and resources form part of Oilshield's value-added initiatives and are exclusive to its customers, giving distributors access to practical support designed around the risks they face.

### Preparedness that pays off

For Barton Petroleum, the training has helped reinforce the importance of early intervention, sound judgement and practical spill response skills. For the wider downstream fuel industry, the message is clear: while preventing every incident may not be possible, ensuring staff know how to respond can make a significant difference.

By combining accredited training, appropriate equipment and access to specialist support, distributors can improve their readiness to protect people, property and the environment when a spill occurs.

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# Winter heating oil demand: what is the data telling us?



WITH **MARTIN SPERR**, DATA SCIENTIST, FOXINSIGHTS

**Every heating season follows a familiar pattern. Temperatures drop, customers notice their tanks are running low and orders flood in within a matter of days, especially after the first cold night.**

Distributors scramble to meet demand, routes are stretched, drivers work overtime and the phones don't stop ringing.

It is a cycle the industry knows well. But this year, the data suggests the conditions are in place for that pressure to be particularly pronounced.

## What the numbers are telling us

Across our monitored tank population in the UK, average fill levels in September were 61%, down from 65% at the same point last year.

The number of tanks below the alert threshold customers have set for themselves has risen from 8% to 11% of the monitored base. These are households whose tanks have dropped below the level at which they have chosen to be alerted, suggesting a reorder decision is getting closer.

Summer refilling activity was also noticeably weaker. Average fill levels gained just three percentage points between March and September, compared with five percentage points over the same period last year. Overall, refill volumes across the monitored base were down by 14%.

The sharp price increases seen during 2026 are likely to have played an important part. UKIFDA reported in March, that wholesale kerosene prices had more than doubled year on year, reaching a three-and-a-half-year high.

Faced with that pressure, many customers appear to have delayed spring and summer refills rather than topping up when their tanks were still at comfortable levels.

UK customers typically order more frequently than their continental counterparts, so the regular ordering cycle can absorb some of that shortfall before tanks reach critical levels. But the margin looks narrower than usual this year.

For context, the picture on the continent is even more stark. In Germany, where tanks are typically larger and customers order less frequently, average monitored fill levels have dropped to 49%, compared with 61% last year. Nearly a quarter of monitored tanks there have already fallen below the alert levels set by their owners.

Different markets have different ordering patterns, but the underlying lesson is the same: when customers defer filling, more demand can ultimately arrive in a shorter period.

## Why this matters for distributors

For UK distributors, the operational risk is straightforward. If temperatures fall sharply, a larger-than-usual proportion of customers could need fuel at around the same time.

Fixed fleet capacity then meets compressed demand. And the trigger is not the price. It's the first cold night.

Most distributors are extremely good at responding to seasonal peaks. Decades of experience, well-run fleets and strong customer relationships mean the sector is accustomed to dealing with sudden increases in orders.

But responding comes at a cost.

Emergency deliveries are expensive. Unplanned route changes reduce efficiency. Overtime increases. Customer service teams come under pressure. And, when a large number of customers call within the same few days, even the best-run operation may find itself deciding which deliveries are most urgent and how best to manage expectations.

The deeper issue is that a purely reactive model leaves much of the timing of demand outside the distributor's control. The weather changes, customers realise they are getting low and the calls begin.

Better visibility creates an opportunity to influence that sequence.

## From visibility to action

Knowing more about customer tank levels does not remove the winter peak, but it can give distributors more scope to manage how that demand reaches them.

There are three areas where better use of data can make a particular difference.

- **Identifying customers approaching reorder point**

Traditional seasonal marketing tends to address a customer base as a whole. Tank-level data allows distributors to focus instead on customers whose circumstances suggest they may genuinely need fuel soon.

That creates an opportunity for more relevant communication: a notification, email, text message or proactive call to a customer whose tank is approaching a predetermined level, perhaps combined with information about expected colder weather.

The value is not simply in communicating more often, but in communicating at the point when the message is useful.

- **Bringing appropriate demand into quieter periods**

Early November is generally less pressured than the depths of winter. If distributors can identify customers likely to need fuel a number of weeks ahead, there may be an opportunity to encourage some of that demand forward.

That does not necessarily require discounting. It could be as simple as letting a customer know that a vehicle will already be delivering in their area, suggesting a planned top-up or using targeted campaigns to highlight the benefit of ordering before colder weather arrives.

For the distributor, a partial fill incorporated into an existing route can be considerably more efficient than an urgent delivery made later in the season.

Spread across a customer base, small changes in ordering behaviour can help flatten what would otherwise become a much sharper peak.

- **Prioritising by remaining range**

When demand does increase, data can also support better decisions about which deliveries genuinely need to happen first.

Order date alone does not necessarily indicate urgency. A customer with 10% remaining in a smaller tank may have only a few days of fuel left, while another with 30% in a larger tank may have considerably longer.

Combining current tank level with historic consumption allows distributors to estimate remaining range and identify customers at greatest risk of running out.



That turns tank data into practical operational information: helping dispatch teams prioritise the most time-sensitive deliveries while making better use of available fleet capacity.

### More relevant customer communication

Greater visibility also changes the relationship between distributor and customer.

Rather than waiting for customers to identify their own need and make contact, suppliers have an opportunity to communicate at a point when that communication is genuinely relevant.

Digital channels can play an important role here. Data from one UK distributor's connected customer base shows that more than 80% of end customers open their monitoring app at least once a month during heating season, with more than 57% checking weekly.

That creates a regular point of contact through the monitoring app which can also be complemented by other channels including email, SMS and outbound calls.

Early adopter partners using targeted in-app campaigns have also recorded engagement rates of around 20–25%, based on clicks and interactions with those campaigns. The important point is not the channel itself. It is the ability to combine knowledge of a customer's actual position with timely, relevant communication.

For distributors, that moves customer engagement away from blanket seasonal reminders towards something much more targeted: identifying who is likely to need fuel, when they are likely to need it and whether there is an opportunity to meet that demand more efficiently.

### A managed peak

None of this eliminates winter volatility. Cold weather will always increase heating oil consumption and there will always be periods when fleets, drivers and customer service teams are working at full capacity.

But there is a significant difference between a managed peak and an unmanaged one.

The September data suggests UK customers are entering this heating season with lower average tank levels, more tanks approaching reorder thresholds and less summer replenishment behind them than a year ago.

That does not guarantee an exceptional winter rush; weather and customer behaviour will ultimately determine how demand develops. It does, however, suggest that distributors have good reason to use the visibility they have now.

Those able to identify approaching demand, communicate proactively with customers and make delivery decisions around actual need have an opportunity to spread some of the pressure before it arrives.

The winter peak cannot be controlled entirely. But, with better data, distributors can do more than simply wait for it.




# ESL Fuels Biofuel Market Update – Q3 2026

IN ASSOCIATION WITH PORTLAND ANALYTICS

## Feedstocks

In July, UCO prices rose marginally from $1,215/mt (80.8ppl) to $1,235/mt (81.0ppl), supported by firm European demand and tightening feedstock availability. Disruption in the Strait of Hormuz again brought significant volatility to energy markets and increased freight rates, whilst low water levels in the Rhine disrupted barge movements and constrained HVO demand from some German buyers, prompting them to instead rely on compliance credits to meet GHG obligations. UCO prices fell below $1,200/mt (78.3ppl) at the beginning of August, amid subdued spot-market liquidity and uncertainty over near-term demand. However, prices then recovered as higher biodiesel values widened the spread over feedstock costs and improved producers' buying economics, with UCO closing August at $1,227.50/mt (83.1ppl) and September at $1,320/mt (87.7ppl).

