

## RSN Seminar: Rural Decarbonisation

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022  
**Subject:** Rural Decarbonisation  
**Chair:** [Kerry Booth](#), Deputy Chief Executive, Rural Services Network  
**Host:** Online Event via Zoom

### Speakers

**Speaker 1:** Jenny Milne, Founder, [Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community CIC](#),

**Speaker 2:** Sophia Haywood, Director of Public Affairs, [Liquid Gas UK](#)

**Speaker 3:** Matt Williams, Senior Specialist (Economy & Culture), [South Lakeland District Council](#)

### Key Learning Points

#### Rural Transport and Decarbonisation – Thinking Outside the Box: Sharing Ideas

- The challenge of urban solutions, eg, [in Scotland](#), there is a national policy on 20 minute neighbourhoods, but [20 minute neighbourhoods](#) not always possible in rural areas.
- Issues with infrastructure, demography, broadband etc but now includes impact of Covid, tourism, Return-on-Investment, budgets etc.
- Transport poverty and car ownership an issue
- Transport Operators are starting to actively listen to stakeholders and users far more than before. Collaboration key to ensure not working in silos and to understand changing expectations of transport user. How do we know what they are and how do we measure them?
- Connectivity/technology has made a big difference but for many still have poor broadband and cannot connect to transport via apps etc.
- Changes in travel behaviour and lifestyle and where we shop, what we take with us on holiday eg canoe.
- Decarbonisation focuses on the car, demand response transport and e-bikes etc been around for ages but not always reducing use of cars etc.
- Outside of the box thinking looks at informal networks ie the WhatsApp or Facebook group requesting lifts or to pick up prescriptions rather than a formal car share club which work well in local, small communities. Also look at “rewards” for people and thinking laterally.eg the rural business owner who’s bought minibuses to bring his staff in to work and back home again – how can the community access/use those minibuses when not in use.
- Dwight Mangle and customer orientated management , in upstate New York, looking at the cost of rural mobility and paying into various “transport pools”. Your “value” as a volunteer driver in the community is acknowledged and if

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you've missed the train/bus etc you will be able to get home at no extra cost. It is cheaper to decarbonise this way than paying for petrol/diesel.

- [UITP report \(Feb 2022\)](#) on the rural mobility challenge for public transport: How combined mobility can help.
- [www.ruralmobility.scot](http://www.ruralmobility.scot) for Scottish Rural and Island Transport Community (SRITC) which is open to all. Hold monthly cafes and have an annual gathering in Sept which is hybrid.
- SMARTA project - <https://ruralsharedmobility.eu>
- MAMBA project - <https://www.mambaproject.eu>
- ITF report.- <https://www.itf-oecd.org/innovations-better-rural-mobility>
- Decarbon8 - <https://decarbon8.org.uk>
- Kathryn Logan has written various academic papers on EV and also hydrogen/electric so happy to point people to the papers if they wish at [jenny@jennymilne.com](mailto:jenny@jennymilne.com)

## Decarbonising Rural Heating – A pathway to Net Zero

- Liquid Gas UK covers 99% of the LPG distributed across the UK and cover the whole supply chain. Historically just LPG but now looking at bio-LPG.
- 2m rural off-grid homes, 1.1m use heating oil and 200,000 use coal. There are also different types of businesses/non-domestic buildings that will need different solutions on how we heat our buildings/homes in the future.
- Cost of living crisis – currently estimate 13.5% of people living in rural areas classed as fuel poor.
- “One-size-fits-all” approach to decarbonisation will not work in rural areas due to the mix of housing stock and is not the best way to encourage people to decarbonise or the most cost effective.
- Research shows that around 44% of rural off grid homes aren't going to be suitable for a straight switch on to an electric based heating system. They're going to need some sort of hybrid system and whatever it is it is going to be a high temperature heating system.
- Results of a [poll of over 1,000 rural off-grid homes](#) by Liquid Gas UK. Households want a mix of technologies that they can still choose from and for Government to take into account rural views.
- Affordability and willingness to pay should be taken into account by Government and policy.
- Re the LPG poll 61% of rural households had not improved in energy efficiency in the last five years. Most thought their homes were energy efficient enough, some were not able to/willing to pay.
- Ambitious targets for businesses to decarbonise as well – varied energy demands and needs that have to be considered, e.g. farming, street food, camping, marine life etc
- Industry going through transition, with a vision to be 100% renewable by 2040. All LPG infrastructure is bio- LPG ready and renewable fuel by LPG, which is

