

# IRTE

OFFICIAL JOURNAL

## TRANSPORT ENGINEER

SEPTEMBER 2025

### IN THIS ISSUE

› MAN showcases its complete range of high-tech electric trucks

› Skilled HGV technicians move into the spotlight



# CHARGING UP

As more electric trucks and vans hit the roads,  
infrastructure is starting to take shape







# HEAVY DUTY VEHICLE LIFT SPECIALISTS

Make light work of vehicle lifting with Stertil-Koni's Heavy-Duty 4-Post Lift. Engineered for strength and reliability, our lifts provide unmatched performance, ensuring your commercial vehicles are raised with ease and precision.

[sterdil-koni.co.uk](http://sterdil-koni.co.uk)  
[lifts@sterdil.co.uk](mailto:lifts@sterdil.co.uk)  
01604 662049



FCA approved financial and  
leasing packages available



# contents



10



25



18



28

## REGULARS

- 05 Comment
- 06 News
- 34 Engineer to Engineer
- 37 Product roundup -  
Bodybuilding
- 38 Legal update

## FEATURES

### 10 Action sub-stations

COVER STORY

As more and more electric commercial vehicles enter the market, the development of charging infrastructure to support their arrival and operation within fleets continues. By John Challen

### 14 A range of possibilities

ELECTRIC DRIVELINES

MAN held a ride and drive event in Munich for the press, where it showcased its latest electric models. Lucy Radley was there

### 18 Showcase of HGV technician talent

IRTE HGV SKILLS CHALLENGE 2025

The inaugural IRTE HGV Skills Challenge takes place from 30 September to 1 October at the DAF Apprentice Academy in Nottingham. The SOE has launched the challenge in partnership with DAF Trucks

### 20 A digital future

INSIDE THE IRTE

Transport Engineer moved to a digital-only publication from this issue. Why has the move been made away from print?

### 22 Technicians take centre stage

IRTE SKILLS CHALLENGE 2025

The spotlight shone on the UK's talented and skilled bus and coach engineers at the IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge Awards lunch. The event took place in Wolverhampton

### 25 A tech-first approach

COACHES

Ember Coaches has seen huge growth in recent years. Ben Spencer learns how a technology platform is allowing the operator to gain momentum while also gaining an insight into why electric may be superior to hydrogen

### 28 Building better

BODYBUILDING

OEM bodybuilding platforms are streamlining specification and integration. Tom Austin-Morgan reports on the latest developments taking place

### 31 What VECTO means to you

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Mandated better fuel economy can only be a good thing, right? Richard Simpson raises some important questions to consider for operators investing in a new truck for their fleets

Scan to donate!

For more than 25 years, Transaid has supported people across sub-Saharan Africa to build the skills required to transform their lives - with a focus on improving road safety and increasing access to healthcare.

UK Registered Charity No: 1072105 Patron: HRH The Princess Royal



# PREMIUM WORKSHOP EQUIPMENT



PROUD MEMBER OF



HEADLIGHT ALIGNERS



BRAKE TESTERS



WORKSHOP LIFTS



ATF LANES



AXLE PLAY DETECTORS

[www.maha.co.uk](http://www.maha.co.uk)



Phone: 01945 580061  
Email: [sales@maha.co.uk](mailto:sales@maha.co.uk)



Published by  
The Society of Operations Engineers  
SOE president  
Howard Seymour

The Society of Operations Engineers is a licensed member of the Engineering Council.

Registered in England  
Company No 3667147

Registered Charity  
No 1081753  
A Company Limited by Guarantee

Registered Office  
22 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PR  
Tel: 020 7630 1111  
Fax: 020 7630 6677  
Email: [soe@soe.org.uk](mailto:soe@soe.org.uk)  
[www.soe.org.uk](http://www.soe.org.uk)

Editor  
Justin Burns  
Email: [justin.burns@markallengroup.com](mailto:justin.burns@markallengroup.com)

Assistant editor  
Ben Spencer  
Email: [ben.spencer@markallengroup.com](mailto:ben.spencer@markallengroup.com)

Contributing editors  
Tom Austin-Morgan, Steve Banner, John Challen,  
Toby Clark, Laura Cork, Dan Gilkes,  
John Kendall, Dan Parton, Lucy Radley,  
Richard Simpson, Simon Walton

Art editor  
Chris Charles

Production manager  
Nicki McKenna  
Email: [nicki.mckenna@markallengroup.com](mailto:nicki.mckenna@markallengroup.com)

Commercial manager  
Lesley Evans  
Email: [lesley.evans@markallengroup.com](mailto:lesley.evans@markallengroup.com)  
Tel: 01322 221144

Chief Operating Officer  
Jon Benson

Transport Engineer  
is the official journal of the IRTE,  
a professional sector of the SOE.

Produced on behalf of the IRTE by  
MA Business  
Hawley Mill, Hawley Road,  
Dartford, Kent DA2 7J  
Tel: 01322 221144  
[www.transportengineer.org.uk](http://www.transportengineer.org.uk)

Transport Engineer  
is distributed free of charge to SOE members,  
dependent on membership sector. For non-members,  
the annual subscription rate (12 issues) is £79.50 UK  
and EU, or £81.50 airmail outside EU. For other SOE  
members, the discounted rate is £32.

ISSN  
0020-3122



Some of the articles and guidance included in  
Transport Engineer may make a contribution to  
your personal CPD requirements.

Please read our privacy policy, by visiting  
<http://privacypolicy.markallengroup.com>.  
This will explain how we process, use and safeguard  
your data.

Views expressed in Transport Engineer are those of the  
writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of The  
Society of Operations Engineers or of MA Business.

© 2025 The Society of Operations Engineers

MA Business

Part of

Mark Allen



## The future is digital

This issue of Transport Engineer is the first edition of the journal for transport engineers that will come purely in a digital format and not in print. After conducting a survey of its IRTE members who receive Transport Engineer, the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE), of which the IRTE is a professional sector, has switched to digital-only after members said they were in favour of the move.

The switch comes at a notable landmark as it also ties in with a key milestone for the SOE, as September marks 25 years since it was launched.

There will be readers of Transport Engineer who are for and against the change, and many with the latter opinion will miss reading the physical version of the journal or may simply be nostalgic about print.

However, the reality is that times are changing: you only have to look at the dwindling number of print publications in WH Smith (itself in decline) or check out the latest sales and print-run figures in all markets and sectors.

In 2025, the way that much of the world consumes its media content, especially the younger generation, is via digital devices – smartphones, tablets and laptops, where there is access to a wide range of articles at any time and place. Having been brought up in the print age myself, I am a little sad to see the decline, but I have to acknowledge that even I no longer buy magazines and newspapers in print on a regular basis.

There are compelling reasons to switch to digital-only, including the ever-spiralling costs of print and distribution which have increased significantly in recent years, while as we look to reduce carbon emissions, a digital-only model is more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

I believe there will always be a time and a place for journals, magazines and newspapers in print, just in a more limited fashion, but the days of daily, weekly or monthly publications are arguably behind us.

Digital platforms offer publishers much greater opportunities for the content they produce, such as videos embedded into features and adverts, allowing the chance to reach a wider audience, and to be more innovative and flexible.

Enjoy reading this issue.

Justin Burns  
Editor



To reach shortened URLs in the magazine – [www.tinyurl.com/xxxxxx](http://www.tinyurl.com/xxxxxx) –  
type the whole link into the address window of your web browser.



## in brief

**WTL**, a provider of professional transport training and driver development, has expanded its fleet with the delivery of an additional six Urban Box trailers from Krone Trailer UK. This latest acquisition brings the total number of Krone trailers in WTL's vehicle training fleet to seven and, says WTL, represents another major milestone in the company's strategic investment in high-quality, industry-relevant equipment. Operating from two depots in Bristol and Devizes, WTL runs a fleet of six articulated vehicles and employs a team of 13 full-time trainers to deliver a full range of vehicle, classroom and MHE courses for commercial drivers, transport managers and fleet owners.

The **Bus & Coach Expo** is to take place from 21–23 April 2026 at the NEC Birmingham, co-located with the Commercial Vehicle Show. The Nineteen Group, which is organising the event, said it will unite operators, manufacturers, technology suppliers, policymakers and public sector leaders for three days of fresh thinking, transformative tech, and future-focused insight. Launched under the banner 'The Pulse of Passenger Transport', the show arrives at a pivotal moment for the industry. As the sector navigates a rapidly changing landscape shaped by net zero targets, digital integration and rising passenger expectations, Bus & Coach Expo offers a timely, dedicated space to explore what's next and act on it.

