News story: New regulations to double the use of sustainable renewable fuels by 2020

Tough new biofuel targets coming into force on Sunday (15 April 2018) will double the use of renewable fuels in the UK transport sector within 15 years, cutting the sector's reliance on imported diesel.

Changes to the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) will compel owners of transport fuel who supply at least 450,000 litres a year or more, to make sure the mix is at least 12.4% biofuel by 2032.

Currently the industry, which supplies fuel to transport companies such as haulage firms and airlines, is only expected to meet a target of 4.75% biofuel.

The government is also challenging the sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6% by 2020 – which coupled with the RTFO changes will support the UK's low carbon fuel industry while helping make sure the UK transport sector is one of the most sustainable in the world.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

> We are committed to reducing carbon emissions from transport to tackle climate change, and to making the sector as sustainable as possible. Increasing our use of renewable fuels is a key part of this.
>
> The changes we are introducing will double our carbon emissions savings from the RTFO scheme by doubling the use of renewable fuels and reducing reliance on imported fossil diesel.
>
> This will deliver emissions savings equal to taking hundreds of thousands of cars off the road.

The changes to the RTFO scheme announced today will also, for the first time, reward and support the production of sustainable renewable aviation fuels in the UK.

Willie Walsh, chief executive of the International Airline Group, said:

> Providing sustainable fuel production for aircraft with the same economic incentives given to road vehicles is long overdue. This is a major step forward to help the UK aviation industry meet its carbon reduction targets.

> These incentives have enabled alternative fuel sources to be developed for cars and lorries, while aviation has traditionally been heavily dependent on fossil fuels. This government initiative will support our plans to build Europe's first waste to jet biofuel plant in Britain, creating UK jobs and growth".

The key changes to the scheme are:

- increasing the biofuels volume target from the current 4.75% to 9.75% in 2020, and 12.4% in 2032
- setting an additional target for advanced waste-based renewable fuels, starting at 0.1% in 2019 and rising to 2.8% in 2032
- setting a sustainable level for crop biofuels, an initial maximum cap of 4% of fuel in 2018, reducing annually from 2021 to reach 3% in 2026 and 2% in 2032
- bringing renewable aviation fuels and renewable fuels of non-biological origin into the scheme.

Nina Skorupska, chief executive of the Renewable Energy Association, said:

> We welcome the increased targets for renewable transport fuels and are excited by the new regulations which will encourage the production of novel fuels for hard-to-decarbonise sectors.
>
> The UK's renewable fuels have excellent environmental credentials and their manufacture supports almost 1,000 direct jobs, many of which are in the north-east. As transport is now the UK's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and air quality concerns are growing, this makes the transition to a cleaner system an imperative.

The majority of the biofuel used in the UK comes from waste. By introducing new targets, the RTFO promotes the development of cutting edge technologies to turn waste into valuable low carbon fuels.

The changes are in addition to the £22 million of government funding available to industry to develop waste-based advanced low carbon fuels in the UK for aviation and freight.

The new RTFO will contribute a third of the total savings from transport for the UK's carbon budget.

Press release: GPS wristband for

surfers among winning ideas from young space entrepreneurs

A group of school children from Cornwall and a student from Wiltshire have won a competition for ideas on how satellites could improve life on Earth, Science Minister Sam Gyimah announced today (Friday 13 April).

Ellie Jones, Jessica Knight, both 15, Summer Jeffery and Emily Haddrell, both 14, from Truro, scooped £7,500 for the best group entry in the UK Space Agency competition with their Surf Safe concept. Ieuan Higgs, from Chippenham, received £7,500 for the best individual entry for his Infrastructure Planning and Development Analysis Tool.

The SatelLife Challenge supports the development of science, data handling and technological skills, complementing the Government's Year of Engineering campaign which is championing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to the next generation.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"The UK leads the world in building satellites and we want to encourage young people like those entering this competition to get involved in every part of our thriving space sector.

"The creative use of data from space can solve many challenges and help establish successful businesses. It's a vital part of the Government's Industrial Strategy to back the entrepreneurs of tomorrow as we build an economy that's fit for the future."

Ellie, Jessica, Summer and Emily's idea was for a wristband that uses satellite location data and communications services to identify the locations of swimmers and surfers in the sea.

Ellie Jones said:

"It was so exciting, finding out about the competition. We had never done anything at all like this before. As students living in Cornwall, the sea has always been important to us and from the very start we knew we wanted to do something involving the beach. It was such a surprise to find out we had won and every one was so happy when we got the email, for a long time, it didn't seem real.