## Wholesale NWE Prices ($ per Metric Tonne)




## Biodiesel

Biodiesel prices rose sharply in Q3, with FAME-10 gaining $410/mt (27.2ppl). Prices increased to $1,609/mt (105.5ppl) in July, tracking higher Low Sulfur Gasoil (LSG) prices after President Donald Trump declared the US-Iran ceasefire "over". FAME-10 premiums to LSG narrowed, while weak market activity indicated that the rally was primarily gasoil-led. Prices reached $1,709.25/mt (111ppl) in August, as tightening rapeseed fundamentals supported RME-linked grades (FAME0 and FAME-10) and reinforced upward price momentum. Adverse weather, including heatwaves and dry conditions, prompted downward revisions to early 2026 European rapeseed crop forecasts, raising concerns over rapeseed oil availability and feedstock costs. In September, prices reached $1,924.25/mt (127.1ppl) before closing at $1,843.50/mt (122.50ppl). Finally, persistent Middle East tensions, low US East Coast diesel inventories, reduced Middle Eastern supply and Russian export restrictions continued to support LSG prices, while the approaching winter specification change also provided support for low-CFPP biodiesel grades.

## FAME-10 & UCOME

In July, higher LSG prices supported both FAME-10 and UCOME prices. FAME-10 gains initially outpaced UCOME, with the UCOME premium to FAME-10 narrowing to $10.25/mt (0.7ppl) on the 17th of July before recovering to $85.75/mt (5.6ppl) by the end of the month. In August, the UCOME premium to FAME-10 continued to fluctuate, reaching $178/mt (11.6ppl) before falling to -$5/mt (-0.3ppl) on the 18th. The rally remained LSG-driven, primarily supported by Middle East tensions, Russian export disruption and Red Sea rerouting. UCOME remained resilient on stable UCO prices and a wider production margin, while FAME-10 strengthened as biodiesel premiums continued to rise. September saw UCOME reach a more than four-year high of $2,006.75/mt (131.3ppl), as surging LSG lifted biodiesel prices and stronger UCO demand supported UCOME. Prices subsequently fell as LSG weakened, while the seasonal shift towards winter blending strengthened FAME premiums relative to UCOME, driving the latter's premium to FAME-10 to-$35.50/mt (-2.3ppl) by the end of the quarter.

## Market Outlook

The European biofuels market remains supported by regulatory-driven demand, but RED III implementation varies between EU Member States. In Germany, its implementation and removal of double-counting for advanced feedstocks are expected to significantly increase physical renewable fuel demand, with HVO demand estimated at around 2.1 million tonnes in 2026, compared with 0.8 million tonnes in 2025. During the first half of 2026, Germany's combined biodiesel and HVO volumes have reportedly risen 11.4% year-on-year, after the national GHG reduction quota increased from 10.6% in 2025 to 12% in 2026. FAME-10 is likely to remain closely linked to LSG, as conventional biodiesel demand in road fuel remains constrained by the widespread requirement of EN590 spec fuel, with its 7% FAME limit. This could change if blending limits are eased. In September, French President Macron proposed temporarily easing EU biofuel blending limits, potentially allowing B7 diesel to be replaced by B10, which the European Biodiesel Board supported, but vehicle-manufacturer approval remains a prerequisite.

## HVO

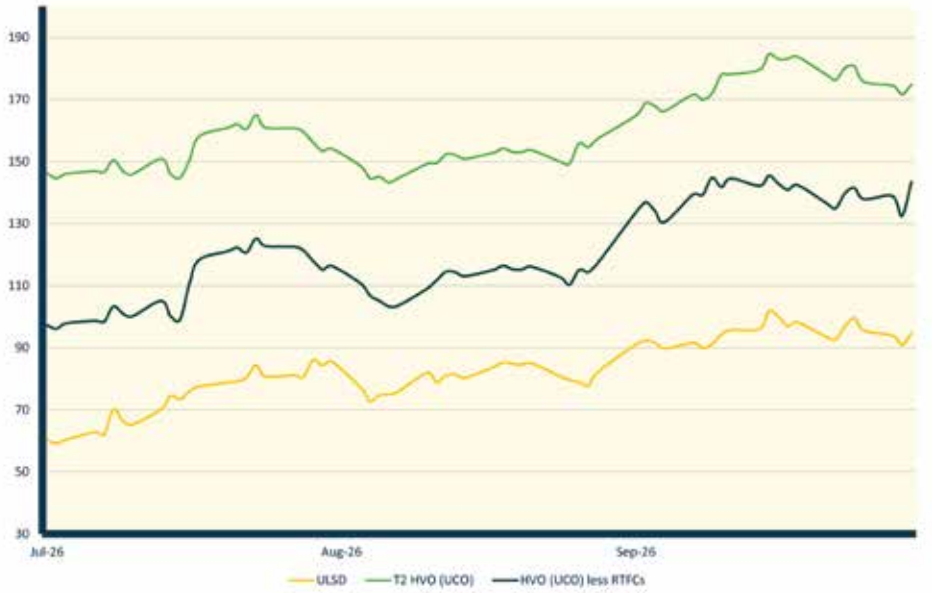
European HVO prices remained elevated through Q3. In July, wholesale T2 UCO-derived HVO rose from $2,489/mt (146.2ppl) at the start of the month to $2,658.75/mt (154.1ppl) by month-end. Prices were initially supported by expectations of tighter near-term supply, as reduced US export availability and planned maintenance at European and Asian production facilities were expected to constrain supply. The new Renewable Fuel Standard requirements were also expected to absorb any export surplus, while stronger mandate-driven demand following Germany's

RED III implementation and removal of double-counting provided further support. Low Rhine water levels temporarily curbed supply to German buyers, with the disruption causing prices to rise in August to $2,739.75/mt (157.4ppl), due to restricted barge movements and higher freight costs. Neste's planned maintenance at its Porvoo refinery, which began on the 18th of August, added further supply concerns and upside risk, although inventories had been built to maintain customer deliveries. In September, HVO prices climbed to a quarterly high of $3,193/mt (186.9ppl) amid firmer UCO values and gasoil futures. Prices subsequently eased as improving Middle Eastern crude flows reduced broader supply concerns and expectations of European diesel stock releases weighed on gasoil, with HVO closing the quarter at $2,977/mt (174.8ppl).

### Certificates

Following a recovery in the second quarter, non-crop RTFC prices fell from 24.50 pence per certificate (ppc) to 18.90ppc in July as higher diesel prices narrowed the biodiesel-mineral diesel differential, reducing blending costs and certificate values. Lower trading activity and reduced market liquidity also weighed on prices as traders stepped back, contributing to subdued market sentiment. In August, prices remained volatile, initially rising above 21.5ppc amid fresh losses in underlying LSG markets, but subsequently eased to 20.00ppc by month- end. Prices then fell sharply to 13.60ppc on the 9th of September as European diesel prices surged amid tightening middle-distillate supply, narrowing the biodiesel-mineral diesel differential. RTFC prices recovered modestly to close the quarter at 15.70ppc, although prices remained well below their July levels, reflecting continued pressure.

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




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




## News and Policy

The UK Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) published its final determination on US HVO imports in July, finding that imports were subsidised and had caused injury to the UK biodiesel industry, following its earlier proposed negative determination in March. The TRA recommended anti-subsidy duties of £258.10-£266.68/tonne. However, the Government opted to reject the recommendation, concluding that the duties would not meet the wider economic interest test due to disproportionate costs for businesses, importers and consumers.

The Renewable Transport Fuel Association (RTFA) criticised the government's decision, warning that continued exposure to subsidised imports could ultimately threaten domestic biodiesel production, investment and skilled employment. The association argued that continued reliance on competitively priced US HVO could undermine the viability of UK producers, discourage future investment and increase dependence on imported renewable fuels, weakening domestic supply resilience and UK energy security over the longer term.

The European Commission initiated an expiry review of its countervailing duty measures on US biodiesel. The review will assess whether removing the measures would lead to continued or recurring subsidisation and injury to EU producers. The measures, originally introduced in 2009 and subsequently extended to certain biodiesel consignments from Canada, remain in force during the review process. The European Commission's indicative timetable targets a definitive determination for the 30th of July, 2027.

