Edition One

apse SECTOR NEWS



TRANSPORT AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Expanding EV charging, exploring fuel alternatives and preparing the roads for winter

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Editorial

Driving Change: Fleet Decarbonisation, Automated Vehicles and Road Safety Updates

Last month, we brought local government colleagues together at the APSE Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Seminar in Derby to explore road safety, vehicle compliance, fleet decarbonisation and more - **view the slides here.**

As local authority fleet teams continue to feel the impact of increased fuel prices, councils are transitioning away from diesel to lower-carbon alternatives. Our latest Transport State of the Market report explores the growing adoption of HVO fuel, electric vehicles and other measures being used to reduce reliance on fossil fuels – **read the report here.**

APSE is also showcasing innovation across the sector, including our recent webinar in collaboration with the DfT's Centre for Connected and Automated Vehicles, which explored the regulatory framework for self-driving vehicles and the implementation of the pilot scheme – **view the slides here.**

Alongside this work, APSE remains actively involved with national transport bodies. Bonni Jee, Principal Policy Lead, recently met with the DVSA's Bus Compliance Team to discuss local authority engagement on bus service reliability. In Scotland, Louise Melville, Principal Policy Lead, continues to work closely with Transport Scotland, recently meeting with Hannah Green, Road Safety Policy & Framework Officer.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Transport Bulletin - and stay safe and compliant this winter!



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Local authorities are continuing to transition away from fossil fuels despite rising costs of low-carbon alternatives, new APSE survey finds

Local councils are increasingly turning to HVO fuel and electric vehicles to reduce their reliance on diesel, according to APSE's Local Authority Transport State of the Market survey.

Local councils are increasingly turning to HVO fuel and electric vehicles to reduce their reliance on diesel, according to APSE's State of the Market survey.

Although diesel remains the principal fuel source for local authority fleets, with 93% of respondents reporting its use, the survey shows that councils are increasingly adopting HVO fuel and electric vehicles to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices related to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

The survey found that 90% of local councils have introduced electric vehicles to their fleet, with 31% reporting the use of HVO fuel, a 5% increase from the previous year.

However, the transition is not without its challenges. The survey highlights the difficulties councils face in balancing diesel alternatives with rising costs, with one local authority noting that "HVO pricing is set above diesel prices, so increased diesel prices affect HVO as well.'

The financial impact of rising fuel costs is set against a wider background of budget pressures, recruitment challenges and retention issues. The survey found that 78% of local authorities struggle to recruit technical staff with 53% of respondents identifying low pay as a barrier to recruitment.

Local councils are responding to workforce challenges by investing in training opportunities, creating higher-graded roles and expanding apprenticeship programmes, with 68% of respondents reporting that they offer apprenticeships.

Bonni Jee, Principal Policy Lead for Fleet, Transport and Vehicle Maintenance and author of the report, said:

'This year's findings show how local councils are responding to rising fuel costs, recruitment challenges and budget pressures. A standout trend is the ongoing transition from diesel to low-carbon alternatives and the financial, operational and workforce challenges involved in delivering fleet decarbonisation.'

The full *Local Authority State of the Market Transport and Vehicle Maintenance* report can be found **here.**



Department for Transport launches consultation on updates to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice

Department for Transport

The Department for Transport has launched a consultation on proposed updates to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice, giving local authorities the opportunity to share their views and help shape future guidance.

The proposed changes aim to bring the code in line with developments in legislation, guidance and working practices, ensuring it reflects current approaches to delivering and managing street and road works safely.

The consultation will consider guidance on maintaining safe pedestrian routes, managing cycle routes affected by works, temporary road closures, short duration works and level crossings.

The proposed updates have been developed jointly by the Department for Transport, Transport Scotland, the Welsh Government and the Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland, helping to ensure the revised code reflects the experiences, priorities and concerns of local authorities across the UK.

A key element of the draft is the protection of pedestrians and cyclists when routes are obstructed by road works. The draft proposes a series of protective measures, including improved temporary walkways, a clearer hierarchy for managing cycle routes affected by works and barriers to separate pedestrians from traffic.

Traffic management and road closures are also a central focus of the draft, with proposals for new definitions of 'hard' and 'soft' road closures, as well as updated guidance on managing temporary obstructions and restrictions to road space during works.

The proposed code also contains expanded guidance on mobile and short duration works, including clearer layout requirements and updated examples to make the guidance more relevant to current methods of working.

Risks associated with level crossings and tramways are also addressed in the draft, which proposes more detailed guidance for works taking place in these environments, alongside enhanced risk management measures designed to prevent traffic queues forming near level crossings.