**Stertil Koni** has announced the retirement of Tony Edge, who stepped down from his role as general manager at the end of July. Edge's retirement marks the close of a career that has left a lasting legacy at Stertil-Koni and within the commercial vehicle lifting industry. His leadership, knowledge and dedication have been instrumental to the success of the Koni business in the UK. Edge's career began in the British Army, where he served for over seven years in the Royal Engineers as a plant engineer. Upon leaving military service, he took on sales and key account roles at Concept and Bradbury. In 1994, he joined Stertil, leading the Koni division for more than three decades.

## Transport managers demand solo systems



More than three quarters of logistics professionals demand 'one-stop shop' management systems to eliminate multi-platform confusion, according to a survey carried out by Microlise.

The same respondents said that they either use, or had used, several different programmes to manage their logistics or supply chain fleets.

Additionally, the research found that almost 70% of those questioned agreed with the statement 'Relying on several different systems makes my job more complex than it needs to be'.

Europa Worldwide Group was using different platforms to manage its fleet's operations. It has 1,300 employees working from 26+ locations around the globe, with its European operation of 30 HGVs and 500 trailers visiting 10,000 delivery locations, resulting in up to 2,400 deliveries per day.

Each element of Europa's tracking was hosted on a different platform, some of which were manual. Unsafe driving cost £238,000 in at-fault accident pay-outs in 2023, and idling cost £900 per month in January 2024 with fuel efficiency at 10.77mpg.

Around 90% of its drivers were in the 'high' or 'very high' risk category of driver performance.

A unified system has allowed Europa to analyse route performance and full shipment tracking – including proof of delivery – with the same interface.

Using its fully integrated telematics platform, Europa has improved driver safety with 99% of drivers now in the 'low' or 'very low' risk category. The cost of at-fault accident pay-outs has decreased by more than 65%, as per-truck accident costs went down from £375 to £225 post implementation. Idling now costs £650 per month less and fuel consumption is up to 12.05mpg.

"We have faith in a system that is multi-faceted. Our drivers are doing their jobs to far higher standards and the margin for error from manually plotting MOTs and services is eliminated. We can make the daily walkaround checks focus on the elements we choose and filter those that need rectifying. We would highly recommend a unified platform," said Europa's general manager for transport, Malcolm Castle.

## AIT Home invests in 35 tractor units

AIT Home Delivery has taken delivery of 35 new MAN TGS 4x2 tractor units in a bid to enhance fleet efficiency and reduce operational costs.

The new vehicles, acquired on a three-year lease, replace the previous MAN TGX 6x2 trucks, which had been operated over three generations. All 35 units are part of the fourth-generation fleet operated with MAN, underlining AIT's longstanding partnership with the manufacturer.

All of the trucks are now in operation with AIT's new livery.

"This marks a step-change



in our fleet strategy," said Gary McKelvey, AIT's vice president global home delivery. "The move to 4x2 configuration brings significant benefits in terms of payload flexibility, fuel economy, and operating costs, all of which are key in a highly demanding final-mile logistics environment."

The shift from 6x2 to 4x2 brings a host of operational

improvements, including reduced unladen weight allows for higher legal payloads, improved fuel efficiency thanks to lower rolling resistance and drivetrain drag, and lower maintenance costs with fewer components such as tyres, axles and brake systems.

The new fleet is also dual-fuel capable, allowing operation on both diesel and HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil). AIT is trialling five of the units on HVO, with early results showing strong performance and improved fuel economy, without any noticeable reduction in vehicle performance.



# Eliminating illegal smartphone usage

Mobile phone blocking technology offers a non-intrusive alternative to driver-facing AI cameras for those fleets facing opposition from drivers and unions.

According to Mark Hadley, CEO of Blackout Technologies, this emerging innovation can help eliminate illegal smartphone usage – responsible for a significant proportion of collisions – without raising privacy concerns increasingly linked with some AI video telematics solutions.

"Despite growing evidence about the dangers of illegal mobile usage, we are seeing fleets delaying or even halting planned AI camera rollouts due to pushback from drivers and their unions," explained Hadley.

"Recent research suggests

that very few drivers can complete a road journey, from start to finish, without touching their mobile device. If AI cameras are not an option for some fleets, then smartphone blocking technology offers a viable way of tackling this issue that is thought to contribute to as many as 40% of vehicle collisions."

On the UK road network, it is illegal to hold and use a mobile phone or any handheld device while driving. The penalties include a £200 fine and six points being added to licences, but despite tougher laws being introduced there has been a 93% year-on-year increase in drivers caught using a mobile device. Figures from the Police's Operation Tramline – using unmarked tractor units to carry

out patrols on the road network – showed that 13,553 of the 51,500 offences involved illegal mobile phone use.

Emerging mobile blocking technology uses an app installed on a driver's smartphone to prevent unauthorised access to encrypted messaging tools, social media platforms, streaming, internet browsing and camera functions, while preventing incoming notifications. It is the only fleet solution that addresses the issue at source, removing temptation and fostering improved concentration behind the wheel.

Enabled via a telematics unit or dashcam, Blackout Technologies' SaaS-based solution activates when the vehicle is in motion for the duration of the journey.



## in brief

**Hiab** is to open a new customer service and installation centre for Hiab UK in Wrexham, Wales in 2027. The facility, representing a substantial investment by Hiab, will also be the headquarters for Hiab's UK operations. "Hiab sees strong potential in the UK market. Building our new state-of-the-art facility in Wrexham is a great business growth opportunity further solidifying our position as a leading provider of load handling solutions," said Jason Stokes, vice president, sales and services, UK & Ireland. "This investment reflects Hiab's dedication to providing top-notch service and support to its UK customer base."

Welshpool-based operator **T Alun Jones** has invested in a high-specification Volvo FH16 780 6x2 tag axle Globetrotter XL tractor unit, replacing an FH16 750 Ailsa Edition truck in the customer's hard-working fleet. Supplied by Jack Hulse, fleet sales manager at Hartshorne Group, the new arrival will be paired with walking floor and low loader trailers, completing bulk haulage and machinery deliveries across the UK and Ireland. Ian Jones, director, T Alun Jones, said: "We've always been selective about the trucks we bring onboard, and this latest Volvo FH16 780 has impressed immediately."

Bus manufacturer **Alexander Dennis** has revealed that English operator RS Tyrer has taken delivery of two Enviro200 buses. The Bolton- and Chorley-based independent operator has over 50 years of experience and provides vehicles for a variety of contracts and private hires. The two Enviro200 buses will be used on the company's service routes and are the first new Alexander Dennis Enviro200 buses for the operator. At 8.9m length, the vehicles have 30 seats with three-point belts. Richard Buckle, managing director at RS Tyrer, said: "We are really pleased to take delivery of these two new Enviro200 buses from Alexander Dennis. They are a great fit for our fleet and are well suited to the needs of our routes and passengers." Buckle also noted the "smooth and professional handover" of the vehicles, by Simon Wood, regional sales manager.

## L Lynch Plant Hire expands fleet

L Lynch Plant Hire and Haulage has expanded its 7.5-tonne plant delivery fleet with eight new Isuzu N75.190(E) trucks with plant bodies.

The provider of plant and transport has been operating the Japanese marque's 7.5-tonners for around a decade. The latest investment increases the number it operates to 11. They will be used to help reduce customer delivery times, especially to construction sites with limited space or on tight urban streets.

Stephen Bremner, fleet director of L Lynch Plant Hire and Haulage, said: "We've always had a few Isuzu trucks in our fleet, but as the plant hire side of the business has continued to grow, we needed a reliable 7.5-tonner to support that growth.



The N-Series' manoeuvrability, payload capacity and customisable chassis makes it the ideal choice."

Supplied by local dealer Cordwallis Group, all eight vehicles feature bespoke bodywork from Solent Body Builders, which include a custom plant body and beavertail with alloy lift ramps, a front mounted toolbox and a working at height safety system. This configuration is said to allow for the safe and efficient loading of a varied range of plant machinery, alongside secure storage for small electrical tools.