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available on the market today, can be dropped into existing infrastructure - the whole supply chain and is a perfect partner for hybrid technology.

- A renewable gas plant being built in the UK – first of its kind.
- Bio-LPG produced from a mix of biomass feedstock and waste products and main place is as a co-product from making sustainable aviation fuel.
- [Sophia.haywood@liquidgasuk.org](mailto:Sophia.haywood@liquidgasuk.org) please contact Sophia directly with any questions
- Handy [Q&A on bioLPG on Liquid Gas website](#)

## How South Lakeland District Council Helps Businesses to Cut Carbon Emissions

- Living in a landscape driven area with many annual visitors was a big driver for pushing forward with declaring a climate emergency and enabling businesses to be low carbon.
- The Council aspires to be a carbon neutral organisation by 2030.
- Partnership approach with local businesses and business support providers. Have a good network of specialist people and organisations to be effective in this and include Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS), Green Small Business and Future Fixers.
- [Carbon footprint calculator](#) by CAfS has proved a very useful tool.
- CAfS business support element has been key and there will be more investment and peer-to-peer support offered.
- [Green Small Business](#) offers environmental management systems that audits an understanding of the businesses carbon footprint and how their operations are affected. A plan is put in place to be monitored and reviewed annually.
- Pilot scheme has been well received by small businesses in Lakeland as a means for them to show their commitment to reducing their carbon footprint but without the associated costs in doing this plus it helps reduce overall costs for the business too.
- Also, they get a green certificate which is important as a marketing tool for the business and the annual review confirms that they are committed to this and doing what they said they would.
- [Future Fixers](#) Driven by a people, planet and profit model to create a fairer, greener and more compassionate world. Benefits to people in terms of their well-being and “doing the right thing” and links with benefits to the planet and improving profits etc
- It’s a start-up course and taking people with ideas and concepts and looking to see if they can make a viable, ethically-minded business model. Helped a number of people to set up their own, unique, environmental-minded business.
- [Simply Repair Directory](#) - .find a local repair business to extend the life of an item and keep it out of landfill. Seed funding from South Lakeland DC.
- Council strong on localism and empowering communities and individuals to do the right thing. It’s also been a very efficient way of making resources and funding go further. If the Council had done this in-house it would have been a lot

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more costly.

## Learning Outcomes

### Examples of Good Practice/Reports/Information

- **CoCars in the SW** offer rural car share schemes and they also do an e-bike share scheme. <https://www.co-cars.co.uk/> and <https://www.co-bikes.co.uk/>
- Scarborough Borough Council are working with partners in North Yorkshire on a project as part of the Community Renewal Fund to identify options and action plans for some of their hard-to-treat homes (rural and small town). Will share learning when project concludes later this summer or can be contacted on: [harry.baross@scarborough.gov.uk](mailto:harry.baross@scarborough.gov.uk)
- South Somerset District Council doing a similar scheme: [Somerset Retrofit Accelerator](#) and has a website focusing on [environmental work and Parish Environment Champions](#)
- [Regen](#) are another organisation supporting decarbonisation of energy <https://www.regen.co.uk/>
- [Local repair cafes](#) becoming very popular. Some are organised by local community groups etc
- [Green Innovation Fund grants by Devon County Council](#) – to find out more contact [polly.frost@devon.gov.uk](mailto:polly.frost@devon.gov.uk)
- [Ramboll](#) – Making 20-minute Neighbourhoods a reality with link to webinar
- Stagecoach – [UK's first full-sized autonomous bus](#)
- [WWF Carbon Footprint](#)
- [Passive House Leisure Centre, Exeter](#)