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# WCF: You said, we listened



WHEN WCF WAS NAMED AMONG THE UK'S BEST WORKPLACES FOR WOMEN, THE RECOGNITION REFLECTED THE EXPERIENCES REPORTED BY ITS OWN EMPLOYEES. FUEL OIL NEWS SPOKE WITH HEAD OF PEOPLE STRATEGY & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT **KAREN KELSO** TO LOOK BEHIND THE RECOGNITION AND DISCOVER HOW LISTENING, VISIBLE LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE-LED CHANGE ARE SHAPING THE WORKING CULTURE ACROSS ITS FUELS BUSINESSES.

**But did the positive picture painted at group level by the recent accolade also hold true within its fuels businesses?**

According to Head of People Strategy & Organisational Development Karen Kelso, broadly, yes.

WCF operates businesses across fuels, retail and leisure and, while individual results inevitably vary, Karen says the fuels division sat within a similar range to its other businesses in the employee survey behind the recognition.

"Broadly speaking, we were in range and very similar to the other divisions," she explains.

For Karen, however, the significance of the recognition lies less in appearing on a list than in what produced the result. "Although external accreditation is wonderful, it isn't really about that," she says. "It's about the effort that's being put in to ensure this is a great place to work.

"We don't always have a good day, of course we don't, but on the whole we do right by our people. What's particularly nice is that the results come from our own people's responses."

## You said, we listened

Karen joined WCF seven years ago with a remit to attract, retain and develop people as the group continued to grow. Central to that has been creating ways for employees across ten businesses and a geographically dispersed workforce to be heard.

WCF uses an independent employee survey, run both externally and confidentially, to encourage candid responses. But, as Karen says, gathering feedback is the easy part. "I always say the survey is just the start. It's what we do with it afterwards that brings the biggest benefit."

Once results are available, headline findings are shared across the company before being broken down by division and individual business. Fuels managers examine what their own teams are saying, and employee voice advocates also participate in conversations about appropriate responses.

"Not everything people ask for can be delivered immediately," Karen acknowledges. "We have to be honest about that too.

"But we can say: 'We've heard you. This isn't something we can do right now, but this is what we can do.'

"It's about being able to say: you said, we listened."

Two recent policy changes provide tangible examples.

Employee feedback contributed directly to revisions to WCF's family-friendly policies, including enhanced maternity provision as well as changes to paternity and shared parental leave, and to the introduction of a standalone menopause policy.

For Karen, the important point is not simply that new policies appeared in the handbook. "We didn't make a huge fanfare," she says. "It's just: okay, we've done that now. What else do we need to work on?"

## Being present

Fuel distribution operations present very practical communication challenges. Drivers frequently start work long before conventional office hours, spend much of the working day alone and have little reason to access a desk, company email or corporate systems.

Several years ago, WCF introduced an employee app partly to address that challenge, giving staff across the group access to information at the same time and a channel to respond.

Karen says this has helped ensure that everyone has access to information at the same time, particularly during periods when information is changing quickly.

Technology, however, is only part of the answer.

"If I need to be at a depot at 6am, I'll be there at 6am," she says. "It isn't only about words on a screen; it's about how we actually have a decent conversation."

That emphasis on visibility extends throughout the leadership structure. "We don't expect people to come to us," Karen explains. "If somebody works in Grantham and we're based in Cumbria, our paths wouldn't ordinarily cross, so the leadership team has to go to them.

"Being present is extremely important."

That visibility becomes especially important during periods of uncertainty. The fuel sector has experienced considerable external volatility and WCF has also been managing change within its own businesses, including acquisition and integration.

"You can't stop the noise externally," Karen says. "You have to support teams through it and say: yes, it's a challenge, but we're here for you. You just have to be human about it."

## Women in fuels

While WCF's driver workforce remains predominantly male, Karen says women are well represented within its fuels businesses and particularly within leadership and have been for a long time.

Former Managing Director Jo Ritzema spent more than two decades with WCF, and Karen describes a breadth of female representation today "from board level down".

That visibility matters in an industry still working to broaden the pool of people who consider fuel distribution as a career. WCF also runs an internal leadership development programme across its businesses, providing opportunities for employees to build the skills and confidence needed to progress.

For Karen, however, the strongest evidence comes from the experiences of the women themselves. We spoke to three women working

# Three women. Three routes



Laura Raffell

### Laura Raffell. Operations Manager, Easy Fuels NE

Laura says support began from her first days in the business. "I made my ambitions and career goals clear from the beginning, and ever since I have been supported with mentoring, guidance and encouragement from my managers and colleagues."

She is currently working towards an NVQ Level 5 in Operations Management and will soon complete her Transport Management qualification, with working alongside the Transport Manager and Head of Compliance providing further opportunities to learn.

"Every single day I learn something new and interesting – you never stop learning in this industry."

Laura acknowledges that working in a traditionally male-dominated sector can occasionally bring barriers but says good leadership can quickly help break those down.

"I think the world has changed, and no industry needs to be male or female dominated anymore. Opportunities should be based on ability and attitude rather than gender, and that has had a positive impact on both my experience and personal confidence."

Her advice to another woman considering fuels is characteristically enthusiastic: "Absolutely go for it, grab every opportunity and be yourself. Let your curiosity run wild. This is a career like no other.

"Yes, there will be hard and frustrating times, like with any job, but the good days, the opportunities and the camaraderie absolutely outweigh them."

### Beth Hindmarsh. Sales Office Manager, Allan Stobart Lubricants & Fuel

In five years in the fuels industry, Beth has progressed from sales coordinator to sales office manager, gaining new skills, broader experience and increased responsibility along the way.

She describes WCF as providing "a stable and encouraging environment where personal development is valued" but also points to employee ownership as an important part of the culture.

"There is a genuine sense of shared purpose, where employees feel invested in the success of the business. Knowing that our efforts contribute not only to the company's growth but also to the wider employee community creates a strong sense of ownership and pride."

Beth has also been involved in groups bringing together colleagues from across WCF to look at processes, efficiencies and customer relationships, as well as discussions around systems within the fuels businesses.

"Being able to share ideas, challenge existing ways of working and help shape future improvements has reinforced that employees are trusted to influence positive change within the business."

Her experience as a woman in fuels has been similarly positive.

"I have never felt that my gender has limited my opportunities; instead, I have been encouraged to take on new challenges, build my skills and progress into roles with increasing responsibility."

Beth also credits several strong female leaders across WCF with helping shape her own leadership journey.

"Their mentorship has helped build my confidence, develop my skills in different roles across WCF Fuels about their own career journeys, the opportunities they have encountered and what they would say to other women considering the sector.

That variety of career paths supports Karen's broader point that development need not follow a single route – and that opportunities within fuels can extend well beyond the roles with which people traditionally associate the sector.

Taken together, their experiences suggest that attracting more women into fuels is only part of the picture; creating opportunities to contribute, develop and progress matters just as much.

For Karen, that same emphasis on listening and practical support is also reflected in the policies WCF has introduced.

### Making difficult conversations easier

The creation of WCF's menopause policy offers perhaps the clearest example of employee voice influencing change.

Karen freely admits that a standalone policy had not previously occurred to her. Instead, the need emerged through the employee survey, employee voice discussions and WCF's involvement with the Better Health at Work framework.

Employees and workplace health advocates asked a straightforward question: with women across the business either experiencing menopause, approaching it or supporting somebody who was, why wasn't there specific guidance?

"My response was: that's a great question. Let's look at it," Karen recalls.

Employees helped shape and review the policy before it was introduced, acknowledging there is no single response to an experience that differs enormously between individuals.

"It isn't about having a rigid policy where, if you don't fall into a certain box, we can't help," Karen explains. "It's about being able to have a decent conversation: how are you feeling and what can we do? What can we try or explore?"

That also means ensuring managers are comfortable enough to begin the conversation



Beth Hindmarsh



Sophie Kay

and shape my approach as a leader."