Alongside the changes to individual types of works, the draft seeks to make the code easier to understand and apply. It includes updated diagrams covering signs, cones, tapers and safety zones, reflecting changes to the Traffic Signs Regulations and wider DfT guidance since 2013.

Commenting on the consultation, APSE said:

APSE welcomes the opportunity for councils to contribute to the review of a code which has not been updated since 2013. Changes in highway use, accessibility expectations, traffic management and working practices mean that keeping the guidance current is important for those responsible for delivering and managing works on public roads.



Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain launches Local Bus Service Performance Standards Consultation

Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain

The Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain have launched a consultation on proposed updates to the regulation of local bus service reliability, giving local authorities the opportunity to share their views and shape future guidance.

The proposals place greater emphasis on the role of local authorities in supporting reliable bus services and seeks to explore the impact of congestion, roadworks and traffic signal management on service performance.

The draft guidance also aims to strengthen accountability for network management by encouraging local authorities to provide evidence of issues affecting bus service performance, including traffic management arrangements, emergency roadworks and parking enforcement measures.

Proactive engagement between operators, local authority transport teams and highways teams is a central focus of the guidance, with the draft emphasising the importance of collaboration to demonstrate that delays are actively being addressed.

The consultation also highlights the importance of including examples of good local authority practice within future statutory guidance which illustrate the benefits of working across neighbouring authorities to ensure main bus routes are not affected by roadworks at multiple points at the same time.

Commenting on the consultation, APSE said:

The consultation indicates a move towards greater scrutiny of how local authorities manage road networks and support bus reliability. Local authorities should review current approaches to congestion management, roadworks coordination, operator engagement and Enhanced Partnership governance, and consider responding to the consultation to help shape future expectations and regulatory practice.



Argyll and Bute Council prepares its roads for the winter

Argyll and Bute Council is preparing for another winter with one of the most extensive road pre-treatment programmes in rural Scotland, treating more than half of the area's adopted road network to help keep communities connected and road users moving safely.come.

The Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, on Friday 9 October, approved the Council's Winter Service Policy for 2026/27. This sets out how roads will be prioritised and treated during periods of ice, frost and snow.

The policy provides for up to 54.57% of the 2300km network to receive preventative treatment, the highest proportion among Scotland's rural local authorities and about 10% above the national local authority average.

Winter standby operations will run from 29 October 2026 until 15 April 2027, with crews ready to respond whenever temperatures are forecast to plummet. The Council maintains 32 treatment routes across Argyll and Bute, covering a vast and geographically challenging area that includes remote mainland communities and islands.

The winter fleet comprises 31 frontline treatment vehicles, including 17 hired gritters, 13 Council vehicles and a contractor-operated vehicle on Jura. Additional reserve and backup vehicles are also available to support operations during severe weather, offering extra resilience when conditions deteriorate.

However, the report highlights the increasing challenge of recruiting and retaining the number of suitably qualified drivers required to operate the service safely and legally. Delivering the current winter treatment programme requires a minimum pool of 72 qualified drivers operating on a rota basis. A review carried out in July identified a shortfall of 13 drivers against that requirement.

The Council is taking steps to address the issue through additional training and contractor support ahead of the winter season. Drivers are drawn from a range of operational services, including roads, waste, fleet and grounds teams, but workforce pressures, an ageing workforce and recruitment challenges continue to affect resilience across the service.



Leicester's electric buses save the CO2 equivalent of over one million trees

Leicester's growing fleet of electric buses has now saved more than 27,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2), the equivalent of planting over one million trees.

Each electric bus saves around 40 tonnes of CO2 a year compared with a diesel bus. With 190 buses now in service across the One Network, the fleet is saving around 7,600 tonnes of CO2 every year, the same as taking 3,800 cars off the road.

The roll-out continues, with Leicester Buses on track to have a fully electric network of more than 250 buses by the end of 2027.
The electric buses have been funded through a mixture of the Transforming Cities Fund, the Department for Transport's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme, local ZEBRA funding and commercial investment from operators.

All of the buses carry the distinctive green Leicester Buses One Network livery and offer passengers a quieter, smoother ride with zero exhaust emissions. They also feature next-stop audio-visual announcements, hearing loops and an additional wheelchair space to improve the passenger experience and accessibility.

The electric fleet builds on the transformation of St Margaret's Bus Station, which reopened in 2022 as the UK's first carbon-neutral bus station.

Moray Council to support home EV charging for residents without driveways

Moray Council is set to introduce a new policy that will help residents without off-street parking charge electric vehicles safely at home, one of the first councils in Scotland to do so.

The use of cross-pavement charging infrastructure, allowing charging cables to be installed beneath public footways where suitable conditions are met, has been approved by the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services committee.