## in brief

**Staplehurst Transits** has hit a milestone with the arrival of three new S.KO Cool reefers from Schmitz Cargobull - the 100th semi-trailer from the supplier in its fleet. Since 2010, Staplehurst Transits has placed an order with Schmitz Cargobull in each of the following 15 years, relying on the quality of the trailers to ensure its time-critical fresh produce is delivered safely and on time, 24/7. Mick Philcox, engineer at Staplehurst Transits, said: "I really can't fault the product. They are extremely good and although we've had quotes from other manufacturers, Schmitz Cargobull has always come back with the right deal, and that's why we've stuck with them."

**Carrier Transicold** is expanding its line of Supra High Efficiency (HE) truck-mounted refrigeration units with the launch of the Supra HE 11 Multi-Temperature (MT) and HE 13 MT. These two systems are designed for compatibility with one of the most comprehensive ranges of evaporators on the market. Available in standard and silent versions, the Supra HE 11 MT and HE 13 MT units are designed to meet a range of refrigerated transport needs, supporting various configurations, including double compartment setup for the Supra HE 11 and the option of either double or triple-compartment setup for the Supra HE 13 MT.

**Sharpes of Nottingham** is to specify Allison fully automatic transmissions on future executive coach orders following the company's positive experience of the Allison T525R transmission in a Van Hool TX21 Altano. Sharpes' coach touring and corporate hospitality fleet consists of 60 coaches and buses, its coaches being Van Hool, from a 39-seater touring coach up to 83-seater executive double-deckers. Customers of the heavily utilised, fully equipped Altano team coach include an EFL League Two football team. Sharpes of Nottingham serves its local community from its base in Langar, 13 miles southeast of Nottingham, as well as customers in the wider East Midlands region, the UK and Europe.

## Nissan electrifies supply chain

An electric truck charging station that will potentially save 1,500 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year has gone live at Nissan Sunderland Plant.

The £1.4m facility has seven charging stations, capable of powering up to 10 eHGVs simultaneously. It complements the plant's EV360 vision for sustainable manufacturing, bringing together electric vehicles, renewable energy and battery production.

Michael Simpson, vice president supply chain management, Nissan AMIEO, said: "It is fantastic for our plant to be leading the charge to an electrified supply chain with this project."

"We welcome the support we've received from our partners to bring the charging station to life and we're proud of what we have achieved."

"The charging station looks brilliant and is a big step forward in Nissan's EV360 vision, which brings together electric vehicles, zero-carbon energy and battery manufacturing."

The station will support 60 UK eHGV deliveries to the plant daily and represents just the start of the plant's journey towards

electrifying its supply chain. Simpson added: "We're exploring further opportunities to allow other hauliers to use the charging station as well as looking at other opportunities to maximise its full potential."

The charging station will support a fleet of 25 trucks with a charging capacity of up to 360kW. The trucks will collect parts from Nissan's UK supply base stretching as far afield as Derby; as well as delivering finished vehicles to and from the Port of Tyne. That equates to more than 2.4 million kilometres travelled per year, fully electrified, saving 1,500 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

Bringing together Nissan, Fergusons, Yusen and BCA, the project is part of the Electric Freightway consortium that is transforming sustainable freight logistics through deployment of eHGVs and high-power charging infrastructure. Led by Gridserve, Electric Freightway forms part of the Zero Emission HGV and Infrastructure Demonstrator programme, funded by the UK government.



## Sapphire opens London depot

Independent truck workshop chain Sapphire Vehicle Services is bringing its 24/7 back-up to operators in South London - and offering job opportunities to ambitious technicians.

Sapphire's new Charlton workshop offers a full range of inspection, maintenance and repair services for trucks and vans of all makes, around the clock. The purpose-built site is already staffed by a team of four, but regional manager Patrick McGlynn said the plan is to add more as soon as possible.



"We are actively recruiting for heavy vehicle technicians who are looking for a great place to work with clear career development pathways," he said. "At Sapphire we place a great deal of emphasis on training and developing our people, so if you want to work your way up the ladder, get in touch soon."

Sapphire boasts a network of 19 workshops across England and Scotland which together look after close to 30,000 vehicles, for a client list that includes some of the biggest fleets in the supermarket sector.

The site also boasts a pair of mobile service vans and is home to an admin team as well as its current roster of four technicians. Among these is 28-year-old Nikhil Varsani, who is undergoing a training programme with a view to taking on the role of its first depot manager.

# LIFTING WORKSHOP PRODUCTIVITY

When it comes to servicing heavy-duty vehicles, in-ground lifts offer a valuable combination of wheel-free access and a clear, clutter-free workspace. But traditional systems often come with drawbacks, especially higher installation costs, fixed positioning, and complex maintenance. That's where Steril-Koni's ECOLIFT comes in. Designed to overcome the typical limitations, ECOLIFT brings the benefits of in-ground lifting without the usual compromises.

## WHY ARE IN-GROUND LIFTS EFFECTIVE?

In-ground lifts are heavy-duty vehicle lifts built directly into the workshop floor, meaning there are no columns, platforms or surface-mounted structures to work around. This allows for unobstructed access to the vehicle's undercarriage and creates a safer, more spacious environment for technicians.

When the lift isn't in use, the entire system retracts and can be covered with roller shutters or flush-fit panels, creating a solid, level surface that can be walked or driven over, or simply used for other workshop activities. For high-throughput workshops, fleet operators, and depots where space is at a premium, the clear floor space and efficient vehicle flow make in-ground lifts a smart investment.

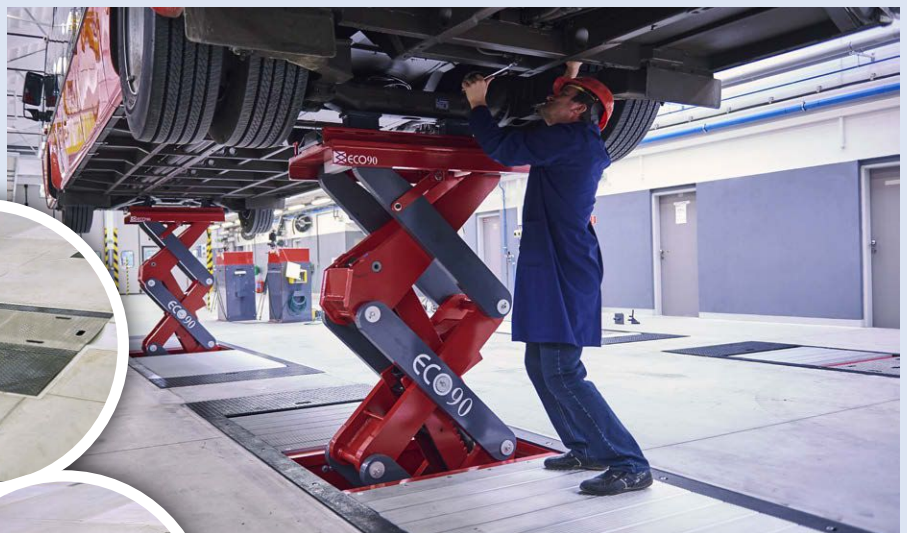
## TRADITIONAL CHALLENGES

Despite these advantages, conventional in-ground lifts have had their limitations. Installation often requires deep excavation, complex drainage, and costly groundworks.

Once installed, they're typically permanent, making them less suitable for workshops with changing needs or future relocation plans. Servicing can also be a challenge, with many mechanical and hydraulic components buried below ground and difficult to access when problems occur.

## SMARTER SYSTEM

Steril-Koni's ECOLIFT has been engineered to address these pain



points. Its shallow-pit design (just 870mm deep) requires far less excavation than traditional systems and simplifies installation

considerably. The system arrives pre-assembled in a protective cassette, using a drop-in/bolt-in method that keeps site disruption to a minimum.

And uniquely, ECOLIFT is relocatable. It's the only in-ground lift system in the world that can be removed and reinstalled at another location, ideal for growing businesses or workshops planning a move.

## KEY BENEFITS:

- Axle-engaging design gives full wheel, brake and suspension access.
- Continuous Recess™ system easily handles low-clearance vehicles like low floor buses and EVs.
- Moveable lift positions adapt to different axle layouts.

- Modular configurations (2, 3, or 4 scissors) lift up to 54 tonnes
- Above-ground hydraulics and controls simplify maintenance and diagnostics.
- eBright Smart Control System offers intuitive operation and lift monitoring.
- Mechanical locking system ensures safe, secure lifting at all times.

