

HYDROTREATED VEGETABLE OIL (HVO) TRIAL

6.0 Overview and Scrutiny Comments

6.2 The Panel discussed the Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Trial report at its meeting on 6th February 2025.

6.3 Councillor Lowe expressed concern that the fuel was being sourced from Denmark and Holland and enquired whether it was possible to source this from the UK. It was confirmed that the fuel was not currently produced within the UK and that these countries were the nearest suppliers. It was noted that opportunities produce this locally would be monitored and further detail would be brought back to the Panel should viable possibilities arise. Following a further question from Councillor Shaw, it was confirmed that the fuel is produced solely from used cooking oil. Councillor Lowe observed that used cooking oil is collected nationwide and questioned whether partnerships could be developed to allow for a fuel supply within the UK. It was also suggested that kerbside collections of domestic cooking oil be investigated, with Councillor Alban observing that Bromley Borough had previously done such kerbside collections. It was noted that this was a complicated and developing market and that the district council's influence within this market would be limited. It was also noted that the fuel as supplied was a treated product originating from used cooking oil and that this was not something which was currently available within the UK. It was proposed by Councillor Lowe to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this was seconded by Councillor Hunt and the Panel voted unanimously in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet;

6) that the leader contact the Energy secretary to request a reduction in the import tax on this product.

6.4 Councillor Hunt stated that he was impressed by the carbon savings which were achieved by the trial, a sentiment which was shared by the Panel.

6.5 The Panel heard, following questions from Councillors Hunt, Shaw and Bywater, that the collaboration with Fire and Police on the trial had been extremely positive. It was confirmed that the police had joined the trial late and that their participation had been a smaller vehicle than the HGVs used by HDC and the Fire Service. The Panel heard that the site at Eastfield was under 24 hour operation due to the services on site and therefore the emergency services had been able to access the fuel as it was required.

6.6 It was noted that opportunities with East of England Ambulance Trust, CPCA, MOD, local town and parish councils would be investigated as the project moved forward and the Panel wished to encourage the Cabinet and leader to contact relevant organisations to share the benefits of the fuel and collaborative working. The Panel felt that this would give a benefit both financially and environmentally in the significant carbon savings which could be made through developing further partnerships. It was proposed by Councillor Hunt to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this was seconded by Councillor Tevlin and the Panel voted unanimously in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet;

7) to encourage the Cabinet to reach out to other organisations to develop further partnerships with the scheme.

6.7 In response to a question from Councillor McAdam, the Panel heard that the cost of the fuel versus diesel has varied over the course of the trial but that it was currently much lower than it had been. It was noted that there would be opportunities to fix the price of the fuel for a period of time but should the cost become prohibitive, it would be possible to switch back to standard road diesel. Following a further question from Councillor Alban the Panel heard that a set price at which point the HVO fuel would become prohibitive had not yet been identified but was expected to be as the project moved forward. Cllr Hassall suggested that it would be prudent to secure a cut off price where HVO becomes unsustainable and the switch back to diesel, it was felt that a monetary amount may be unsuitable due to the fluctuations of the diesel market therefore a price which was a percentage above the cost of diesel may be preferred. It was proposed by Councillor Hassall to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this was seconded by Councillor Kerr and the Panel voted unanimously in favour of forwarding the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet;

8) to establish a price where the fuel would become prohibitive and to switch back to road diesel.

6.8 Following a question from Councillor Hassall relating to the cost of electric vehicles, the Panel heard that the HVO fuel would be a stepping stone towards future technologies. It was also clarified that the costs of vehicles identified within the report were the list price comparison for the vehicles and capital costs rather than the lifetime costs of the vehicles.

6.9 Councillor Criswell expressed concern that should the use of HVO increase worldwide, this would affect supply and cost of the product. The Panel heard that this was not anticipated to be a fuel of the future but a stepping stone to future technologies. The Panel also heard that the fuel was created from used cooking oil and therefore was making use of a waste product which would have to be disposed of in other manners were it not used for fuel. Councillor Bywater

expressed concern over the odours caused by the storage of used cooking oil. Councillor Hassall expressed a desire to develop and investigate any opportunity to produce the fuel locally. Concern was expressed by Councillors Criswell and Bywater that there was a concern about food security nationwide and that growing crops for fuel would exacerbate this. It was proposed by Councillor Tevlin to add an additional recommendation to the Cabinet report, this was seconded by Councillor Hassall and the Panel voted in favour, with 10 Councillors voting for and 2 abstentions, of forwarding the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet;

9) to create a cross partner steering group of relevant organisations and local producers within Cambridgeshire to develop the production of the fuel within the district.

6.10 It was confirmed to the Panel, following a question from Councillor Shaw, that the team would investigate the purchase of a larger tank should it be required for more collaborative work in the future. The Panel requested that further details on the progress of the fuel scheme be communicated back to Councillors as it progressed.

6.11 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations within the report, and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;

6) that the leader contact the Energy secretary to request a reduction in the import tax on this product;

7) to encourage the Cabinet to reach out to other organisations to develop further partnerships with the scheme;

8) to establish a price where the fuel would become prohibitive and to switch back to road diesel; and

9) to create a cross partner steering group of relevant organisations and local producers within Cambridgeshire to develop the production of the fuel within the district.