For women considering the sector, her message is to look beyond the stereotypes.

"Capability, attitude and a willingness to learn are what truly matter.

"Fuel distribution is a dynamic and essential industry, with opportunities spanning customer service, operations, logistics, commercial management and people leadership. No two days are the same."

### Sophie Kay. Planning Manager, WCF Chandlers

Sophie's own route through the business demonstrates how a career in fuels can move in unexpected directions.

"I joined WCF Chandlers in sales and have worked my way into my current role as planning manager within transport."

Along the way she has completed ADR training and was recently given the opportunity to undertake her Transport Manager CPC.

"This has helped me build my confidence and knowledge of the industry."

Sophie says she has also felt able to contribute ideas about the way the business operates, particularly around delivery planning and prioritisation.

"Being trusted to make decisions and see ideas put into practice gives you a real sense that your contribution matters."

Rather than finding the industry's traditionally male profile discouraging, Sophie says it has strengthened her determination to progress.

"I think working in a traditionally male-dominated industry has made me even more determined to progress and succeed in my career. It is great to see more women coming through into roles within the transport and fuel sector."

And her advice for somebody considering following them?

"I'd say go for it and don't let the fact that it's traditionally been a male-dominated industry put you off.

"There are lots of opportunities to learn and progress, and I'm a good example of how you can start in one area of the business and work your way up into a completely different role."

without believing they need to provide every answer.

"We're not asking them to be experts on a subject," Karen says. "It's about creating open, safe dialogue where somebody feels able to say: 'I need some help here.'"

The policy is therefore partly about practical support and partly about language – making menopause something that can be discussed normally at work rather than ignored or reduced to humour.

### A continuous conversation

Perhaps one of the more revealing comments in our conversation comes when Karen acknowledges that communication still features in employee feedback as something WCF could improve.

Rather than defensive, her reaction is a welcoming: "Okay, tell us how we could do that."

It sums up an approach in which a good workplace is seen as something requiring continual attention rather than an achievement to be completed.

The latest employee survey is already under way, and Karen does not yet know what it will reveal. Whatever emerges, she expects the same process to begin again. "What feedback have we had and what are we doing with it?" she says. "It's a continuous thread."

That thinking is reflected in WCF's employee-owned structure. Karen describes today's workforce as custodians, responsible for leaving the business in a better position for the next generation of employee owners.

"Sometimes we have good years and sometimes we have less good years, and that's okay because we're in it together. We make decisions for the long term."

For other businesses, perhaps the most useful lesson behind WCF's workplace recognition is not particular policies. It is something much simpler – but harder to sustain.

Ask people what they think. Give them confidence to answer honestly. And then demonstrate that somebody was listening.

# From three people to £40m: RSM Group's growth ambitions

FROM THREE PEOPLE IN A HALIFAX OFFICE TO A MULTI-SERVICE BUSINESS TARGETING £40 MILLION IN ANNUAL TURNOVER, RSM GROUP HAS AMBITIOUS PLANS FOR ITS NEXT CHAPTER.

IN SEPTEMBER 2020, **ADAM PRITCHARD, AIDAN CLEGG** AND **DAVID SCOTT** WERE WORKING FROM WHAT CEO ADAM DESCRIBES AS A "FAIRLY DILAPIDATED OFFICE" IN HALIFAX.

SIX YEARS ON, THE BUSINESS THEY ESTABLISHED HAS 50 EMPLOYEES, FOUR SPECIALIST DIVISIONS AND A FLEET OF 27 VEHICLES. ITS AMBITIONS SHOW NO SIGN OF SLOWING.

RESPOND SERVICE AND MAINTAIN WAS ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED TO ADDRESS A PERCEIVED GAP IN SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES STORING SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES OF LIQUID FUEL.

TODAY, RSM GROUP COMBINES THAT ORIGINAL FUEL SERVICES OPERATION WITH BULK FUEL DISTRIBUTION, FUEL CARDS AND DRAINAGE SOLUTIONS. THE COMPANY IS TARGETING GROUP TURNOVER OF £40 MILLION, A POTENTIAL DOUBLING OF THE WORKFORCE, AND FUEL DELIVERIES OF 15 MILLION LITRES OVER THE 12 MONTHS TO SEPTEMBER 2027.

BUT THE JOURNEY HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT CHANGES OF DIRECTION. A SHORT-LIVED MOVE INTO THE EV MARKET, THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONWIDE EMERGENCY DELIVERY CAPABILITIES AND PLANS FOR FURTHER LOCATIONS ALL OFFER INSIGHTS INTO THE DECISIONS FACING A GROWING FUEL SERVICES BUSINESS.

FUEL OIL NEWS CAUGHT UP WITH ADAM TO EXPLORE THE THINKING BEHIND RSM'S EXPANSION, THE OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD AND WHAT IT TAKES TO SUSTAIN SUCH RAPID GROWTH.



**What prompted you to establish RSM?**

I'd spent over a decade in the downstream fuel industry working with both a large and a small bulk fuel supplier. I felt there was an opportunity to help customers with ongoing maintenance, safety and compliance requirements associated with storing large quantities of liquid fuel.

The original business, Respond Service and Maintain (RSM), was established specifically to meet that need.

**How has the business developed since 2020?**

If you'd visited RSM in September 2020, you'd have found a socially distanced group of 3 people in a fairly dilapidated office: me, Aidan Clegg (Group MD) and David Scott (Group Operations Director).

The most obvious change since those humble beginnings, is the sheer number of people now working in our much improved and significantly extended office.

Our fleet has also grown considerably. We now have 27 vehicles across the group, including two vacuum tankers.

The group's performance also continues to surprise me. Even as we enter our seventh year of trading, we consistently outperform our budgets and targets.

In round numbers, I expect the fuel delivery business to deliver 15 million litres, and the group to turnover a total of £40m between now and September 2027.

**Why did you choose to build four complementary businesses?**

Our four businesses – Fuel Services, Fuel Delivery, Fuel Cards and Drain Solutions – were very much planned and deliberate additions to the group.

There is significant crossover between the divisions, particularly among some of our larger customers. Our marketing team does a tremendous job of ensuring customers across the group are aware of the services we can offer.

The individual teams also take great pride in the RSM brand and in making sure customers understand what we can provide collectively.

Geographically, Fuel Services and Drain Solutions operate across the UK, and we have recently started delivering projects in Europe.

**You also briefly entered the EV market before withdrawing. What influenced that decision?**

Although our diversification has always been planned, even the best laid plans aren't always successful. In 2022, we dipped our toe into

"I'M IMPRESSED EVERYDAY WITH JUST HOW MUCH EFFORT IS PUT IN BY EVERYONE INVOLVED."

the EV market. However, market pressures and a lack of clarity around industry support led us to make the strategic decision to withdraw only 12 months later.

**What role does bulk delivery play in the group?**

Given my previous industry experience, RSM Fuel Delivery was always part of the plan. However, customer demand and the quality of our staff have been the biggest contributing factors to its growth.

In many respects, we're a traditional bulk fuel supplier, servicing Yorkshire and surrounds. However, through our partner network and in-house emergency delivery team, we can also provide a nationwide service, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We receive excellent feedback from customers about our emergency response capabilities, across both bulk fuel and fuel services.

Our fuel delivery fleet currently comprises five vehicles, with investment plans to increase that to nine during 2027.

**How important are technology and external partnerships in supporting the business growth?**

Our systems partners are key to how we operate.

A good example is our fuel delivery business, which recently partnered with CDS. That partnership has had a significant influence on the business's recent success and its performance against expectations.

Our wider network of partners is also fundamental to our ability to provide nationwide emergency deliveries, working alongside our own specialist team.

**Where do you see the greatest opportunities for further expansion?**

We've recently completed a strategic review of our growth plans and it's an exciting time for the group.

We have plans for additional locations across three of our four business, most notably Fuel Delivery.