Whether you're working with refuse trucks, articulated buses, or mixed fleets, ECOLIFT gives you the flexibility of a surface-mounted system, with the space-saving advantages of in-ground lifting.

## IS ECOLIFT RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you're looking to increase workshop throughput, improve technician safety, and make better use of available space, ECOLIFT offers a futureproof solution that adapts to your needs.

Explore the ECOLIFT here  
[www.tinyurl.com/ysv36zwe](http://www.tinyurl.com/ysv36zwe)



As more and more electric commercial vehicles enter the market, the development of charging infrastructure to support their arrival and operation within fleets continues. By John Challen



# Action sub-stations

There is no escaping the shift away from diesel when it comes to a power source for trucks. And, while the jury is still out on what is the best way forward – the two main front runners continue to be battery-electric vehicles (BEVs) and hydrogen – preparing for the new age of propulsion continues.

Regardless of what is powering trucks, vans and everything in-between, a capable charging network is paramount to keep them all moving in the most efficient way. Thankfully, there are plenty of companies that are dedicated to making that happen, much to the relief of operators who face an alternative future.

For example, Aegis Energy, co-founded by former Iveco UK managing director Chris Thorneycroft-Smith, is keen to overcome infrastructure issues for commercial vehicles.

"Surveys show that charging availability ranks in the top two barriers to electric HGV adoption, driven by a gap in infrastructure," he explains. "This means that, in early 2025, there were

fewer than 10 publicly accessible electric HGV charge points across the entire UK."

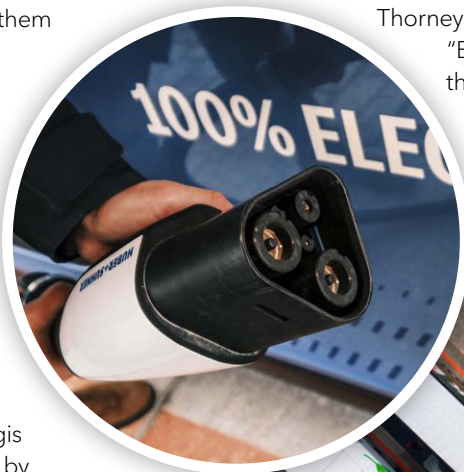
In response, Aegis Energy is developing a network of multi-energy hubs for commercial vehicles. "These sites are built from the ground up with HGVs and vans in mind. The first five sites, in Sheffield, Immingham, Warrington, Corby and Towcester, will all be live by the end of 2027, with a roadmap to scale to 30 hubs by the end of the decade," confirms Thorneycroft-Smith.

"Each site will have the capacity to serve, on average, 35 vans and 30 HGVs, with

the first five sites accommodating a total of 140 HGVs and 230 vans, with high-speed charging starting at 400kW."

Importantly, the company has been working closely with distribution network operators (DNOs) for a while, to ensure the infrastructure will have adequate power not only on day one, but also as demand grows.

"Each location will launch with 400kW DC chargers, capable of meeting and exceeding the maximum charging speeds of most electric trucks on the market today," confirms Thorneycroft-Smith. "But crucially, we have designed our hubs with longevity in mind, so the power infrastructure behind the



***"These sites are built from the ground up with HGVs and vans in mind. The first five sites, in Sheffield, Immingham, Warrington, Corby and Towcester, will all be live by the end of 2027, with a roadmap to scale to 30 hubs by the end of the decade"***

Chris Thorneycroft-Smith



scenes is being built to accommodate megawatt charging where fleet demand and OEM readiness align.

"We have worked closely with major OEMs and fleet operators to make sure our charging systems align with evolving technical standards," he adds.

"We are positioned to respond to new fuel developments and innovation – and the sites are designed with maximum flexibility to accommodate a range of refuelling options, meaning we can meet our customers wherever they are on their decarbonisation journey."

### BUMPS IN THE ROAD

The plan sounds great, but Thorneycroft-Smith warns it will not be a straightforward process. "Our hubs require a huge amount of power – enough to power a small village, every day. That's meant negotiating multi-megawatt connections with distribution network operators and exploring grid upgrades where necessary," he reveals.

"There is also the challenge of location. We have had to rethink what constitutes 'valuable' logistics real estate. It is no longer just about access to roads; it is also about energy access, network resilience and long-term adaptability. Our hubs are designed with fleets in mind, which is why our development model is based around the commercial and operational needs of fleets and drivers.

"We have been lucky enough to work with an array of early-moving fleets such as Welch's Transport and Wordsworth Excavations, along with OEMs, who have shared key priorities and pain points that have helped guide our thinking. This insight has helped shape our entire development model, including planning, engineering and even insurance."

There are also practical considerations, such as the requirements beyond just longer bays than those available for passenger car charging spots. "You need safe turning circles, vehicle flow logic, space for queuing and

pre-booking, and robust security systems that make both operators and drivers feel comfortable," says Thorneycroft-Smith.

"That said, we have taken a long-term, hands-on approach to solving these challenges. We have secured land in strategic locations, locked in future-proofed grid connections – and brought in expert partners across engineering, planning and technology."

### EUROPEAN ELECTRIFICATION

A bit further afield, Milence, a joint venture between Daimler Truck, the Traton Group and Volvo Group, says it is building Europe's largest public charging network dedicated to battery-electric heavy-duty vehicles. It already operates a hub in Immingham, with plans for a second in Aylesford, Kent.

"We are doing more than installing chargers; we are creating infrastructure that fits the real-world needs of transport operators," says Lars Minekus, regional lead, Benelux and UK.

"Our charging hubs are strategically placed along major freight corridors, ports and logistics centres to integrate seamlessly with the routes trucks already use. By combining CCS (up to 400kW) and pioneering MCS technology (up to 1.44MW), we are ensuring that eHGVs can charge quickly and reliably, whether during mandated rest breaks or overnight."

The plan is for 1,700 charging points across 300-400 European sites by 2027, with each hub typically hosting 30 chargers. "Our initial rollout targets 10 core markets, including the UK, based on freight density, logistics demand and grid capacity," explains Minekus.

Like Aegis, Milence faces obstacles, the biggest ones being grid connectivity and permitting – not helped, it believes, by an absence in transparency towards grid capacity.

"Delays in grid access, due to capacity constraints or lengthy approval processes, can slow deployment. We

## REAL-LIFE REPORTS

Fleet operators that start acting now will also gain a competitive edge as market expectations shift. By decarbonising their operations, they will have a greater chance of winning ESG-conscious customers and contracts with businesses who are increasingly prioritising sustainability in their supply chains.

"We recently launched the Aegis Trailblazers initiative, a dedicated programme for forward-thinking fleet operators who are ready to take early, impactful steps toward low-carbon transport, offering a range of benefits, including discounted electric charging rates and a voice in our infrastructure design," says Chris Thorneycroft-Smith.

"The aim is to create a community of like-minded fleets who can share insights and enjoy an array of benefits which make decarbonisation more viable and accessible."

One of the first operators to take part was Wordsworth Excavations, which, along with the environmental and cost benefits, is already seeing the commercial boost of decarbonising its fleet.

Plant manager Craig Lofthouse says: "Adding electric HGVs to our fleet has been a source of great excitement for our customers and has led to conversations with construction businesses who are looking for more sustainable partnerships."





***"The UK is a key market in our rollout. While specific numbers are under development, we are targeting high-traffic freight routes and major logistics hubs across the country"***

Lars Minekus



have also encountered varying local permitting standards and regulations across mainland Europe, which creates inconsistency.

"To address this, we are working with grid operators and regulators to streamline processes and secure multi-megawatt connections for future-proof charging hubs," says Minekus.

There are plenty of considerations to be made when planning the infrastructure, not least of which how it can achieve a positive customer experience.

"Our hubs are equipped with user-centric features, including 24/7 availability, intuitive payment systems, real-time monitoring and amenities such as toilets, showers, lounges and Wi-Fi, depending on the site," says Minekus.

Beyond the driver, Milence is also rolling out a 'smart' booking system, says Minekus. "This system allows fleet managers and drivers to reserve charging slots in advance, receive real-time notifications and gain automated



access on arrival – streamlining operations and reducing uncertainty around charger availability," he explains.

