



association for public service excellence

Fuelling Concerns

The impact of the recent fuel price increases on local authority fleet

APSE Member Survey Results



Briefing 26-24

May 2026

Executive Summary

Purpose of the report

A number of local authorities have been in touch with APSE concerned about the increasing price of fuel in the advent of the conflict in the Middle East and wished to understand the effects on other authorities and what action is being taken.

Methodology

APSE conducted an online survey of its member councils between March and April 2026. Respondents were relatively evenly spread across the country and there were 35 responses in total.

The main takeaways



Significant price increases have added yet more pressure to LA budgets, but there have been little sign of shortages



Emergency / business continuity plans are being developed in some authorities



Authorities are appearing to 'weather the storm' than use this as a trigger to accelerate fleet decarbonisation



Some early adopters of EVs/sustainable fuels are unsure about future ambitions towards decarbonisation

Out of the loop with your council peers? APSE can help...

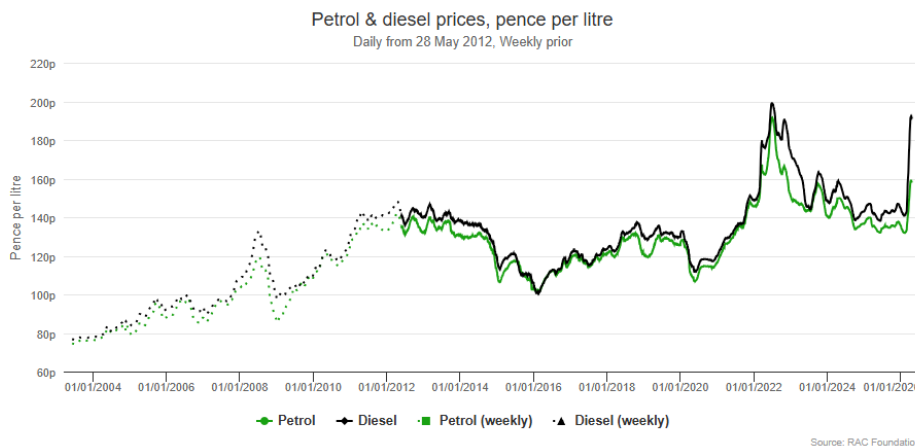


All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Network. This online network provides regular meetings across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider transport sector. The network is your chance to talk about the latest legislation, technology and best practice with your peers in local government. Be sure to sign up for the network [using this link](#).

Introduction

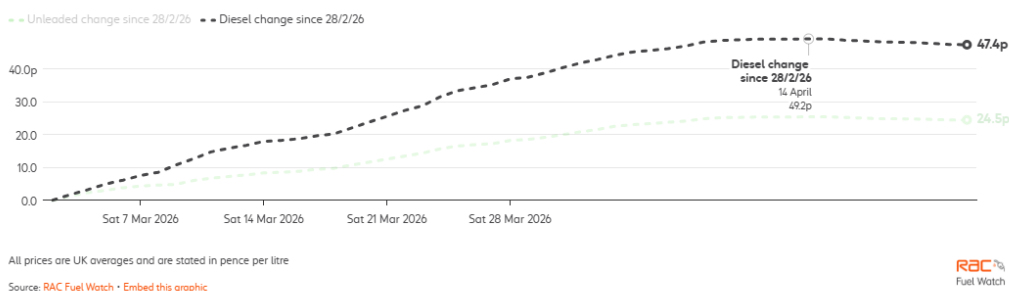
The escalating conflict in the Middle East at the end of February 2026 caused major disruption to the Strait of Hormuz, a key passing point for the oil produced in the region, caused global oil prices to skyrocket to levels not seen since the start of the war in Ukraine.

This would once again have effects on domestic petrol and diesel prices in the UK, with significant increases on the forecourt, with petrol rising from an average of 135p/l in January 2026 to 158p/l in the middle of April, and diesel from 144p/l to 190p/l, according to RAC data, illustrated below.