Fuel Cards is another distinct growth opportunity. The business has only recently started trading, but we have an ambitious plan and a clear strategy, with recruitment playing an important part.

As a board, we see a significant opportunity for the group to develop a valuable customer proposition in this market.

**As the business continues to grow, how do you maintain the culture that has contributed to its success?**

The success of RSM is down to the fantastic people working across our businesses.

We have a unique business culture, and I'm impressed everyday with just how much effort is put in across the board by everyone involved.

Recruitment is an ongoing process as we look to support further growth across the group.

As the number of people working at RSM grows from 50 today, to a forecast 100 next year, I think it's crucial that we continue to be a responsible and fair employer, and one that invests heavily in its people.




# FRESH LOOK

## same reliable deliveries

While the livery may have changed, what hasn't is the service behind it. The same experienced drivers, the same dependable supply, and the same commitment to keeping your operations moving.




MB Energy
Our energy, your way.

Delivering Insight

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

Delivering Insight is your monthly business-critical briefing. Designed to give SME distributors clear, actionable guidance to work smarter and more profitably. Although larger distribution groups may have in-house HR teams, fleet managers, compliance officers and analysts, many SME FODs operate without those resources. Delivering Insight is your virtual support team – a growing knowledge base that builds into a valuable reference library for your business, helping you make informed decisions that safeguard your business today and strengthen it for the future. This month, we consider the true cost of recruiting and replacing staff and review the ways in which SMEs can develop a more cost-effective approach to building and retaining a loyal and capable workforce.

# Recruiting and retaining staff: what is the true cost of getting it wrong?

**Skilled people are essential to the success of every fuel oil distributor, but recruiting them can be expensive and replacing them even more so. With competition for drivers and other specialist roles continuing, where are your efforts best focused – on finding new employees or keeping the ones they already have?**

For fuel oil distributors (FODs), having the right people in the right roles is essential to maintaining reliable deliveries, safe operations and good customer service.

Yet recruiting and retaining skilled employees remains a challenge, particularly for smaller distributors competing with larger businesses and other sectors for a limited pool of experienced workers.

Drivers may be the most visible recruitment pressure point, but engineers, depot operatives, transport coordinators and customer service teams are all vital to efficient business operation.

And every vacancy carries a cost. Beyond recruitment fees and salaries, there can be overtime, temporary cover, training, management time and lost productivity.

So, what is the true cost of recruiting and replacing staff? Are recruitment agencies worth the premium? And could investing more in existing employees prove the better commercial decision?

This month's Delivering Insight examines the evidence and considers how SMEs can develop a more cost-effective approach to building and retaining a loyal and capable workforce.

### Where are the recruitment pressures?

The wider UK road freight industry continues to experience recruitment challenges, although the acute driver shortages seen in earlier years have eased.

Department for Transport figures show that 25% of UK HGV businesses reported driver vacancies during January–March 2026, compared with 24% in the equivalent period of 2025.

For fuel distributors, the recruitment pool can be narrower still. Tanker drivers require appropriate HGV licensing, Driver CPC and ADR qualifications for the products carried. Drivers loading petroleum products at terminals also require a Petroleum Driver Passport (PDP).

Recruiting a suitably qualified and experienced tanker driver may therefore be more challenging than filling a general driving vacancy.

Other specialist skills are also in demand. Institute of the Motor Industry research indicates that online job postings for heavy-vehicle technicians increased by 5% year on year in August 2026 and were 19% higher than in August 2024.

For FODs operating in rural areas, the challenge may be compounded by a smaller local labour pool and competition for staff whose skills are readily transferable to other industries.

### An ageing workforce

The age profile of the wider HGV workforce presents a further consideration.

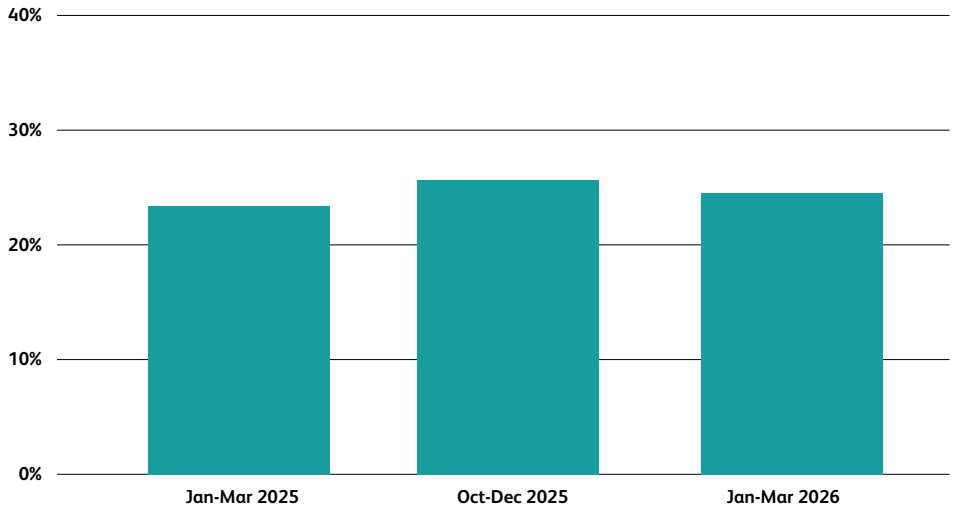
ONS figures for July 2025–June 2026 indicate that approximately 35% of UK HGV drivers were aged 56 or over, while only around 4% were aged 16–25.

Although these figures are not specific to fuel distribution, they highlight the importance of workforce succession planning.

For an SME distributor, the retirement of one or two experienced drivers or depot employees could represent the loss of a significant proportion of its operational knowledge.

The question is therefore not only how to fill today's vacancies, but how to develop the workforce needed in five or ten years' time.

**UK HGV businesses reporting driver vacancies**




*Source: Department for Transport, domestic road freight statistics. Figures cover the wider UK HGV sector, not FODs specifically.*



## What does recruitment actually cost?

Pay is an obvious starting point.

The ONS 2025 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings places median full-time annual pay for UK large goods vehicle drivers at approximately £39,900. This is a national benchmark rather than a tanker-driver-specific salary.

However, salary is only one element of the cost of employing somebody.

Employer National Insurance, pension contributions, holiday entitlement, training, equipment and other employment costs all contribute to the total investment.

Recruitment itself adds another layer.

Agencies can provide a route to established candidate networks, specialist recruitment expertise and potentially faster access to suitable applicants.

But that convenience comes at a price.

Industry guidance suggests permanent recruitment agency fees commonly fall between 15% and 25% of first-year salary.

For a position paying £40,000, that would mean an agency fee of between £6,000 and £10,000.

Direct recruitment may appear cheaper, but advertising, screening applicants, interviewing, management time and onboarding all have costs.

The CIPD's 2024 Resourcing and Talent Planning report identified a median recruitment cost of £1,500 per non-management hire, providing a broad benchmark rather than an FOD-specific figure.

The right comparison is therefore not agency fee versus zero cost, but agency recruitment versus the full cost of recruiting directly.

In this illustrative scenario, direct recruitment costs £4,500 less, although the assumed longer recruitment period results in higher temporary cover and management costs.

Neither method is automatically the better option.

If an agency can fill a critical vacancy more quickly, the additional recruitment fee may be justified by reduced disruption and avoided operating costs.

Equally, where a distributor can recruit effectively through its own networks, an agency premium may offer limited additional value.

The most expensive recruitment decision may not be the one with the highest fee, but the one that leaves a critical role unfilled for longest.

### Beyond the recruitment fee

The financial cost of replacing an employee is only part of the picture.

Patrick Kirby, CEO of Tria Energy, believes that the true cost of replacing a driver is considerably greater than many businesses recognise.

While agency fees and direct recruitment expenditure are significant, Patrick points to the management time required alongside the operational consequences of a vacancy.

"My sense is that the true figure is

## What does replacing a driver really cost?

Consider a purely illustrative example involving a distributor replacing an experienced tanker driver.