"Additionally, we maintain close collaboration with fleet operators to anticipate capacity needs and adjust site layouts as usage evolves, ensuring our services continually evolve alongside our customers."



## BATTERY FUTURE

For both Aegis Energy and Milence, the targets are lofty, but achievable, according to the duo.

"We are targeting 30 sites by 2030, with a long-term roadmap to build a network of 50+ hubs, providing national coverage across the freight and logistics network," explains Thorneycroft-Smith.

"We are building an ecosystem that supports decarbonisation in a way that works commercially for operators, making the transition energising, not overwhelming. Our belief is simple: if we get the infrastructure right, the rest will follow."

Minekus concludes: "The UK is a key market in our rollout. While specific numbers are under development, we are targeting high-traffic freight routes and major logistics hubs across the country."

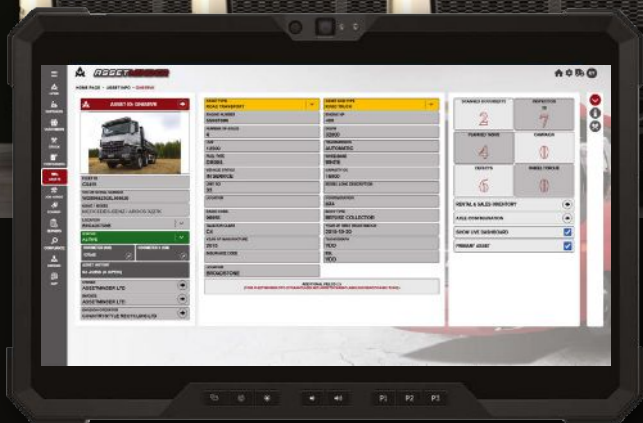
"Our first UK hub is already live in Immingham, at Able Humber Port, equipped with four 400kW CCS chargers serving eight truck bays and is already prepared for Megawatt Charging System (MCS) integration in future phases.

"We are also developing a second hub in Kent, a strategic location serving high-volume freight routes and international logistics flows." **TE**



# FLEET

ASSETMINDER  
**WORKSHOP  
MANAGEMENT**  
SPECIALISTS

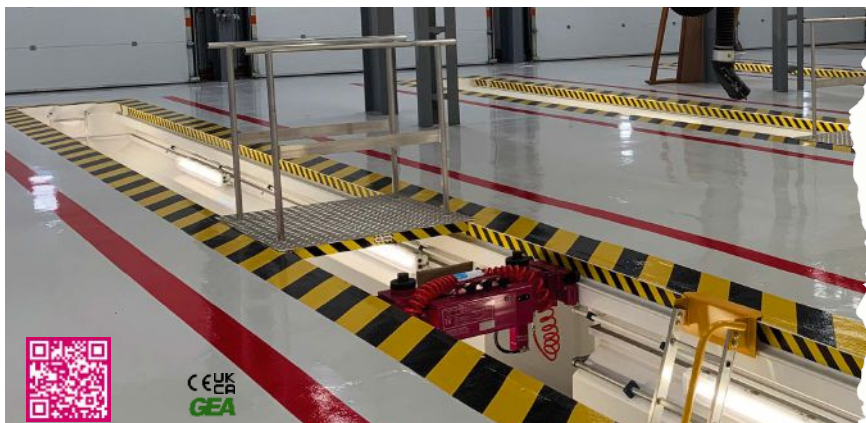


**ASSETMINDER**  
FLEET MAINTENANCE SOFTWARE

Modern Management Software for Fleet and Maintenance Workshops

- Asset Management
- Driver Inspection App
- Electronic Inspections
- Workshop Management
- Maintenance Planning
- Stock Control
- Defect Management
- 100% Compliance

[WWW.ASSETMINDERSOLUTIONS.CO.UK](http://WWW.ASSETMINDERSOLUTIONS.CO.UK)



## TRANSFORMING COMMERCIAL VEHICLE & PSV MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION

- ✂ **WORKING & MAINTENANCE PITS**
- 📋 **INSPECTION & TEST PITS**
- 💧 **WASHDOWN PITS & RAMPS**

Premier Pits – The UK's No.1 Prefabricated Pit Company supplying the Commercial Vehicle & PSV industries for 40 years. Improve the efficiency of your workshop with our range of inspection pits and washdown solutions, built to the highest CE and UKCA certified standards.

**PremierPits®**  
PREFABRICATED VEHICLE PITS

Tel: +44 (0)1775 821222  
Email: [info@premierpits.com](mailto:info@premierpits.com)  
Web: [www.premierpits.com](http://www.premierpits.com)

## TRANSFORMING THREAD REPAIRS

- Thread restoration with full material retention
- Wheel stud thread repair in as little as 30 seconds
- Consistent load capacity after restoration
- Proven in many safety-relevant areas

SAVE MONEY BY REMOVING THE NEED FOR COSTLY AXLE REPLACEMENTS, WITH THREAD SAVER!

"Thread Saver saved us from replacing an axle on a Mercedes Sprinter, saving us around £10k"  
David - Shuttle Buses Ltd

INTRODUCING  
**ST THREAD  
SAVER**

Distributed in the UK by  
**PremierPits®**  
PREFABRICATED VEHICLE PITS  
Tel: +44 (0)1775 821222  
Email: [info@premierpits.com](mailto:info@premierpits.com)  
Web: [www.premierpits.com](http://www.premierpits.com)





# Range of possibilities

**M**AN is not new to the electric vehicle parc, having originally launched its long-range tractor, eTGX, at the IAA Transportation show in Hannover back in 2022.

This model was then followed by the eTGX and eTGS rigid range in 2024 with the eTGX going on sale in Europe in October 2023, and in the UK in June 2024, at which point a right-hand drive version was made available for test.

But what we have not seen before is an overview of the whole range, which entered full series production at the company's Munich plant in mid-June.

This in itself is something worthy of announcement, MAN having chosen to follow in Volvo's footsteps by building both electric and diesel models on a single, integrated production line at its Munich plant.

Currently able to produce a maximum of 100 vehicles a day, regardless of the driveline, we are told a total of around one billion euros is being spent expanding this across its European plants over the next 10 years. The delivery target for electric models

**MAN held a ride and drive event in Munich for the press, where it showcased its latest electric models. Lucy Radley was there**

by the end of this year alone is 1,000 units.

As you might expect, Munich was also the venue for an extensive press and customer demonstration event in late July, where the full range was presented and made available to drive. As ever at Transport Engineer, we were most interested in the technical side of things, which was covered in a reasonable amount of detail before hitting the road.

## **FLEXIBLE OFFERING**

On the rigid side, there are both 4x2 and 6x2 chassis available, which can be equipped for drawbar trailers if required. The additional weight allowance permitted for electric vehicles means these have gross weights of 20 and 28 tonnes, respectively. The 6x4, 6x2 with rear steer and 8x4 tridems can also be provided ex-works from next year, under the MAN Individual program.

These are joined by the 4x2 tractor, available both as a standard chassis and an ultra-low version for those needing greater volume within the trailer – something more pertinent to mainland Europe where there is, of course, a 4m overall height limit.

Overall, we are told the aim is flexibility through modularity. All MAN's electric vehicles start with two NMC batteries under the cab. This is designed to directly replace the engine and gearbox in the manufacturing process – they are the same size, and use the same fixing points, so can just slot into place at the same point on the production line.

The same is true of the third battery in the minimum specification, which replaces the fuel tank. Each battery is equivalent to 80kWh usable capacity.

The actual drive unit – consisting of a single electric motor, the inverter required to turn DC from the batteries into the AC that motor requires, and either a two- or four-speed transmission – sits centrally within the vehicle frame. This, combined with the low mounted battery positioning, means these trucks are very stable to drive.

This was particularly noticeable when





driving the eTGS 4x2 skiploader, which was loaded to 14 tonnes. Not only was it incredibly sure-footed on the road, but it kept traction well on the gravel off-road testing track, despite not having the extra weight of a full skip to help it.

Pulling away from a standstill on one of the steeper slopes was not a problem at all, bar a slight spin where we hadn't allowed for the first, instant burst of torque all electric vehicles enjoy.

### MODULAR SYSTEM

The standard maximum number of batteries that can be fitted to MAN's electric offer is six, which we are assured is enough for 500km of range – the magic number all the OEMs seem to be shooting for with battery-electric vehicles (BEVs).