The new approach aims to improve access to home charging while preventing the safety risks associated with cables being laid across pavements. Residents will need to apply for permission to install a cable gully and will be responsible for the installation, maintenance and removal of any infrastructure through an agreement with the council, known as a Section 109 Agreement.

In-line with the existing charge for a Section 109 Agreement, a charge of £923 will apply and will include the permit for minor works (Roads Opening Permit). The charge is being introduced to cover the council's costs for processing applications, legal agreements and site inspections. Grant funding could be available for eligible residents through the Energy Savings Trust Cross-pavement charging grant.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority brings buses in St Helens back to public control

Buses in St Helens have returned to public control for the first time in 40 years, providing passengers with more frequent services, better evening and weekend connections and a brand-new fleet of Metro buses.

The first phase of Mayor Steve Rotheram's franchised bus network gives the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority control over routes, timetables and service standards – and the power to plan services around the needs of local communities.

It means decisions over when, where and how often buses run will once again be made locally, with operators held to high standards on reliability, punctuality and cleanliness.

Residents in St Helens will benefit from more frequent services and better connections, including improved links to local hospitals and regional rail interchanges, as well as a new express link to John Lennon Airport.

Capped single fares have also been introduced to make the service more affordable for passengers, as well as a new contactless 'tap-and-go' payment method.

The brand-new fleet of Metro buses offers a low-emission travel option for passengers, equipped with USB charging points, more comfortable seats and extra space for wheelchairs and prams.
Bus operators will also be required to meet strict targets on reliability, punctuality and cleanliness, giving the Combined Authority greater power to hold them to account.

Alongside taking back control of the network, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Steve Rotheram, has committed to keeping bus travel affordable, with the £2 single bus fare cap remaining in place across the Liverpool City Region.

The changes come alongside major investment in St Helens' wider transport network, including the development of the new £35m St Helens Transport Interchange, currently under construction in the heart of the town centre.

St Helens is the first part of the Liverpool City Region to move to the new system. The bus network in Wirral will come back into public control later in the autumn, with Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton following in future phases as the network expands across the city region by the end of 2027.

The new Metro buses form part of a wider transformation of public transport across the Liverpool City Region.

They join the region's new publicly owned Merseyrail trains and the first brand-new Mersey Ferry in more than 60 years as the city region modernises its entire public transport fleet – the only area in the country to do so.



Reporting back from the APSE Fleet, Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Seminar 2026

On Thursday 15 October, APSE welcomed local government transport, fleet and vehicle maintenance colleagues from across the UK to the APSE Transport, Fleet and Vehicle Maintenance Seminar in Derby.

The event provided a valuable opportunity for delegates to explore the latest developments across the sector, including road safety, electric vehicle charging, staff development, occupational road risk and employment law issues.

The seminar was opened by an introduction to Derby from Sam Kelly, Head of Fleet Management and Streetpride, and Adrian Ball, Fleet Transport Manager at Derby City Council. They outlined Derby's key priorities for the coming year, including the introduction of apprentice technicians and an upgraded fleet management system. Sam and Adrian also reflected on the progress made in Derby, including the introduction of HVO, upgrades to their electric charging infrastructure and supporting the food waste collection service.



Improving compliance and protecting the public

Matt Williscroft, Head of Enforcement Relationship Management at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, explored how DVSA supports operators to improve compliance and protect the public. Matt highlighted the Earned Recognition scheme which enables drivers and operators to prove their commitment to vehicle compliance.

The future of fleet

Session two focused on fleet decarbonisation and the innovative approaches local authorities are adopting as they progress towards electrification. Shamala Gadgil, Senior Programme Manager at Coventry City Council, outlined the council's electrification strategy, including its partnership working with charge point operators, the rollout of EV charging infrastructure, and trials of innovative gully charging solutions for residents without off-street parking.

Andrew Smith, Assistant Fleet Manager at Nottingham City Council, shared how the council has turned its fleet green, from its depot and street cleansing vehicles to its refuse collection vehicles. Andrew shared Nottingham's electrification journey from just 4 EVs in 2011 to ambitions of achieving a fully ULEV light commercial fleet by the mid-2030s.

Bonni Jee, Principal Policy Lead at APSE, shared the findings of the latest Local Authority State of the Market Transport and Vehicle maintenance report which highlighted the challenges councils are facing around rising fuel costs, the transition to low-carbon alternatives and recruitment and retention issues within the workforce.

To conclude session two, Rosanna Maxted, Jamie Flintan and Ryan Burke from Procurement Services, explored how their fleet solutions services can maximise local authority fleet operations, including how they supported Kent Highways through the Vehicle Managed Service.