"This whole experience has been amazing, we really enjoyed having the opportunity to do something like this. It has definitely given us the confidence to pursue STEM careers moving forwards."

When combined with tidal and rip tide data, this could provide real time tracking and identification of people approaching known danger areas, and provide coast guards or the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) with potentially life-saving information.

Jon Oxenham, RNLI's Community Safety Manager, said:

"It's great to see young people thinking about water safety and creating new ideas which could save lives at sea. At the RNLI we are always trying to find new ways to save lives through innovation, data analysis, and new technology."

Ieuan Higgs' winning idea was for a tool that would map change in urban areas using satellites and algorithms, identifying where building is taking place and potential sites for development.

Ieuan, who is studying Computer Science at the University of Reading, said:

"I thought it would be an exciting opportunity to do a project on a topic I am very passionate about. I came up with my idea after combining my knowledge of current space technology with my areas of interest in Computer Science – using both to form a realistic business solution I thought would be both useful and achievable. It came as a massive shock to see that I was one of the winners, but it was certainly a welcome one! This unexpected result has given me the confidence to continue researching and working on my ideas in my spare time."

The competition is split into three age groups: 11 – 16; 16 – 18; 18 – 22, and a further seven entries from across the age categories were awarded £5,000. The judging panel was made up of experts from the UK Space Agency, the European Space Agency, the Satellite Applications Catapult in Harwell and industry.

All nine winning entries will be able to pitch their ideas to a panel of 'dragons' from the space sector. In 2017 the competition winners were offered a mix of support including an offer to build a prototype, thousands of pounds worth of space on Amazon Cloud Services, access to data, business development advice and a visit to a satellite factory.

With one in four of all telecoms satellites already built substantially in Britain, the government's Industrial Strategy includes plans to work with the industry to grow the space sector and establish commercial space launch services from the UK for the first time.

Today's announcement follows the news that Oxfordshire-based firm Reaction Engines has secured a further £26.5 million to support the development of SABRE™ – a revolutionary new class of aerospace engine combining jet and rocket technologies. The new strategic investors are Boeing HorizonX Ventures, the investment arm of the world's largest aerospace company Boeing; and Rolls-Royce, which has been at the forefront of British engineering for over a century.

Full list of winners:

Ieuan Higgs, 20, from Chippenham, Wiltshire (Best individual

project)

Infrastructure Planning and Development Analysis Tool: This tool would map change in urban areas using satellites – it would identify where building has or is taking place and areas where there is potential for development or where an area is becoming run-down. This change detection would use algorithms rather than be totally manual.

Ellie Jones, 15, Jessica Knight, 15, Summer Jeffery, 14, and Emily Haddrell, 14, from Truro, Cornwall (Best group project)

Surf Safe: This concept is for a wrist band that uses satellite location data and communications services to identify the locations of swimmers, surfers and other people just off the shoreline in the sea, which could be combined with tidal and rip tide data, to provide real time tracking and identification of people getting close to known danger areas. This could be used by coast guards, RLNI and other rescue agencies in the event of an incident.

Kari Lawler, 15, from Castle Bromwich, Solihull

Capturing Earth's changes: An application that uses Machine Learning Deep Artificial Neural Network to regularly ingest and analyse Earth Observation data to learn what the what the Earth looks like, and detect changes and patterns across the globe. The application would also be able to identify the causes of natural disasters through providing details of historical events, to help with preparation and prevention in the future.

Dylan Todd, 17, from Totnes, Devon

Measuring LED usage: This idea would use a spectrometer from space to identify whether light from the Earth is emitted from LEDs or from standard lights. This is important because LEDs are better for the environment as they are more energy efficient and progress in this area is of interest to environmentalists and the scientific community as well as local authorities and governments.

Ben Schofield, 21, Thomas Green, 19 and George Nightingale, 19, from the University of Sheffield

Automated Person Detection: This idea uses drones for search and rescue. This is currently a military capability but the team showed how it could be used in a civilian capacity to identify life and deliver aid. They propose using machine learning to improve the ability of the drones to spot life.

Jasmine Hurley, 16, Jack Whinnom, 17, Megan Goss, 17, Kieron Robson, 17 and Matthew Jones, 17 from Bedlington, Northumberland

Displaced Person Aid: This idea looks at people who are internally displaced and how satellites can help meet their needs rather than those who are refugees. One opportunity for its use would be when there is a natural

disaster such as a hurricane where it could provide information in advance for people who would need to move out of the way of the storm.