Whilst various rounds of negotiations take place in the Middle East, as the weeks go on, further pump prices increases have not yet been seen and the price of crude oil has begun to fall. The most recent RAC data (below) at the end of April 2026 shows a very slight reduction in the increase, suggesting the peak has passed, but nonetheless it continues to be a volatile situation.

Increases in pump prices since outbreak of 2026 Iran conflict

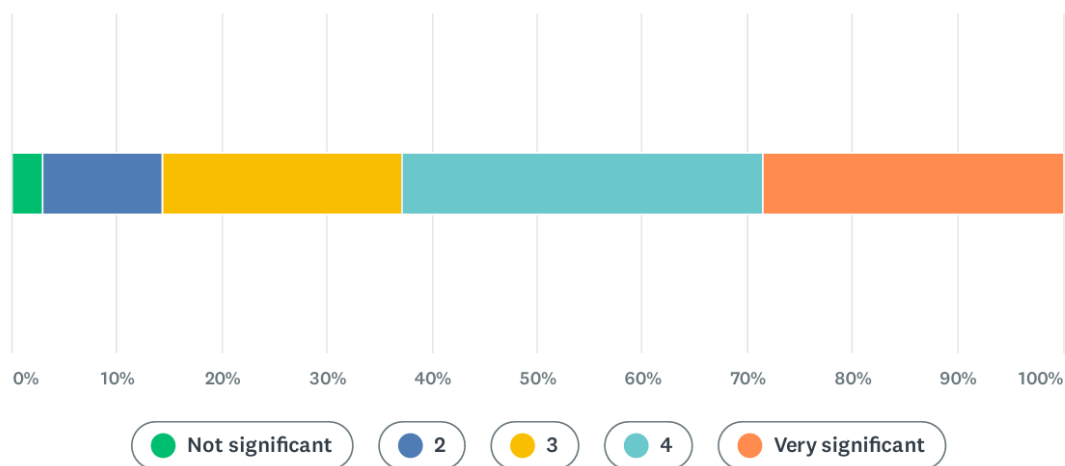


Local authorities are large consumers of fuel, particularly diesel, to power their fleet for essential services from bin collections to street cleansing and grounds maintenance. Budgets to deliver these essential frontline services are under considerable pressure as it is, notwithstanding external factors such as the global increase in fuel prices. APSE received several enquiries from authorities as to how other authorities are managing the situation given increasing budgetary pressures, and if emergency/contingency plans are being prepared in the event of widespread fuel shortages.

APSE launched a survey in March/April 2026 for members to answer questions on fuel and its procurement, any concerns and the current situation in their authority, and to assess the impact on their decarbonisation plans. We are also interested in whether the fuel price increases have caused authorities to bring decarbonisation and electrification to the top of the agenda again to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

What do the survey results tell us?

Q1: Up to now, how significant has the impact been of the recent increase in fuel prices on your local authority?



When asked on a sliding scale, the vast majority of respondents either stated that there was a 'Significant' or 'Very Significant' impact on their authority.

Respondents were also given the option to add comments. The most numerous comments (24 out of 33) were along the lines of clarifying that the impact at the time of writing had mostly been through **cost / budgetary**, and not actual fuel shortages.

62%

"Significant" or "Very significant" impact

Key comments:

- *"No shortages, just increase in cost so far"*
- *"Cost and budget, increase of over 40%"*
- *"Standard road diesel is a small percentage of my fuel turnover. I have a fixed price deal for HVO which expires end of July. My answer to this question might change thereafter"*

