

Working progress

Steve Welch talks to Neil Wallis of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership about the organisation and recent initiatives



Neil Wallis, Head of Communications at the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership is responsible for the LowCVP's communications activities including government and media relations, most publications, the monthly e-newsletter and I also have oversight of the website. He also leads on the Annual Conference and Parliamentary/Party Conference activities and aspects of information management.

Steve Welch: Could you tell me a little about your background in the sector?

Neil Wallis: I've worked in the energy/transport industry – in both public and private sectors - in a variety of policy, public affairs, programme management and communications roles. After 7 years with the energy company, Texaco (now Chevron), and a two-year assignment as a VSO volunteer, I joined the Energy Saving Trust's nascent transport programmes division. After around ten years there, I moved to the LowCVP. I originally studied Economics and Politics, have a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and a Postgraduate Certificate in Journalism. I'm also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

SW: Could you provide a brief summary of your organisations activities?

NW: The LowCVP is a not-for-profit, independent partnership, jointly funded by Government and our members. The Partnership is unique because of the breadth of stakeholders (government, industry, NGOs and the widest range of experts) who work with us, helping to shape policy, regulation and initiatives targeted at reducing emissions to tackle climate change and improve air quality. We've been active for over 16 years, becoming one of the most experienced and well-connected bodies in the sustainable road transport world.

Our work encompasses personal and public transport as well as freight, fleet and fuels. We aim to create a shift in the way people think – and act – in terms of mobility, working towards a better way of reaching shared goals in the transition to net zero.

SW: Could you give some details of recent initiatives you are working on?

NW: A key element of our work programme this year will be the conclusion of the Electric Vehicle Energy Taskforce (EVET), which was set up by the LowCVP at the request of Government to help make sure that the UK's energy system is ready and able to facilitate – and maximise the benefits from - the mass take up of electric vehicles.

Alongside the activities of the Taskforce, we'll be working to identify opportunities for the electrification of depot-based fleets.

The freight sector presents particular challenges in terms of decarbonisation. Alongside various initiatives in this area, we'll be setting more standards for the definition of Ultra Low Emission

Trucks, enabling the creation of a policy framework to support their accelerated introduction.

Building on many past initiatives, we'll be working with our members to further develop and promote the rapidly expanding Ultra Low Emission Bus market

In a period of unprecedentedly rapid change, consumer understanding of new technology and its implications is vital. Several LowCVP work-streams will help ensure there's informed demand for low carbon/emission vehicles, through consumer information, labelling and other mechanisms. We'll be particularly focusing on support for the finance and leasing sector in accelerating the ULEV transition.

SW: Could you give some updates from your annual conference?

NW: This year's LowCVP annual conference focused on which of the future fuels can play a role in the vital transition to net zero carbon emissions. Acknowledging the momentum behind the drive for electrification, particularly in the car and bus sectors, it discussed future fuel options for 'hard to electrify' applications (such as long-haul freight and coaches) and low carbon options for IC-engines during the electric transition.

This year, the LowCVP aims to build on our leading work on the carbon assessment of biofuels and further develop carbon and sustainability criteria proposals for low carbon transport fuels and other bioenergy sectors.

We'll also be working on projects to stimulate the uptake of high blend renewable fuels and helping further with preparations for the introduction of E10 (a 10% ethanol blend in petrol).

Neil Wallis



SW: Who in the main are the member companies you engage with and in what way?

NW: LowCVP has the widest range of stakeholder members – now over 200 – which makes the Partnership unique in terms of the range of perspectives that are brought to the table.

Members participate in the Partnership in a wide variety of ways, depending on their interests and expertise. At the LowCVP's core are

our working groups which delve into the details of potential future policy, regulations and initiatives to drive low emission technology uptake in road transport.

Members are able, of course, to gain privileged insight into the future market and policy developments, often giving them an edge on their competitors, through their active participation in our working groups and related initiatives.

SW: What are your reflections on 2018/2019?

NW: It feels as though there's been a real sea change in the last year or so. Vehicle electrification is now really taking off; there are some great products out there and many of them are now a common sight, almost wherever you go.

There's been a significant 'ramping up' in terms of political pressure – particularly through the 'school strikes' and Extinction Rebellion protests – and indications of a serious response with the recent adoption of the net zero target into law and widespread official acknowledgment that we're now facing a climate emergency.

There's very much to do, of course, but some clear reasons to be optimistic in terms of both the potential for environmental progress and the industrial and commercial opportunities for the automotive sector that this 'green industrial revolution' will bring with it.

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