The following indicative figures are hypothetical, not industry averages.

| Cost element | Agency recruitment | Direct recruitment |
|---|---|---|
| Recruitment fee / advertising and selection | £8,000 | £1,500 |
| Training and onboarding | £1,500 | £1,500 |
| Temporary cover / overtime | £2,000 | £3,500 |
| Management and productivity costs | £1,000 | £1,500 |
| **Total** | **£12,500** | **£8,000** |

substantially higher than most operators would estimate.

"Between recruitment, management time, training, downtime, operational disruption and the potential impact on customer retention, it can be a massive cost to a business.

"It's probably one of the biggest hidden costs of staff turnover in our industry."

Reduced delivery capacity, additional pressure on existing drivers and the time required for a replacement to become fully effective can all increase the cost.

But there is another, less easily measured consequence: the potential loss of customer knowledge and relationships.

As Patrick highlights: "Fuel distribution is still a very local and relationship-driven business."

In a sector where regular drivers often understand customers' premises, individual requirements and delivery arrangements, replacing that experience is not straightforward.

"You lose experience, local knowledge, operational efficiency and potentially some of the customer goodwill that has taken years to establish," he explains.

For FODs attempting to establish the true cost of staff turnover, the distinction is between costs that can be calculated – recruitment fees, training, temporary cover, overtime and management time – and those that are harder to quantify, including lost capacity, operational knowledge, customer relationships and potential lost business.

Some of the most significant costs of staff turnover may be the ones that never appear on a recruitment invoice.

Some of the most significant costs of staff turnover may be the ones that never appear on a recruitment invoice..

## Could alternative recruitment routes offer better value?

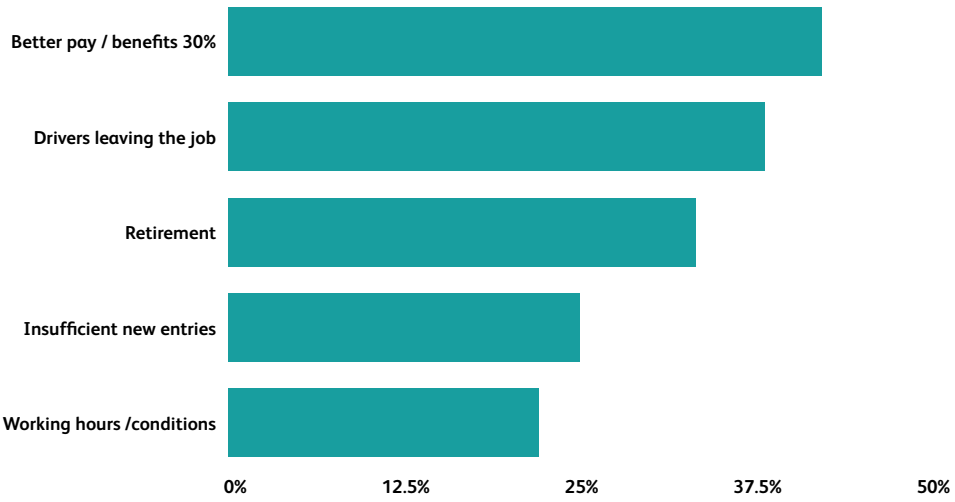
For smaller distributors without dedicated HR teams, recruitment may be largely reactive – beginning only when an employee gives notice.

Developing a broader recruitment strategy could help reduce both cost and disruption.

Several options are worth considering.

Employee referrals can provide access to candidates already familiar with the industry through existing staff. A referral bonus, payable after successful completion of probation, may offer a relatively low-cost recruitment route.

### Reasons cited by HGV businesses with driver vacancies




*Source: Department for Transport, Q4 2025. Respondents could cite multiple reasons; percentages do not total 100%.*

Direct recruitment through company websites, local job boards and social media can reduce agency dependence, particularly where a distributor has a strong local reputation.

Local partnerships with colleges, HGV training providers, Jobcentre Plus and other organisations may help reach candidates who would not otherwise consider fuel distribution.

Training and upskilling can widen the available talent pool. Rather than recruiting only fully qualified tanker drivers, a distributor might recruit suitable HGV drivers and support them through the additional qualifications required.

Apprenticeships and entry-level opportunities can help develop a longer-term pipeline for drivers, engineers and depot roles.

These approaches are not necessarily quicker or cheaper in every circumstance. Training requires investment and employees may take time to become fully productive.

However, they can reduce reliance on an increasingly competitive market for experienced recruits.

## Is retaining staff the better investment?

Recruitment costs are only one side of the equation.

Every employee who leaves may take valuable experience, customer knowledge and operational expertise with them.

Their departure can also increase the workload of remaining employees, potentially contributing to further dissatisfaction and turnover.

The wider road freight data offers some insight into why employees leave.

Among HGV businesses reporting driver vacancies in the fourth quarter of 2025, the DfT recorded the following recruitment difficulties:

Pay clearly matters. Among HGV businesses that increased driver pay during the same quarter, 55% reported doing so to retain existing drivers, while 35% cited attracting new drivers.

But pay is not the only influence.

Predictable working patterns, manageable workloads, suitable equipment, supportive management and opportunities for progression can all contribute to employee satisfaction.

For FODs, this may be particularly relevant during the winter peak, when seasonal demand increases pressure on drivers, transport teams and customer service staff.

A business that repeatedly relies on overtime and extended working hours may need to consider whether its operating model is contributing to employee turnover.

## What makes employees stay?

There is no single retention measure that will work for every distributor. Competitive pay and benefits matter, but work-life balance, career development, recognition, support, leadership and work environment can also influence whether employees stay.

The importance of employee engagement is illustrated by WCF, whose approach to workplace culture is explored in more detail elsewhere in this issue.

In "WCF: You said, we listened", Head of People Strategy & Organisational Development Karen Kelso explains how the employee-owned group uses confidential staff surveys, visible leadership and employee feedback to shape its

working environment.

For a geographically dispersed workforce, including drivers who start early and spend much of their working day alone, maintaining communication is particularly important.

"If I need to be at a depot at 6am, I'll be there at 6am," says Karen, emphasising the value of face-to-face engagement alongside digital communication.

WCF also highlights the importance of development opportunities, with employees across its fuels businesses progressing into management and specialist transport roles.

While smaller distributors may not have WCF's dedicated people resources or be able to match larger employers' pay packages, they may have advantages in closer management relationships, flexibility and a stronger sense of belonging.

The underlying principles are transferable: listen to employees, act on feedback, maintain regular contact and provide opportunities to develop.

The important starting point is understanding what employees actually value – rather than assuming every departure is solely about money.

## What is retention worth?

If relatively modest changes to working practices can help retain an experienced employee, how does that investment compare with the cost of replacing them?

Returning to our illustrative recruitment example.

If replacing a driver costs between £8,000 and £12,500, preventing even one avoidable departure could represent a significant saving.

Suppose a distributor with ten drivers considers an annual retention investment of £5,000, covering additional training, recognition and improvements to working arrangements.

If, hypothetically, that investment prevents one departure which would otherwise have cost £8,000 to address, the avoided replacement cost exceeds the investment by £3,000.

But this calculation needs careful interpretation. Not every departure is preventable, and it may be difficult to demonstrate that a particular investment directly caused an employee to stay.

Nevertheless, the comparison illustrates an important principle:

Retention expenditure should be assessed against the potential cost of staff turnover, not simply treated as another employment overhead.

The financial case becomes stronger where retaining an experienced employee also protects operational capacity, customer relationships and valuable specialist knowledge.



## What have we learned?

**Recruitment remains challenging.** Specialist qualifications and competition for transferable skills can make FOD vacancies difficult to fill.

**The cheapest recruitment route is not always the most cost-effective.** Total cost, time to hire and operational impact all matter.

**Staff turnover has hidden costs.** Lost capacity, experience and customer relationships may be as significant as recruitment expenditure.