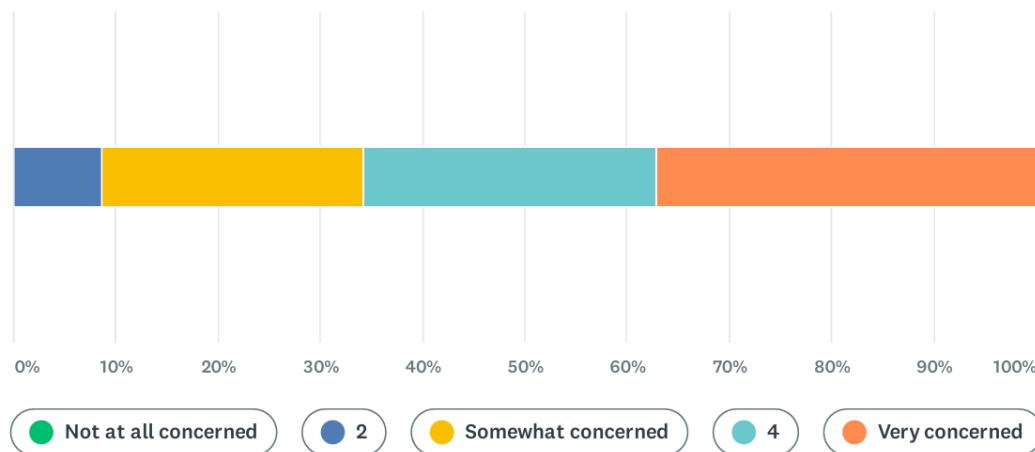
No need to reinvent the wheel! Has your Transport question been asked already?

APSE has received an increasing number of network queries from member councils seeking advice and examples of good practice in relation to Transport and Vehicle Maintenance.

You can view a list of network queries from previous years [here](#). If you'd like to see the responses, please email bjee@apse.org.uk with the reference number of the query.



Q2: How concerned are you in the short to medium term future about fuel prices / shortages and the impact on your fleet?



92%

“Concerned or very concerned”

The survey then asked of the level of concerns going forward to the short and medium term. Nearly all respondents (92%) were at least somewhat concerned with most (37%) being very concerned.

The free comments here indicated a range of concerns:

- *“Fleet and Grey Fleet operations may have to be curtailed if we fail to receive deliveries as required”*
- *“If the current prices are maintained it will have a significant cost implication requiring extra funding.”*
- *“Concerned our contract may be at risk.”*
- *“The impact is based on price and allocated budget rather than acquiring the product”*
- *“We use HVO so if we have to go back to normal derv due to cost of HVO as it is more expensive our carbon footprint will increase”*
- *“It is a potential impediment on the path to net zero”*
- *“Most of my fleet operate HVO or electric which in theory shouldn’t be affected by rising fuel prices but this might affect electric tariffs sooner or later.”*
- *“Panic buying will strain the supply chain”*

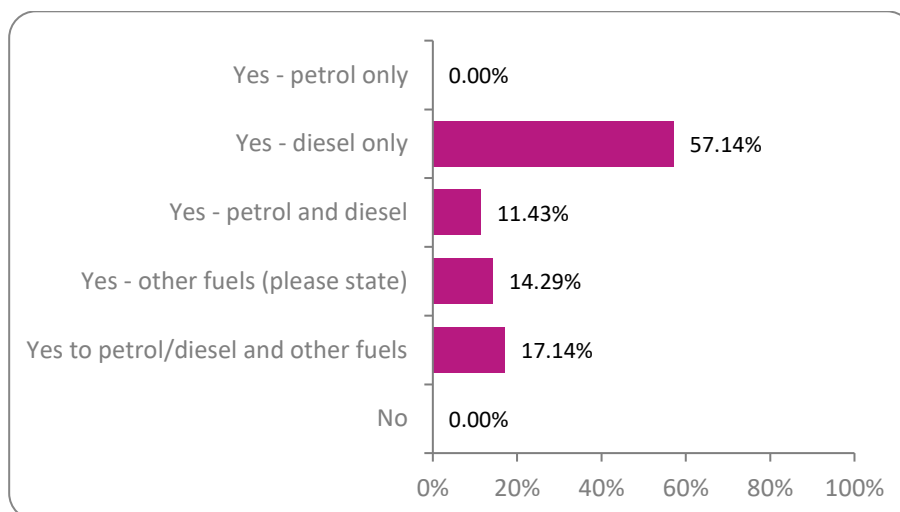
The comments illustrate the level of anxiety caused across the sector. It is interesting to note that of those who may be ahead on the sustainability journey, there were equally concerns around potential EV tariff or HVO cost increases as a knock-on effect, potentially hampering efforts to move away from fossil fuels despite the increased prices.

Q3 At present, how do you procure your fuel?