Recruitment, retention and workforce development

Session three began with a presentation from Chris Demetriou, Assistant Director of Corporate Fleet, Transport and Accessible Community Transport at the London Borough of Islington, who shared how they have invested in training, workforce development and staff engagement to create a safer, more resilient fleet and transport operation. Chris highlighted the importance of workforce planning to encourage retention and outlined the career pathways available, from trainee to master technician.





David Smith, Managing Director of Acorn Environmental Solutions, explored the different pathways available to employers to develop their workforce, including the Apprenticeship Levy, Passenger Transport Driver D Licenses and O Licenses. David highlighted the benefits of apprenticeship schemes and the wide variety of opportunities available across the fleet and transport sector.

Supporting safer fleet operations

Becky Guy, Senior Policy Manager at ROSPA, outlined the current landscape of occupational road risk, provided an introduction to ScORSA and highlighted the practical steps organisations can take to improve their fleet safety.

Delegates were then joined by Jane Crees and Catrin Mills, Partners at Sharpe Pritchard LLP, who explored employment law issues for fleet managers, including maintaining service continuity during organisational change and TUPE regulations.

Interactive workshops

The seminar concluded with two interactive workshops led by APSE Associates, Nick Bridle and Bob Bowdler. Nick's workshop explored the transition to fleet decarbonisation and the pathway councils can follow to achieve this ambition, covering every stage from fleet analysis and strategic planning through to implementation and optimisation.

Bob's workshop focused on strengthening vehicle compliance and fleet control, providing delegates with practical steps to strengthen their fleet accountability. The workshop explored supervision gaps, the hidden risks of drivers' hours, compliance frameworks and the importance of resilience through change.



This year's seminar provided an excellent opportunity for fleet, transport and vehicle maintenance colleagues from across local government to come together and discuss the latest policy developments, share best practice and explore the future of the service.



East Hampshire Council begins trials with hydrotreated vegetable oil (HV0)

East Hampshire's new food waste vehicles are trialling using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as fuel, which is reducing the carbon impact of the new service.

The seven food waste vehicles that serve the district are currently running on HVO, the production and use of which reduces greenhouse gas emissions compared to standard diesel.

HVO burns cleaner than standard diesel, with reduced soot, sulphur dioxide and other airborne particles. It's also non-toxic, biodegradable and odourless so it's safer to handle and for the environment in the event of a spillage.

The food waste vehicles are standard diesel vehicles that have been emptied of diesel and switched to HVO without any specialist adaptations, so it is possible to switch back to diesel later if needed.

Northumberland County Council extends EV provision

Northumberland County Council has introduced a new suite of electric vehicle chargers, strengthening the council's existing network.

The Council's Cabinet has agreed to an additional 36 EV charging points at 26 locations, improving access to EV charging for residents and visitors while also promoting cleaner air across the county.

The list of sites will be subject to a final review once connection and installation costs are confirmed to ensure the proposed locations offer value for money.

£1.038m external funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement will be used to roll out the charge points until 2029, with generated revenue being used to meet the chargers running costs, management and maintenance.

78% of the installations will be on land owned by the Council with 22% on third party owned land through a licence agreement.

Belfast Bikes celebrates record year as city marks World Car Free Day

Belfast residents and visitors are being urged to leave the car at home and choose active, sustainable travel this World Car-Free Day, as Belfast Bikes celebrates a record-breaking year, following the introduction of electric bikes to its fleet.

New figures from Belfast City Council, who manage the scheme, show that Belfast Bikes users made more than 170,000 journeys over the past 12 months, following the appointment of a new operator, Beryl, in September 2025.

Bolstered by the addition of 100 state-of-the-art e-bikes and 300 new pedal bikes, users have covered more than 440,000 kilometres in the past year, saving an estimated 17 tonnes of carbon emissions, and completing 52,000 hours of physical activity.

August 2026 was also the busiest month on record for the fleet, sponsored by Frank & Honest Coffee, with 29,211 journeys made across the network, highlighting the growing demand for affordable, accessible and sustainable transport options across the city.

April, May and June also saw their busiest months in five years, with 86% of all registered users using the scheme regularly.

Now, on World Car-Free Day today, Tuesday 22 September, operators Beryl are inviting more commuters, students and tourists to swap four wheels for two, with 25 per cent off student bundles for those returning to university this month and a new 'group rides' feature for friends and family use.

Belfast City Council



Upcoming events

Do you want to share best practice, network with local government colleagues and keep up to date with the latest developments in fleet, transport and vehicle maintenance services? Explore our upcoming events:



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