**Retention is an investment.** Understanding why employees stay or leave can help businesses target spending more effectively.

## Review your recruitment and retention economics

**1. Calculate**

Establish:

- Number of employees by role
- Annual staff turnover and reasons for leaving
- Average time to fill vacancies
- Recruitment costs by method
- Training and onboarding costs
- Overtime and temporary cover costs
- Total estimated cost of replacing an employee
- Current expenditure on retention and development

Calculate the full cost of your most recent recruitments and identify which vacancies caused the greatest operational disruption.

**2. Compare**

Compare:

- Agency versus direct recruitment costs
- Recruiting experienced employees versus training suitable new entrants
- Recruitment costs across different roles
- Staff turnover by department and length of service
- Cost of replacing employees versus investment in retaining them
- Your pay, benefits and working conditions against relevant local competitors

Consider whether particular roles, managers, working patterns or locations experience consistently higher turnover.

**3. Decide**

If agency recruitment is expensive but effective: Assess whether the speed and quality of appointments justify the premium, particularly for critical vacancies.

If suitable candidates are difficult to find: Consider widening recruitment criteria and investing in training, referrals or local partnerships.

If turnover is concentrated in particular roles: Investigate the underlying causes before increasing recruitment expenditure.

If experienced employees are approaching retirement: Develop succession plans and opportunities to transfer knowledge to newer colleagues.

If retention investment is lower than repeated replacement costs: Consider whether targeted improvements to pay, working patterns, training or management could deliver a stronger return.

THE BUSINESS QUESTION

Do we know what it really costs to replace a valued employee – and are we investing enough to avoid having to?

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# PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

NOVEMBER IN VIEW

HOW A ONCE SELF-DECLARED ENERGY SUPER POWER IS FALLING VICTIM TO ITS OWN BLUNT TOOL POLICY.

We know how clever the US President is, because he tells the world that "fact" fairly frequently. On his Truth Social platform in September, Trump declared himself a "STRONG AND SMART (High IQ!) PRESIDENT" and then at an October rally in Ohio, he confirmed that he was "a high IQ person. Among the highest IQs anywhere in the world". Despite this superior cognitive ability, the current US President does seem to struggle with commodity markets and the basics of supply and demand.

As Americans are set to vote in November's midterm elections, one of the biggest issues on voters' minds is the spiralling cost of fuel. In particular, it is the cost of diesel that is dominating headlines, with a price of $6.50 per gallon (£1.25 per litre, so still cheap by European standards!) being 75% higher than before Trump's "little excursion" into Iran. Trump's solution to this problem was the proposal of an export ban on US diesel, the news of which was met with predictable horror by European powers. To be fair, this may have been what the President intended, as he was surely aware of just how dependent Europe is on American diesel (up to 20% of EU diesel currently comes from the USA). What Trump might not have expected though, was an immediate kick-back from his own beloved US Oil Industry.

The opposition from US Refiners was unreserved, as they pointed out that current American diesel production was greater than American diesel demand. They then highlighted the fact that any "excess" diesel production is centred on the Gulf Coast – a long way from the northern US States suffering from the diesel squeeze. Of course, those states could buy-in diesel from neighbouring Canada – but Trump has already tariffed Canadian oil products, so that is off the table! From a technical perspective, the export ban proposal also overlooks the basics of how refineries work. Diesel production goes hand in hand with gasoline and jet fuel, and to maintain current diesel output – without an export outlet – would leave refiners with more product than inland storage capacity. This in turn would force production runs to reduce for all products and thus drive prices further up on all grades of fuel. The final overlooked factor by the President is that diesel is a global commodity and priced as such. If the international market is willing to pay a premium for US diesel, then in the spirit of competition, US Refiners would also expect domestic buyers to pay that price. In short, the US oil industry was not willing to subsidise diesel sales to the US consumer.

> "THE CURRENT US PRESIDENT DOES SEEM TO STRUGGLE WITH THE BASICS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND"

Even Trump's own Energy Secretary Chris Wright (an oilman it should be noted) said that "the blunt tool of banning diesel exports definitely doesn't work", whilst other market economists were quick to point out that withholding diesel from global markets would indirectly accelerate inflation anyway. By proposing an export ban, global diesel prices would be rise further, which would mean that the cost of food production outside of the US would also increase. Once those food products are re-imported into the US (which they will be because the US is a net importer of food – their agricultural trade deficit is $40bn), then the price of daily goods in the USA would be pushed up, and with that comes inflation.

Undeterred, the President quickly came up with a new proposal, again seemingly without any consultation outside of his own mind. The new suggestion involved the relaxing of sanctions on Russian fuel, with 3m barrels of diesel being supplied to the USA "very soon". If we put aside the unsavoury politics of this decision, the plan once again highlights a disconnect with oil market reality. The first stand-out fact is that Russia doesn't actually have any diesel to export, having sustained significant damage to its refineries as a result of Ukrainian drone attacks. Russia is already rationing its own domestic diesel consumption, so it is hard to see how they will be sparing up capacity for Trump's America. Secondly, Trump is almost certainly now too far behind the curve to bring prices down in time for the November midterms (3rd Nov). Whatever (if any) Russian diesel is made available, will take weeks to hit US markets and the volume itself is less than daily US consumption (3.7m barrels of diesel per day). On top of this, we have to once again remind ourselves how diesel is bought and sold. It is a global commodity, priced on the fundamentals of global supply and global demand and as long as there is a global shortage of diesel, the price will remain high. Just like the US Refiners, Russia is not going to give US consumers a discount and sell their diesel below the global price.

All of this is almost certainly going to be academic, because the indications are that the Trump-Putin diesel deal will not go-ahead. US law-makers have already introduced a bill to block the deal and unlike more partisan topics, opposition to the deal seems to enjoy broad support across both Republican and Democratic lines. No doubt those politicians are scratching their heads and wondering how a self-declared energy super-power now finds itself coming up with desperate, last-minute measures to offset the incredible damage done by Trump's war with Iran.

The US has historically supported open markets and has viewed US energy exports as strategically important – now it just champions short-sighted policy and chaotic decision making.

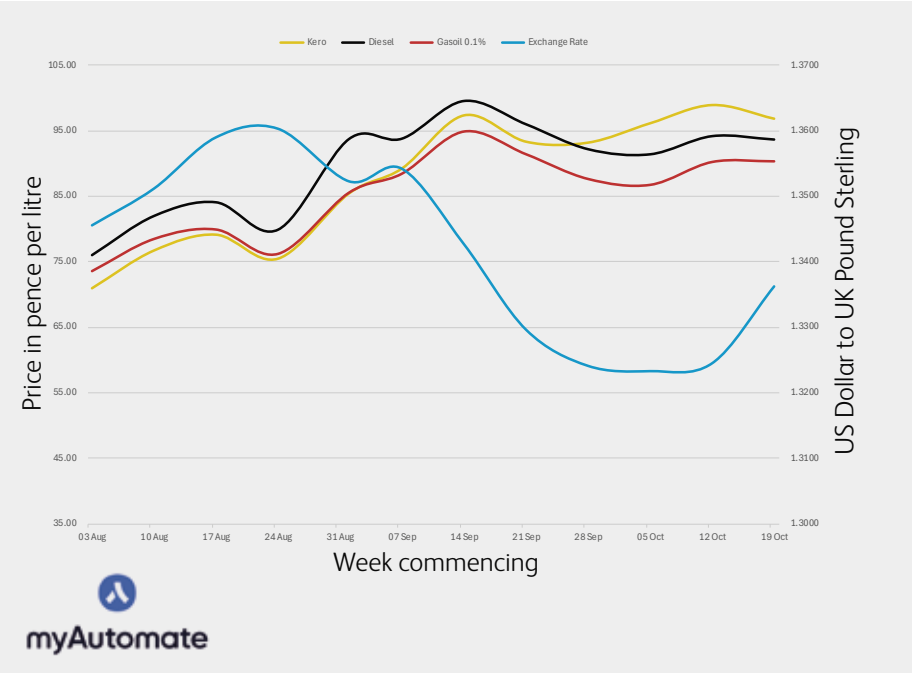
For more pricing information, see page 39