This was asked in an open comment box to capture a wide range of approaches. Most authorities responding used frameworks.

- Frameworks mentioned include CCS, YPO, Scottish Fuels, Highland Fuels, Welsh Government, to purchase fuel in bulk.
- The next most common answer was the use of fuel cards
- Large depots would have regular deliveries to storage bunker tanks
- *“A procurement options appraisal was undertaken and was used to determine that the best route to market for the supply of fuel is through a compliant framework, as this allowed the targeting of liquid fuel suppliers who have the experience, capacity and accreditation. Fuel is therefore procured through a compliant Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) framework for Liquid Fuels and Associated Products (reference 1183)”*

Q4 Do you have your own fuel storage tanks/bunkers? If so, what fuel types do you store?



The majority of respondents declared that they only store diesel fuel on their sites. The next most popular option was to petrol, diesel and other fuels, suggesting they are also storing HVOs in addition to petrol and diesel.

57%
Store diesel fuel only

Facing reorganisation? APSE can help...



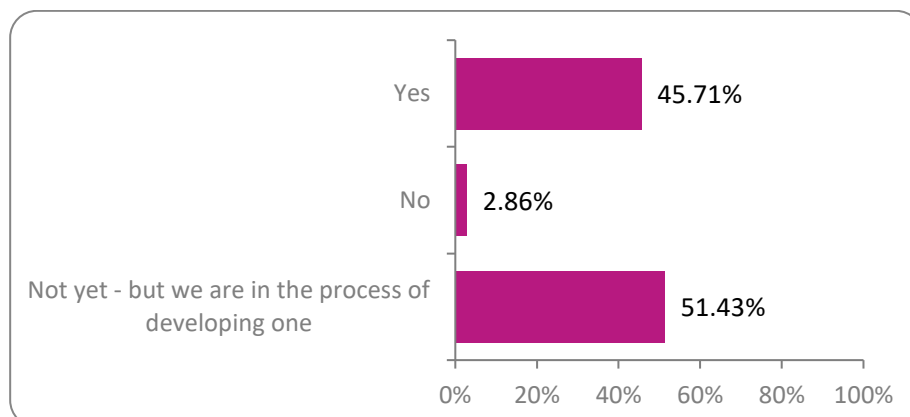
With councils merging services, there will be a need to review transport and asset bases, look at depot rationalisation or repurposing sites, and ensure services are fit for purpose and are run with optimal efficiency. The APSE network can support your local authority Transport service through reorganisation – visit our [Local Government Reform Support Hub](#) for more information.

Q5 How are you managing in terms of reserves levels, in case of any shortages?

As prices increased and petrol forecourts around the country faced queues and shortages at the time, it was pertinent to ask the question to understand how prepared authorities were. This was done through an open comments box. Most responses stated the importance of keeping supplies topped up, replenishing as often as possible, even daily, and ordering regularly, to keep reserves up. Some mentioned the use of reserve tanks, others did not have reserve tanks and ensured a high(er) target level of fuel to maintain (70% mentioned by several, and a minimum of 50%).

- *“Monitoring and keeping storage tanks at high levels at this time with regular orders.”*
- *“We have sufficient storage around our depots and an electronic stock monitoring system. We are using a higher re-order level currently i.e. **not allowing stocks to drop to our normal levels**”*
- *“we try to keep above 10 days supply on all relevant sites”*
- *“Currently ordering level at 10,000ltrs, this will be reviewed depending on how the situation develops”*
- *“Our contracted provider has so far said that supply is uninterrupted. We have contingency plans should supply become an issue.”*
- *“All fuels are monitored live, we have the ability to increase levels in larger tanks by 20000 30000 litres when required. Additionally, we have retained, cleaned and activate (Red Diesel Tanks) where required. We have the ability to have a reserve tanks brought in by fuel tank & pump supplier if needed”*
- *“We converted our red diesel tanks to hold Derv and we are maintaining a higher than usual level stock. Grey fuel mileage may become the bigger issue along with commuting, i.e getting people in if there is no fuel in the area and they are unable to fill their cars. Contracts i.e. passenger services failing to meet the terms of contract”*