## Open Forum Discussion

- **John Birtwistle from First Bus** observed that latest government assistance schemes for decarbonisation have focused on electric and hydrogen fuel for buses. Despite the investment in significant numbers of buses and bio-LPG, re-fuelling Facilities and Operations in Bristol, which First Bus is running, but also in Nottingham and Reading; these are not included in the latest assistance schemes for decarbonisation. John believes that bio-LPG is potentially suitable for rural areas and the infrastructure requirements and maintenance facilities are no more difficult to provide/operate than for diesel. Electric and particularly hydrogen, are difficult in some rural areas in terms of providing the infrastructure. The vehicles themselves are fine, but actually getting power to those vehicles can be problematic due to either issues in the supply chain or issues in grid capacity. In the longer term, hydrogen may become a viable fuel option for rural public transport (it doesn't have the range issues associated with electric vehicles) but has issues around how the hydrogen is produced. Some is green hydrogen produced by an electrolysis process from wind/solar/wave etc, but some

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produced from burning coal. Another issue is cost of infrastructure, vehicles, maintenance, supplying the fuel and storage.

- **Sophia Haywood response:** Bio-LPG is made with the same molecule size as LPG so is compatible with existing infrastructure etc. For other fuels, there will be a process of upgrading different parts of the technology and there is a lot of investment in this area. Much thought is going into food crop versus fuel and not impacting in a negative way and how to utilise waste feedstock. Looking into circular economy and collecting/using waste from local areas and recirculating back into the local economy as an energy source.  
Biomass strategy – at a UK level will be a critical piece of work looking at bio-energy and different types of feedstocks, waste of biogenic.
- **Matt Williams response:** How to contact particularly small, rural businesses who may not be part of a network? Matt suggested using the local chambers of commerce but if businesses are not part of those then the council has the addresses for all its business and so writes to them directly with their council tax/business rate bills and promote the programmes to them. Also build up a network of contact details through a newsletter and push that out through social media channels and Council partners share these across their networks.
- **Cllr Jones, South Lakeland DC:** Look to re-open the Lido, but a massive carbon footprint. Would like to work with BEIS and some pilot money to make this happen. Kerry noted that the government has put out a lot of funding for bids but rural councils don't have the resources to work on discretionary projects/services so this puts them at a disadvantage at the start of the bidding process. Also, RSN has fed back to Defra that if a bid is unsuccessful then Councils need feedback.

## Any Other Key Outcomes from the Seminar

**RSN's Revitalising Rural Campaign** **Specific Policy Asks** of the Government is for fairer distribution of national resources to rural areas and more nuanced national policies. There are 14 Chapters in the campaign. These include [Decarbonising Rural Communities & Economies](#) and [Sustainable Farming & Land Management](#).

As new Government strategies are announced, RSN puts them through a "[Rural Lens Review](#)" which adds depth and texture to the Policy Asks. A fresh crosscut of the Revitalising document being worked on will look in more depth at younger people. It will also look at the impact of various issues on younger people and develop case studies (personal experiences) rather than dry policy discussions. Reviews include: [Net Zero Strategy](#), and [Heat and Buildings Strategy](#)

**Case Studies**: If you've got a great case study highlighting some of the issues within the seminar, or where a project has been successful, we'd love for you to share them with us. Please complete the downloadable form in the link and email it through to us to help inform our Revitalising Rural Campaign but to also highlight to Government the impact of policy decision making.

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Who are the Rural Services Network? [Please click here to find out.](#)

### Useful links to share about some of our RSN members

- CPRE The Countryside Charity and their climate change and energy campaigns. See: <https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/climate-change-and-energy/>
- Cafs Cumbria Action for Sustainability offering independent advice and services on sustainability and prevention of climate change. See: <https://cafs.org.uk/>
- And the following National Park Authorities on nature recovery and climate plans:  
<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/>  
<https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/>  
<https://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/>  
<https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/home>  
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/>

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