

BIONIC: Sustainable Biofuels in the Community

We love transport. The last century saw a boom in our transport options and raised our expectations of travel to unforeseen heights. Anyone of us could be on the other side of the world by tomorrow. This insatiable hunger to broaden our horizons does have the odd downside however. Not least of these is the contribution that our expeditions make to human induced climate change, or to be more exact the impact that our choice of fuel has.



In the UK, Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG – a basket of gases which exacerbate human induced climate change, of which CO₂ is the most prevalent and well known but by no means the most potent) have been on a generally reducing trajectory in recent years from all sectors apart from one, yes you guessed it transport.

Transport is a difficult area to tackle because it is highly emotive. Despite being relatively recent inventions cars, vans, trucks and planes have become as deeply embedded in our lives as their forbearers, trains and boats. It is difficult for the majority of us to think of life without them and difficult for some to even consider a life where we might use them less.

If we are to make serious inroads into GHG emissions, we are going to have to think more about the journeys we do make and how necessary they are. However, there are other things that we could do too. As we have already alluded to, it isn't the fact that we are travelling huge distances that is the central problem, it is how we travel. Cars, vans, planes and boats are all hugely dependant upon fossil fuels. Electricity plays a much bigger role in the rail sector but ultimately the majority of the world's electricity grids are still reliant on fossil fuels too. If we are going to avoid draconian cuts in travel, we need to move away from fossil fuels.



Biofuels are one way in which our road transport in particular may be able to diverge from GHG

emissions. In late 2007 nine partners from five European countries came together to promote the production and use of sustainably produced biofuels through BIONIC – BIOfuel Networks In the Community. BIONIC is a three-year project examining the potential of and barriers to the increased production and use of road biofuels in the partner areas, with the emphasis on sustainability. The project is partly financed by the EC's Intelligent Energy – Europe programme.

Active in Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Sweden and England, BIONIC recognizes that if biofuels are going to play a role in reducing GHG emissions they need to be properly managed. For biofuels to make their full contribution they must avoid undue conflict with food crops, they must avoid indirect effects and they must be shown to reduce GHG emissions compared to fossil fuels. The good news is that all of these can be achieved today.

The most important thing is not to view biofuels as the answer. In the near term it is hard to see how sustainably produced biofuels alone can replace all of our fossil fuels. They must be viewed as a part of the solution. For some the fact that they can't do the job on their own is a reason not to develop them. We believe that we need to use all of the tools at our disposal to tackle climate change and encourage energy diversification, so we must fully exploit sustainable biofuels so that they can do their share.



And that is the key message for our transport future. There are many technologies, fuels and demand management tools which can help us to get to a low carbon transport system. There is no one silver bullet. We must ensure that they are each used in the most appropriate way to achieve Europe's challenging carbon reduction targets.

We believe that BIONIC is a small but important step in the right direction. If you would like to know more about the work of BIONIC please visit the website www.bionic-project.eu where you will find a description of the work and contact details. Businesses with an interest in sustainable biofuel are welcome to join the local network groups in each partner area.

Travelers finding earth-friendly means

Whether it's sharing rides to and from the airport or printing only essential pages of their itineraries, travelers are casting a critical eye on earth-friendlier habits, a new survey by a leading ground transportation company shows. The GO Group LLC, polled 400 travelers to find that more than 80 percent intend to take shared rides to and from the airport, reducing both fuel consumption and

emissions. Another 80 percent of respondents said they plan to print only essential pages of travel confirmation details, saving paper and ink. More than 70 percent cited use of the bathroom in the airport in order to reduce the need for fuel to power the flush on the plane. And 57 percent of respondents plan to refill security-mandated 3-ounce containers with their own toiletries in a bid to recycle. Survey respondents also offered their own earth-friendly travel tips, such as bringing fewer pieces of luggage and using the minimum amount of hotel towels. In one instance, a traveler suggested paying a carbon-offset fee after every trip. Goairportshuttle.com

By Andrew Leadbetter

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