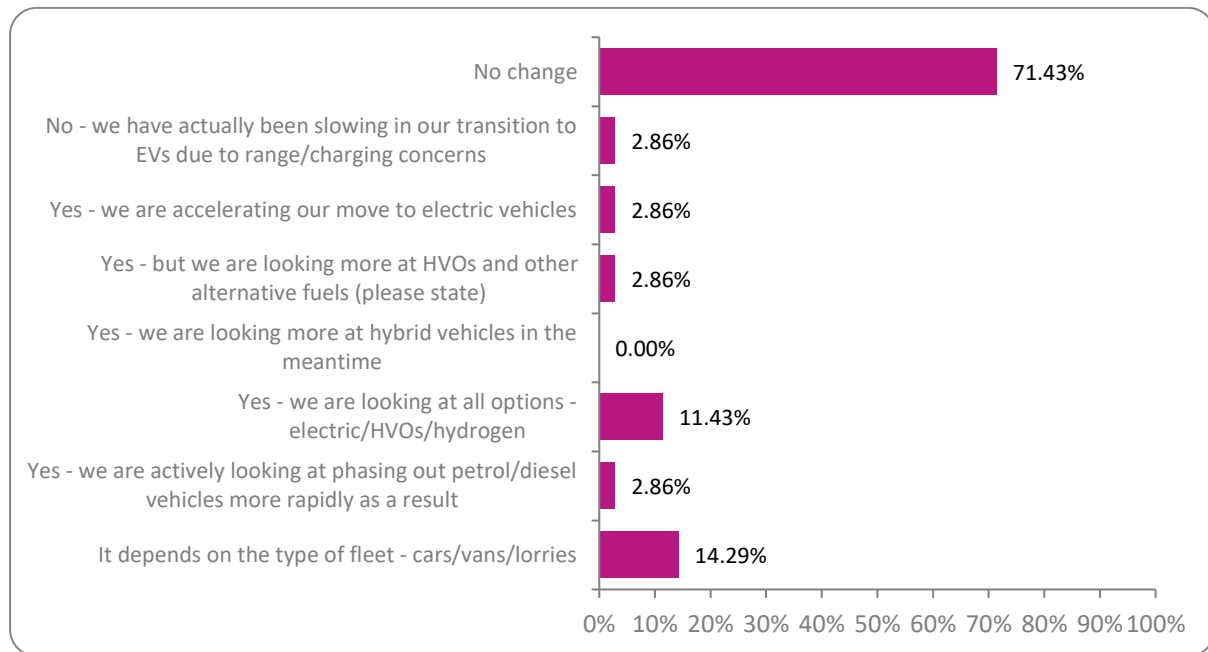
Q6 Do you have a business continuity plan / contingency plan for fuel?



In this question, based on requests from other authorities, respondents were asked if they had a business continuity plan (BCP) or similar emergency plan to manage with the issue. Just under half already have one with a little over half in the process of making one.

A subsequent question asked those who already had a plan to attach a copy of this for inspiration to help other authorities in the process of making one. Unfortunately, none of the respondents were willing or able to attach this, and no comments were given as to why.

Q7 Has the recent fuel price crisis caused you to look again at your fleet decarbonisation / electrification plans and decisions?



71%
 Not changing their approach to fleet decarbonisation as a direct result of the fuel price increases

We were interested in whether the significant fuel price increases had caused authorities look again at and prioritise moving away from fossil fuels to electric and other alternatives, where we have not seen similar fuel price increases. This did not appear to be the case, with 71% stating no change to their approach.

We know that many local authorities have had concerns and reservations around electric fleet, from range issues to reliability and the challenge of EV charging and grid capacity, and these appear to remain the case and most authorities seem to be bearing the brunt of absorbing the fuel price increases.

Of course, switching to new fleet does require significant capital investment in new vehicles and infrastructure which can be costly compared to petrol/diesel fleet, even if there is an opportunity for potential long-term savings on fuel as some EV charging tariffs remain relatively cheap.