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# Wholesale Price Movements: 17th September 2026 – 22nd October 2026

| | Kerosene | Diesel | Gasoil 0.1% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average price | 96.07 | 93.42 | 89.14 |
| Average daily change | 2.46 | 2.41 | 2.46 |
| Current duty | 0.00 | 52.95 | 6.48 |
| Total | 0.00 | 146.37 | 95.62 |

All prices in pence per litre




**Kerosene**

| Highest price | Biggest up day |
|---|---|
| 101.31 | +5.68 |
| Thu 08 Oct 266 | Wed 07 Oct 26 |
| **Lowest price** | **Biggest down day** |
| 90.27 | -5.04 |
| Tue 29 Sep 26 | Fri 02 Oct 26 |

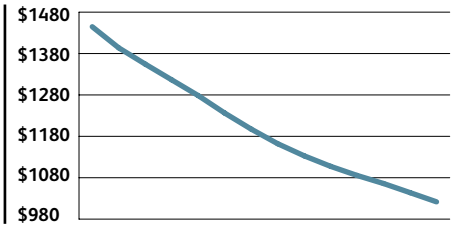
**Diesel**

| Highest price | Biggest up day |
|---|---|
| 99.34 | +5.16 |
| Thu 24 Sep 26 | Wed 07 Oct 26 |
| **Lowest price** | **Biggest down day** |
| 85.93 | -6.44 |
| Tue 06 Oct 26 | Fri 02 Oct 26 |

**Gasoil 0.1%**

| Highest price | Biggest up day |
|---|---|
| 94.16 | +5.30 |
| Thu 24 Sep 26 | Wed 07 Oct 26 |
| **Lowest price** | **Biggest down day** |
| 81.46 | -6.59 |
| Tue 06 Oct 26 | Fri 02 Oct 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 | 101.21 | 98.33 | 150.43 | 115.38 | 105.06 | 156.32 |
| North East | 100.16 | 96.96 | 149.51 | 120.08 | 103.28 | 153.85 |
| North West | 101.73 | 99.56 | 151.90 | 115.28 | 105.38 | 155.76 |
| Midlands | 100.23 | 97.49 | 149.97 | 113.68 | 103.70 | 154.68 |
| South East | 100.33 | 97.45 | 149.95 | 128.05 | 108.28 | 154.03 |
| South West | 100.68 | 97.29 | 149.79 | 118.50 | 103.50 | 153.52 |
| N. Ireland | 100.79 | 98.66 | n/a | 113.93 | 106.21 | n/a |
| Republic Of Ireland | 114.55 | 104.09 | 151.37 | 125.21 | 110.25 | 156.16 |
| Portland | 98.54 | 95.01 | 146.66 | | | |

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

# TSA Conference and Exhibition 2026: A landmark 25th anniversary

**As the UK's leading event for the bulk storage and energy infrastructure sector, the Tank Storage Association's (TSA) Conference and Exhibition marked its 25th anniversary on 17 September 2026, returning to the Coventry Building Society Arena for a day of high-level discussions and debate, industry insights and networking.**

This milestone edition was the largest in the event's history, bringing together a record number of stakeholders from across the bulk storage sector and beyond, and providing a valuable opportunity for the industry to connect, exchange perspectives and explore the issues shaping its future. Over 60 exhibitors showcased an extensive range of sector products, services and solutions, giving delegates the opportunity to discover latest developments and connect with industry specialists.

## Navigating a changing energy landscape

This year's conference programme reflected the key issues and priorities defining the sector's trajectory, featuring contributions from senior industry leaders, government representatives, regulators and leading experts, complemented by a special panel session.

Mark Waddington, CEO Channoil Energy, opened the programme with a keynote examining the changing and complex geopolitical landscape in which bulk storage operates and the implications for the sector as it looks to the future, setting the scene for wider discussions around the energy transition, security of energy supply and resilience.

This was followed by a panel session titled "Powering the Future – Leading Through the Energy Transition", moderated by the day's Chair, Greg Emmenis, Publisher of Storage Terminals Magazine. Matt Wilson, Head of New Energy Markets at Navigator Terminals, Edward Gill, North-West Europe Communications & Public Affairs Lead at Exolum, and Mark Waddington joined the panel to consider the challenges and opportunities presented by the energy transition and the vital role of bulk storage and energy infrastructure in supporting a secure, resilient and future-ready energy system.

## Security of supply in focus

Major Andrew Clarke, Fuels Infrastructure Specialist, Royal Engineers, presented on the strategic importance of security of supply to UK defence and the role of resilient fuel infrastructure in operational readiness.

His presentation provided a further perspective on the critical role of infrastructure and highlighted the importance of resilience and preparedness in an increasingly complex operating environment.

## Safety, emergency response and pipeline integrity

The afternoon programme focused on safety leadership, COMAH emergency response and buried pipeline integrity.

Chris Griffin-McTiernan, Director of the Chemicals, Explosives and Microbiological Hazards Division at the Health and Safety Executive, addressed leadership vigilance in the face of major-hazard risks, while Charlie Sholl, Manager for Energy and COMAH at the Environment Agency, explored emergency planning and preparedness under COMAH.

Closing the day, Lewis Barton, Global Service Manager – Non-Intrusive Pipeline Assessment at Rosen Europe, gave a presentation on Non-Intrusive Pipeline Assessment, highlighting the latest approaches and technologies through practical case studies and real-world applications.

## Bringing the sector together

In his concluding remarks, Arun Sriskanda, Managing Director of Oikos Storage and TSA President, reflected on the value of the event in bringing the sector together to collaborate, share ideas and drive the industry forward, while also reiterating the importance of collaboration, partnership and innovation in seizing the opportunities of tomorrow.

Peter Davidson, TSA CEO, agreed: "Each year, the event provides a valuable opportunity to explore the wider landscape in which the sector operates, while looking ahead at the developments that will define its trajectory. Our 25th edition brought together an exceptional cross-section of industry, government representatives, regulators, suppliers and organisations from across the sector and beyond, with discussions reflecting the central and evolving role of bulk storage and associated infrastructure in supporting international and regional supply chains, as well as the industrial ecosystems that depend on them.

"The strength and breadth of this year's event reflect a sector that continues to evolve, innovate and look confidently to the future. With such a wealth of expertise, experience and ambition across our community, I am confident that our annual event will continue to go from strength to strength."

## Ready to lead and shape what comes next

Arun added: "It's been a privilege to host the 25th edition of the TSA's Conference and Exhibition.

"This significant milestone is testament to the strength and dynamism of our sector and, crucially, the value of coming together. Conversations t reflected a sector ready to lead and shape the opportunities that lie ahead. In an increasingly complex and evolving geopolitical landscape, bulk storage and energy infrastructure remain fundamental to the safe, efficient, and reliable movement and storage of essential products.

"As I said in my opening remarks, our collective ambition is to see a sector that is thriving, growing and continuing to play an increasingly important role in wider industrial competitiveness and the UK's energy system. As an Association, we remain firmly committed to working in partnership with all our stakeholders to ensure that ambition is realised, and that our sector is in a strong position to lead and contribute to what comes next."

## Engaged, vibrant and forward moving

Nunzia Florio, Communications Director for the TSA, concluded: "This year's event was a fantastic reflection of where our sector stands today: engaged, vibrant and forward moving.

"Particularly evident was the depth of expertise and innovation, alongside a clear recognition of the importance of ensuring that bulk storage and energy infrastructure remain at the heart of strategic considerations as we look to shape the next decades. Our thanks go to everyone who helped make this year's Conference and Exhibition a success!"

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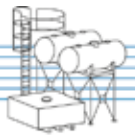


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