For longer wheel-based vehicles, however, there is the option of a seventh battery, giving a range of up to 740km, although obviously there are payoffs here in terms of weight and additional charging time. Tractor units come a minimum of four batteries, and a maximum of six.

The advantage of having a modular

battery system like this is that it enables operators to find the best possible balance for their operation between payload and range – operators can choose to reduce vehicle weight by up to 2.5 metric tonnes by specifying only minimal power storage on the chassis.

For example, two short-wheelbase artic tippers were provided at this event, one of which only had five batteries. That's 800kg per load saved, which

would soon add up on repeated short-distance deliveries.

This is also what allowed MAN to build its smaller eTGL, currently the only 12-tonne electric vehicle on the market. A far smaller chassis again, this has two battery packs for a range of up to 235km – deemed optimal for the kind of daily distribution these vehicles are likely to undertake. Production of this model is likely to begin in 2026.

While all MAN's electric range can accept charging at up to 375kW under the current standard CCS protocol, they are also ready for MCS, or megawatt charging, when that becomes available. We're assured we can expect a battery service life of 1.6 million kilometres or up to 13 years on long-haul work, rising to 15 years in shorter range distribution applications.

At the heaviest end of the test fleet was the eTGX tractor, in this case fitted with the flagship GX space cab.

MAN's highest powered electric vehicle, it came with







the 400kw/544hp drive unit, giving 1,250Nm of immediate torque through a 4-speed Tiptronic gearbox.

This was coupled to a 13.6m triaxle Krone Dry Liner box trailer, the combination fully laden at its MGW of 42 tonnes – equivalent to 40 tonnes for diesel, with the extra 2,000kg allowance for the additional weight of the six batteries.

### TOTAL EFFICIENCY

Like all electric trucks, eTGX was a very easy vehicle to drive, although we were almost immediately caught out by the Range mode when first joining the highway.

One of three driving settings available via a roller switch on the right-hand stalk, this version was the most limiting, allowing the driver only 80% maximum power and a reduced top speed of 80kph.

Once flicked into the middle, Efficiency, setting things felt far livelier under the pedal, as it allowed us 100% power to accelerate, before dropping back to 90% once settled and driving.

Power mode gave us 90kph and 100% power all the time, though the



difference was not that great given we were already at full speed by then. Acceleration for overtaking would be its principle use, at a guess.

Like all BEV trucks, the MAN range comes with regenerative braking, set via the right-hand stalk to one of five settings. This was kept within the first two on the highway, enabling it to activate on overrun without us losing excessive speed.

Dropping onto a more rural road we deactivated the predictive cruise control. Choosing the highest regeneration setting allowed us to drive on one pedal the vast majority of the time, only needing the service brake when we actually came to a halt.

Actually, when not using one pedal driving, use of the left-hand pedal doesn't immediately give service braking on MAN's BEVs. They are instead designed to again use the regeneration brake for as long as possible, only using the mechanical system when firmer pressure is applied.

Everything about these vehicles is aimed at preserving maximum range, so that makes sense – and should also reduce the number of brake linings they go through.

### CHARGED UP

While this event was mainly about the vehicles themselves, it would be remiss of us not to mention MAN's solutions for the other end of the road – namely, charging. We were introduced to two of these, the first being the electric equivalent of a fuel bunkering card, MAN Charge&Go.

Available since May 2025 in 15 European countries, the UK included, this has been put together in partnership with some of the main charging providers, including BP Plus, E.On and Ionity.

All the 700 charging locations listed so far have been checked for truck suitability, and the aim is to try and keep costs to below the breakthrough level for diesel parity – around 40c per kWh in Europe, apparently – though that can't be guaranteed.

Finally, there's MAN's 'Smart Charging Cube', a fully portable solution for those who are unable to immediately connect their depot to sufficient power from the grid, in cooperation with AW Automotive.

Made up of second life batteries (currently supplied by the Audi test fleet) the Cube can provide up to 1,100kWh of storage and 400kW of charging power across one to four charge points, while slowly charging itself from a far lower power grid connection. Solar charging is also an option. [TE](#)

# The ultimate compliance solution for complete fleet management

Award winning fleet management software, trusted by thousands of companies across the UK. From vehicle checks and grey fleet management to remote licence checks and GB Domestic hours, our all-in-one platform keeps you compliant.



## **Driver's app**

Drivers conduct their checks and report back using our easy-to-operate app.



## **Fleet portal**

Comprehensive reporting for all vehicles and users in one location.



## **Licence checks\***

Conduct licence checks remotely using our innovative technology.



## **GB Domestic Hours\***

Demonstrate your GB domestic hours compliance whenever needed.

Try free for 30 days  
at **checkedsafe.com**

\*Additional costs apply





**H**heavy goods vehicle (HGV) engineers are critical to the efficient running of trucks that drive up and down the country, but their skills are not often given the recognition or the platform that they deserve.

The inaugural IRTE HGV Skills Challenge at the DAF Apprentice Academy in Nottingham, from 30 September to 1 October, will do just that, when it shines the spotlight on the outstanding technicians plying their trade across the industry.

With a much talked about shortage of HGV technicians, the national



# HGV technician talent showcase

competition has been developed as part of a close partnership between the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE) and DAF Trucks.

This new challenge builds on the 13 years of success enjoyed by the annual IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge in Bristol, bringing the competition's approach to celebrating excellence to the HGV sector for the first time.

This challenge also builds on the success of irtec qualifications, and the recently launched Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS), a workshop accreditation scheme that is aiming to elevate standards across commercial vehicle workshops.

Participants in the IRTE HGV Skills Challenge will engage in a range of both theoretical and practical assessments designed to test and refine their technical knowledge, problem-solving and teamwork.

**The inaugural IRTE HGV Skills Challenge takes place from 30 September to 1 October at the DAF Apprentice Academy in Nottingham**

Competitors will also gain valuable networking opportunities with their peers and industry experts, alongside the opportunity to work on the latest industry technology.

"At SOE, we believe that recognition drives standards. The HGV Skills Challenge celebrates the vital role of engineers and technicians who keep the UK's heavy vehicle fleets safe, roadworthy and future-ready," says Emma Thompson, executive director of the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE), of which the IRTE is a professional sector. "These professionals are the backbone of our industry, embracing new technologies, adapting to evolving regulations, and maintaining the highest standards of safety and precision."

## NATURAL FIT

DAF Trucks is the market leader for HGVs in the UK and has a longstanding commitment to technical excellence, training and the future of the industry.

Matt Coates, training and apprenticeships manager at DAF Trucks, explains it is "incredibly exciting" for DAF to be involved. "We see this event as a landmark moment for the industry - a chance to celebrate the talent and technical capability that underpins commercial vehicle operations across the UK."

"It is a privilege to co-host the inaugural challenge at our new DAF Apprentice Academy, which has been built specifically to support skills development across the sector."

***"It is a privilege to co-host the inaugural challenge at our new DAF Apprentice Academy, which has been built specifically to support skills development across the sector"***

Matt Coates



recognised across the HGV industry as it is the "backbone of safety, reliability and efficiency in transport".

"Our technicians keep fleets moving, ensure legal compliance and contribute directly to customer satisfaction. Recognition not only rewards that skill but also drives ambition and pride in the profession," Coates adds.

Coates adds.

Truck fleets are the lifeblood of the UK supply chain and keep the country moving, delivering everything that society needs to run effectively and efficiently, yet the skills of HGV technicians are arguably not given enough recognition and attention.

Coates says: "They are often the unsung heroes of our industry. Technicians play a critical role in the

performance and uptime of every HGV on the road, yet the visibility of their work remains low compared to other roles in the sector. Events like this go a long way to redress that balance."

### PERFECT PLATFORM

More HGV technicians are needed in the industry with the skills shortage showing no signs of abating and the challenge will provide a platform to help to attract more technicians into the industry by shining a spotlight on the role.

"Promoting real-world excellence and the career potential within the sector helps shift perceptions and broaden appeal," says Coates. "It is particularly powerful when apprentices and younger colleagues see peers excelling and being celebrated - it shows them a clear path and a purpose within the industry."

The event will take place at the state-of-the-art DAF Apprentice Academy in Nottingham, a £3.5m cutting-edge training facility that opened in February. This new academy has raised the bar in training and development within the HGV industry.