Comments included:

- *“Most of my fleet already operate alternative fuels. We are looking to transition BEV to our HGV's but not because of fuel prices. However, in central London we are challenged by a lack of depot space to accommodate charging infrastructure”*
- *“It is complex. We have our waste collected by external contractors. We are hoping to move them to HVO.”*
- *“We already use HVO for majority of fleet and electric for smaller vans”*
- *“As a Council we have been earlier adopter to EV with 24% of the Fleet being EV already including RCV”*
- *“We are investigating Hydrogen for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, but are unsure regarding the potential supply issues.”*
- *“Decisions around any further transition to EVs is not a short term solution to the current situation”*
- *“Too early in conflict to change strategy”*

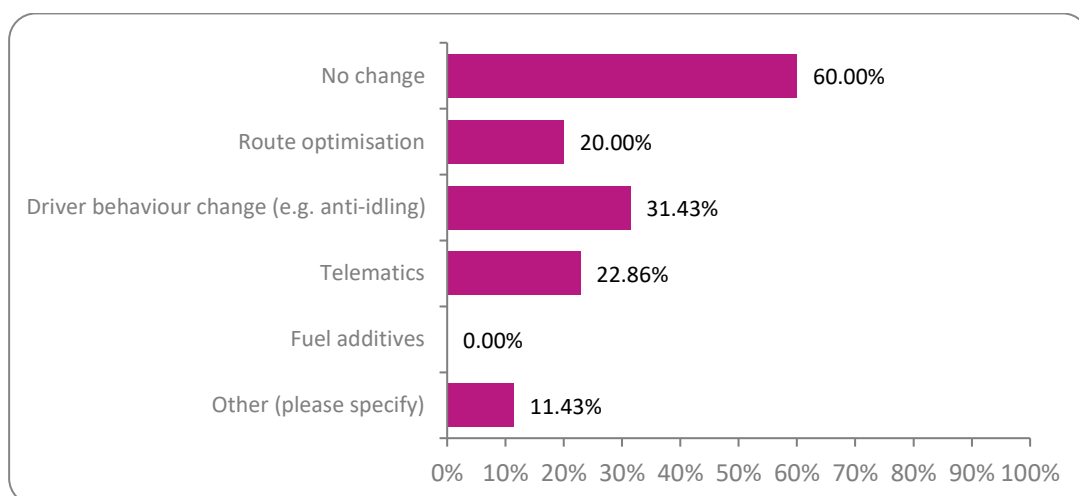
Budget pressure has slowed the transition to net zero:

- *“We are struggling for extra budget to purchase EV's and our charging infrastructure is at capacity. This will require significant investment”*
- *“Fleet decarbonisation program is severely limited at this time due to financial constraints”*

Perhaps concerningly for the low carbon agenda, one authority was looking at reverting from HVOs to normal diesel despite the circumstances:

- *“We are already mostly using HVO but as it is more expensive we may have to consider going back to normal derv and increasing our carbon output”*

Q8 Has the recent fuel price crisis caused you to look at implementing fuel efficiency measures more strongly within the parameters of your existing fuel fleet?



31%

Looking at implementing driver behaviour change initiatives to reduce fuel usage

Our final question asked if authorities were considering interventions to improve fuel efficiency rather than a wholesale switch to EVs and alternatives. A majority (60%), albeit a smaller one than the previous question, still stated no change to this, but as the comments show, many have already implemented initiatives and technologies where they can so may not have much room for further improvement hence 'no change'.

The most common fuel efficiency measure stated was driver behaviour change (e.g. anti-idling) to cut on fuel usage.

Comments included:

- *"We currently do a lot of work in this area so, at this time, are continuing with that. However that may change if the current situation continues or escalates further."*
- *"Changes in development"*
- *"Route optimisation, telematics and driver behaviour measures already in place"*
- *"We already use telematics and our routes are optimised. Idling is monitored."*
- *"We currently do a lot of work in this area so, at this time, are continuing with that. However, that may change if the current situation continues or escalates further."*



Need a steer with your Transport service?

APSE can help...

Through our ethical consultancy service – APSE Solutions – councils can access expert support with strategic reviews, operating models, business planning and transformation programmes to ensure an effective and sustainable in-house service.