Thomas Franchi, 20, Christopher Law, 19, and Hammad Jeilani, 20 from London

MEDrone: This idea uses satellites and drones to help people in isolated areas who cannot access basic health care such as vaccines, birth control or medicine. This would use satellite data to find a remote region, then a drone to gather terrain data from the air, sending the information back via satellite. The drone would then land and allow people to use Skype to talk to health professionals. The drones could also transport swabs or samples and medicine.

Ella Richards, Eleanor Champion and Maddie Harvey, all aged 13, from Truro, Cornwall,

Illness Tracker: This app aimed to map and model the spread of infectious disease. This would not only help individuals who wanted to avoid illness, but also health authorities in getting medication to the right place. It would use the GPS elements of satellites and comms for remote locations.

Tek Kan Chung, 18, from the University of Cambridge

Satellite Imagery for Traffic Management: This idea used satellites to identify traffic areas of problems and re-route people. The idea would use real time data, and then use pace cars to control traffic and reduce phantom traffic jams.

Press release: New curbs on bogus holiday sickness claims

The rules will fix the legal costs that can be claimed in package holiday sickness claims, closing a loophole which the travel industry believes has helped fuel a rising number of claims. This claims epidemic, the industry fears, is raising the prospect of higher travel costs for British tourists.

The rules will come into effect in the coming weeks – ensuring the curbs will be in place before the next summer holiday season.

Up to now, legal costs in overseas package travel claims have not been controlled, which has meant costs for tour operators can spiral out of all proportion to the damages claimed. This has led many operators to settle holiday sickness claims out of court, rather than challenge them.

Industry experts believe this has been a major factor in a rise in claims

which has sparked concerns that Britain’s reputation overseas is being damaged and that British tourists will face higher package holiday prices.

Justice Minister Rory Stewart said:

> Claiming compensation for being sick on holiday, when you haven’t been, is fraud.
>
> This damages the travel industry and risks driving up costs for holidaymakers.
>
> This behaviour also tarnishes the reputation of British people abroad. That is why we are introducing measures to crack down on those who engage in this dishonest practice.

According to the travel industry, there has been a substantial increase in claims, which some have estimated to be as high as 500% in recent years.

While uncontrolled costs have discouraged tour operators from challenging claims, they have also emboldened claims management companies to encourage tourists to pursue holiday sickness compensation, with touts reportedly operating in European resorts.

To help tackle this, Ministers asked the Civil Procedure Rule Committee, which is responsible for setting rules on legal costs, to look at bringing package holiday claims within the fixed recoverable costs regime. This would mean tour operators would pay prescribed costs depending on the value of the claim and length of proceedings, making defence costs predictable and assisting tour operators to challenge bogus claims.

The Committee has now agreed to this rule change – the rules will be updated on Monday, and will come into effect shortly. More detail will also be published on the Government’s approach, alongside its response to a recent call for evidence.

The Government is committed to tackling the country’s compensation culture, and recently introduced a Civil Liability Bill which includes measures to reduce the unacceptably high number of whiplash claims and allow insurers to cut premiums.

Other reforms include the forthcoming ban on cold calling and tougher regulation of claims management companies.

Notes to editors

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) reports a 500% increase from around 5,000 claims in 2013 to around 35,000 claims in 2016. This is despite the fact that travel industry data on the global trend for reported incidence

of illness in resorts has actually declined in recent years.

Since October 2017, four couples were either sentenced or ordered to pay significant legal costs by the court after making false package holiday sickness claims. These cases were private prosecutions brought by tour operators Thomas Cook, TUI and Red Sea Holidays.

Press release: PM call with President Trump: 12 April 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

“The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump about Syria this evening.

“They agreed that the Assad regime had established a pattern of dangerous behaviour in relation to the use of chemical weapons.

“They agreed it was vital that the use of chemical weapons did not go unchallenged, and on the need to deter the further use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime.

“They agreed to keep working closely together on the international response.”

Press release: Cabinet meeting: 12 April 2018

This afternoon Cabinet met and received an update on the attack against innocent civilians in Douma, Syria, on Saturday.

The Prime Minister said it was a shocking and barbaric act which killed up to 75 people, including children, in the most appalling and inhumane way.

Cabinet agreed that the Assad regime has a track record of the use of chemical weapons and it is highly likely that the regime is responsible for Saturday’s attack.

The Prime Minister said it was a further example of the erosion of international law in relation to the use of chemical weapons, which was deeply concerning to us all.

Following a discussion in which every member present made a contribution, Cabinet agreed it was vital that the use of chemical weapons did not go unchallenged.

Cabinet agreed on the need to take action to alleviate humanitarian distress and to deter the further use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime.

Cabinet agreed the Prime Minister should continue to work with allies in the United States and France to coordinate an international response.