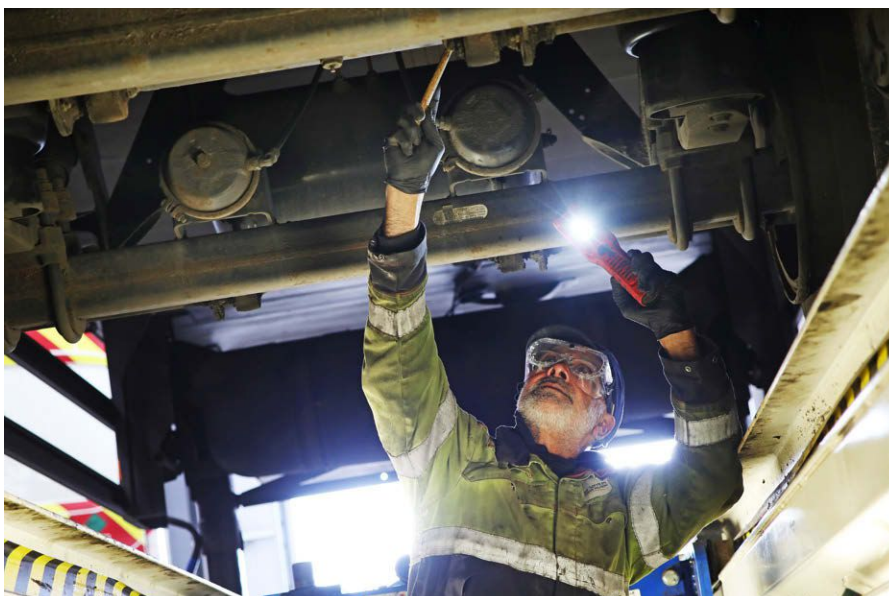
Coates says: "The new DAF Apprentice Academy has been designed from the ground up to deliver the highest quality learning experience. It brings together modern facilities, expert instruction and a culture of excellence.

"Beyond just meeting standards, we are focused on creating environments that inspire, where apprentices and experienced technicians alike feel valued, challenged and supported to grow.

"It is not just about qualifications: it's about developing real, lasting capability across our dealer network and the wider industry." **IRTE**

"Supporting the IRTE Skills Challenge was a natural fit," adds Coates. "It aligns perfectly with our values, recognising individual achievement, raising industry standards, and bringing organisations together."

He believes that it is "absolutely vital" that technical excellence is





# A digital future

This month's Transport Engineer is a digital-only publication. What has driven the move away from print?

The world is evolving at pace and so is the media landscape, and with changing demands of how content is consumed, Transport Engineer is now a digital-only publication from this month.

As the official journal for members of the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE), a professional sector of the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE), the move has made been by the SOE's board for a number of factors.

Emma Thompson MSOE, executive director of the SOE, explains: "The shift to digital reflects both the evolving preferences of our members and our commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the IRTE.

"We recognise that more of our audience is engaging with content online, across devices and in real time. Moving to a digital-only format allows us to be more responsive, timely and innovative in how we deliver insight and updates that matter to professionals in the road transport engineering sector."

The strategy for Transport Engineer moving forward is to offer a greater range of content with the digital issue at the heart of this offering with more news, features and videos via the website and social media platforms. There will also be Transport Engineer roundtable debates, webinars and interviews from key industry events.

"Going digital allows us to offer more dynamic and interactive content,



from embedded video and real-time news to quicker turnaround on industry developments and regulatory updates," Thompson says.

"IRTE members will benefit from more accessible archives, enhanced search functionality and richer multimedia formats, ensuring the publication stays at the cutting-edge of technical and sectoral developments."

## MEMBER FOCUS

How to constantly better meet the needs and demands of its professional members both now and in the future, is the primary focus of the IRTE/SOE.

As Transport Engineer will move away from a costly print platform, where costs have risen for both paper and distribution, more funds will be available for the IRTE/SOE to invest in other

initiatives and services for its members.

Thompson says: "Redirecting the resources previously dedicated to print and postage enables us to invest more in member services, including our CPD and mentoring platforms, expanded online events and deeper member engagement.

"This move supports our broader strategy of delivering greater value through innovation, collaboration and targeted professional development."

Thompson notes that Transport Engineer is an integral part of the IRTE/SOE's offering to its members and, in future, it will continue to be an essential benefit for its membership.

"Transport Engineer remains a cornerstone of our member offering," Thompson says. "It connects our

***"Redirecting the resources previously dedicated to print and postage enables us to invest more in member services, including our CPD and mentoring platforms, expanded online events and deeper member engagement"***

Emma Thompson



community with the latest technical developments, sector insights and member stories.

"It also showcases the excellence and expertise of IRTE members and the wider SOE, and plays a key role in informing, inspiring and connecting professionals across the transport engineering landscape."

### MILESTONE MONTH

September is a landmark month for the SOE as it celebrates its 25th anniversary.

A digital focus for Transport Engineer aligns with the IRTE/SOE's strategy of being an agile, innovative and future-focused engineering institution.

"The 25th anniversary is a significant milestone and a perfect moment to look forward," Thompson says. "We are a modern professional body supporting our members, who are driving progress across the sector. Embracing digital ensures we remain fit for the future and responsive to their changing needs."

As the world evolves, engineers are critical to the sustainable future, and the future is bright for the IRTE/SOE, through its specific professional engineering sectors, promoting safe, efficient, sustainable and ethical engineering operations to the benefit of the entire society.



"The future is incredibly exciting," Thompson says. "From decarbonisation and vehicle autonomy to skills development and professional recognition, IRTE and SOE are at the forefront of tackling some of the industry's biggest challenges."

"Through strategic partnerships, digital transformation and continued advocacy for professional standards, we're empowering our members to lead in a fast-changing world and that's something we're proud to celebrate as we look ahead to the next 25 years."

### GROWING TREND

The media landscape is moving away from the traditional print platform to digital as readers increasingly prefer to consume content via their smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Digital platforms allow content to be more diverse, produced

timely, reach a wider audience, and in a more sustainable manner.

Jon Benson, managing director at MA Business, the publisher of Transport Engineer, explains: "As a publisher of content, it is our obligation to make sure we produce information that is highly accessible to our audiences."

"This new modern approach taken by the SOE, will ensure the enhanced benefits of instant access, search functionality, real-time updates and interactivity will provide an enhanced user experience for their membership."

"Above all, the integration with the new CPD platform will allow for much better integration across all of the SOE's media platforms."

"We are delighted to support the SOE in this exciting development to future proof Transport Engineer." **TE**



**heathline  
commercials ltd**

**For nearly 50 years, our experts have kept fleets road-ready and reliable.**

#### Services Include:

- HGV & Trailers Servicing & Repairs
- MOT Preparation & Presentation
- Breakdown Services
- Tachograph Repairs & Calibration
- Parts Department



**Give us a call on  
01670 712333**





# Technicians take centre stage

**T**he UK's talented and skilled bus and coach engineers were rewarded for their outstanding technical abilities at the glittering IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge Awards lunch at the packed Grand Station in Wolverhampton on 16 July.

There were 16 awards up for grabs, awarded to bus and coach engineers and operator teams, who had put their skills to the test at the Challenge's 13th edition, from 2-5 June at the S&B Automotive Academy in Bristol.

Over three intensive days, top technicians and apprentices showcased their skills in the UK's only national competition celebrating technical excellence in public service vehicle (PSV) maintenance.

They all competed in various challenges that included diagnostics,

**The spotlight shone on the UK's talented and skilled bus and coach engineers as they picked up their prizes at the IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge Awards lunch**

mechanical and electrical tasks, with the competition testing technical knowledge, precision and real-world application.

The awards lunch was hosted by former BBC broadcaster and host of The Bus Inspectors Podcast, David Sheppard, whose passion and love for the transport industry was evident throughout.

In her address to attendees, Emma Thompson, executive director of the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) – of which the IRTE is a professional sector – explained that the 2025 edition of the event was the largest in its 13-year

history and the success represents "growth and momentum".

She says that the IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge demonstrated that the bus and coach industry "continues to invest in the people and their skills" and adds: "People and their skills are what keep this industry moving forward, something everyone in this room is part of."

Thompson adds: "It's a real pleasure to stand here today at Grand Central in Wolverhampton and see so many talented individuals pushing their boundaries and achieving excellence in engineering, diagnostics and maintenance.