[For more information about how APSE Solutions can help, click here.](#)

APSE Training's *'Principles of Fleet Management'* course provides a comprehensive overview of fleet management, covering essential principles and practices for local authorities nationwide. Learners will also gain an understanding of budget setting and effective monitoring to ensure optimal fleet performance. This comprehensive four-unit course explains how to manage the lifecycle of vehicles, as well as financial evaluation techniques to help identify the best option when comparing alternative fuel types to conventional models.

[You can book your place on the training course here.](#)

Don't stall on your journey to a greener fleet!



APSE held an online event in [late 2025](#) showcasing best practice local case studies in fleet decarbonisation across the UK.

In [April 2026](#), as part of a Transport Network discussing the issue of fuel prices, speakers from Logistics UK and an APSE Associate expert in fleet decarbonisation were part of the line-up.

Click the links above to view the slides presented.

APSE Comment:

The ad hoc survey findings highlight the increasing pressure local authority fleet and transport budgets are under due to these external factors as a result of global issues. Whilst at the time of writing, shortages were not experienced by local authority fleet teams (whereas this was the case in the consumer market at some petrol stations due to panic-buying) – local authorities appear to have good contingency plans to keep their fleet moving, through additional deliveries and finding more storage capacity.

What was surprising is the fact that increasing fuel prices have did not act as an immediate call to action to move away from fossil fuels, as the short term costs of changing over the fleet, switching to HVOs and upgrading grid and charging capacity remains high. Authorities are doing all they can to reduce fuel consumption within their existing fleet, but remain on the same track, and in some cases, hesitant on the journey to electrification due to market uncertainty. There has still been considerable progress with many authorities operating majority-electric/zero emission fleet, but these are not always suitable for all vehicle types, and local authorities continue to keep their options open looking at HVOs and hydrogen fuel.

The ability to transition to different types of fleet is dependent on a host of factors such as location and geography, access to the grid, current capacity in the supply side of types of vehicles and costs, including available capital. Local Authority Transport Managers are highly skilled in developing replacement fleet strategies but they have considered and come up against a number of barriers to transitioning fleet, so a glitch in fuel supplies or costs, will not of itself change the factors that they are working under in developing greener fleet which remains a long-term ambition across most local authorities.



Sick of your team's absence levels? APSE can help...

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. As standard for all our benchmarking services – including grounds maintenance –we provide data on staff absences and productivity. By comparing with other UK councils, APSE Performance Network provides

How can APSE help?

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

Training

APSE Training has also designed several special interactive online courses for Transport and Fleet officers and managers:

1. **Principles of Fleet Management** Our one-day training provides a comprehensive overview of fleet management, covering essential principles and practices for local authorities nationwide. Learners will also gain an understanding of budget setting and effective monitoring to ensure optimal fleet performance. Through a series of practical exercises and facilitated group discussion, learners will gain knowledge of alternative approaches to review fleet vehicle and management options, to arrive at the best practical solutions for their requirements. Find out more and book your place [here](#).
2. **Health and Safety – Working on Highways and Verges** APSE's popular course on Health & Safety on Highways and Verges was designed in response to network query requests from councils seeking guidance for roads, highways, street scene, and transport. In addition to new concerns and requirements, accidents to workers and road users on the highway regularly make headlines and attract investigation and enforcement action. Find out more and book your place [here](#)
3. **Biodiversity Net Gain: Preparing Parks Professionals**. This training has been specifically designed to familiarise parks and greenspaces colleagues with this legislation. Through a variety of interactive activities, learners will have the opportunity to gather information and discuss strategies for practical application. You can book your place [here](#).

Benchmarking

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking organisation in the UK. With over 200 authorities in membership, Performance Networks assists local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.

- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

For more information about how your Transport service can benefit from Performance Networks membership, click [here](#).

Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular network meetings, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE Network meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national networks include:-

- FM and Building Cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Veterans and Military Champions Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Waste Management, Recycling and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more details.



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
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Association for Public Service Excellence

3rd floor,

Trafford House,

Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS.

telephone: 0161 772 1810

fax: 0161 772 1811