"You all prove that the future of the sector is safe in your hands. This event is about recognising talent and personal development in the bus and coach sector."

***"You all prove that the future of the sector is safe in your hands. This event is about recognising talent and personal development in the bus and coach sector"***

Emma Thompson

## CLASS OF 2025

The UK's finest bus and coach engineering talent was on show during the Skills Challenge.

Hasan Khan, an apprentice at National Express, won the Electric Driveline Apprentice award and says it was an honour and a "very nice surprise".

"I was delighted with my work, but when you have so many talented people all within the building, you do not quite know where you are going to finish, because they all did an excellent job," he adds. "To walk out of that with something shows that my hard work has paid off."

Khan is aiming to compete again next year: "They have already asked me to do it again and asked me to take part in the mechanical challenge, so I am hoping to win one on both sides. That is my ambition for the year ahead."

Stephen Price, a technician at First Bus, was awarded the prestigious Master Technician award and says he was "really honoured" to pick up the accolade.

He adds: "I have competed for the last four years and I came runner-up last year. I still have weaknesses but I now know where I went wrong. It is all about the challenge of getting better, and that is why I keep doing it."

S&B Automotive Academy played a pivotal role in delivering the event, providing state-of-the-art facilities and expert guidance throughout the three days of technical assessments.

Sponsors of the IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge 2025 included Alexander Dennis, Imperial Engineering, Clarios VARTA, C9 Recruitment, GYS, and GTG Engineering.

## CALL FOR ACTION

In honour of this year's International Women's Day 2025, the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) and Women in Bus and Coach joined forces to tackle the under-representation of women in engineering.

The bus and coach industry has



## WINNERS

- **Philip Margrave Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement**  
*Heath Halle, First Bus*
- **Bodywork Apprentice**  
*Abdikafi Abdi, First Bus*
- **Electrical Apprentice**  
*Stuart Dunlop, Lothian Buses*
- **Electric Driveline Apprentice**  
*Hasan Khan, National Express*
- **Mechanical Apprentice**  
*Jamie McCallum, Lothian Buses*
- **Mechelec**  
*Alex Hirst, First Bus*
- **Outstanding Apprentice Team**  
*Michael McNicol, Jamie McCallum and Stuart Dunlop, Lothian Buses*
- **DVSA Inspection Apprentice**  
*Kaden Dacosta, First Bus*
- **DVSA Inspection Technician**  
*David Farnworth, First Bus*
- **Bodywork Technician**  
*Paul Bevan, National Express/ Lucketts Travel*
- **Electrical Technician**  
*Jack Davidson, Reading Buses*
- **Electric Driveline Technician**  
*Peter Blake, First Bus*
- **Mechanical Technician**  
*Calum Beltrami, Metroline*
- **Coach Technician**  
*Craig Brown, Greys of Ely*
- **Master Technician**  
*Stephen Price, First Bus*
- **Outstanding Qualified Team**  
*Nikolajus Kovalenkovas, Peter Blake, and Daniel Sobolewski, First Bus*

long been male-dominated, reflecting wider trends in the engineering sector. Despite progress, women still face barriers to entry, including outdated perceptions of engineering roles, lack of visible role models, and limited access to industry opportunities.

The partnership between SOE and Women in Bus and Coach marks an important step towards a more diverse and inclusive transport industry.

Keynote speaker at the awards lunch was Laura Hadzik, partner and head of commercial road transport at JMW, and a director of Women in Bus and Coach.

In her speech, Hadzik made a call for action to the bus and coach industry: "We have already achieved so much, but it is obvious that challenges remain. Our partnership with the SOE is here to drive that change for you and to challenge stereotypes."

She believes that companies need to shine the spotlight on women role models who are working across different roles, create inclusive workplaces where women can thrive at all levels, be flexible and develop female-friendly working environments.

Hadzik says that the bus and coach industry would benefit from more women working in roles as it is currently a bit "skewed" and they are under-represented and, when women are at the table, she believes that organisations are "far stronger".

With the engineering sector in general facing a well-documented skills shortage across disciplines including technicians, Hadzik believes that it can only benefit from more women being employed across different roles.

"Ignoring half of the population simply does not make sense when we are crying out for skilled professionals to enter the sector," she says.

"And think about the message that we are sending to women when they look at the industry and cannot see other women involved." [TE](#)



ASSETMINDER  
**WORKSHOP  
MANAGEMENT**  
SPECIALISTS



**WORKSHOP**

**ASSETMINDER**  
FLEET MAINTENANCE SOFTWARE

Modern Management Software for Fleet and Maintenance Workshops

- Asset Management
- Maintenance Planning
- Driver Inspection App
- Stock Control
- Electronic Inspections
- Defect Management
- Workshop Management
- 100% Compliance

[WWW.ASETMINDERSOLUTIONS.CO.UK](http://WWW.ASETMINDERSOLUTIONS.CO.UK)



Commercial Vehicle Repair and Contract Maintenance

**“KEEPING YOU MOVING FOR OVER 40 YEARS”**

Based in County Durham, est. 1982.

Providing contract maintenance on all types of commercial vehicles

- Rolling road brake testing
- Tachograph calibrations
- Computer diagnostics
- MOT preparation
- Mobile fleet support vehicles



Contact Amanda Hart and the team on: 01388 814205 or  
Email: [amanda@johnhartcommercial.co.uk](mailto:amanda@johnhartcommercial.co.uk) for further information.

**[www.johnhartcommercial.co.uk](http://www.johnhartcommercial.co.uk)**

# Tech-first approach

**Ember Coaches has seen huge growth in recent years. Ben Spencer learns how a technology platform is allowing it to gain momentum while also gaining an insight into why electric may be superior to hydrogen**

**H**aving the right technology in place and knowing how to leverage its advantages has certainly paid off for coach operator Ember Coaches.

Launched in October 2020 with two Yutong first-generation electric coaches, the EmberOS platform has enabled the coach operator to scale a 78-strong fleet spread across depots in Edinburgh, Dundee, Fort William and Aberdeen.

The EmberOS platform is a proprietary technology solution that manages all aspects of the fleet, comprising 54 GTe14 Pelican Yutong coaches that feature 621kWh batteries and 24 TCe12 Pelican Yutong coaches with 281kWh batteries.

Ember's head of Scotland Andy Mason says: "The technology underpins how the coaches are allocated, meaning that any coach located on Thurso or Fort William will rotate through the network down to our maintenance centre in Dundee in good time for a 28-day inspection, and then be put back out onto the network."

To ensure the coaches are fit for service, Ember's in-house engineering team conducts a 28-day inspection to check for any issues relating to wear and tear such as wheel bearings or damaged



tray-tables. They also undertake preventative maintenance and service, pre-emptively replacing any parts that have a limited lifespan.

Additionally, the engineers check the vehicle for all potential defects, including a detailed inspection of the underside of the vehicle. This process typically takes between two to three hours, with more time added for repairing any complex defects such as detecting an internal communication fault or tracing the loss of power to the integrated wheelchair lift.

Beyond these inspections, the EmberOS platform can send an alert to the operations team of any issues that can affect safety, from damaged marker

lights to more significant issues affecting the performance of the headlights, brakes, or even a sharp edge caused by unreported minor accident damage.

## CHARGING UP

The EmberOS platform is also responsible for the monitoring, planning and execution of the company's charging strategy. With coaches operating on routes between Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Stirling, Kinross and Edinburgh Airport, the system forecasts charging windows based on the known position of the vehicle, the estimated time of arrival at the charger and the known charging speeds.

Ember co-founder Keith Bradbury says: "We are already charging our coaches at 600kWh and we are building the infrastructure that enables us to charge at high speeds in a way that minimises downtime."

"We can recharge a coach to 100% in 45 minutes during the driver's break," he continues. "This means that our vehicles have a high uptime with each coach travelling around 250,000-300,000 kilometres per year, which translates to roughly 800-900 kilometres per day. Our newest coaches, our GT14, can do around 500-600 kilometres before needing to be charged."

The information stored within EmberOS allows the company to further optimise its charging strategy by prioritising the charging of coaches





ready to depart within 30 minutes over those that will leave the depot in two hours. Furthermore, some coaches may only require 70% battery to complete their journeys, allowing them to be fully recharged later in the day, at a cheaper rate.

Conversely, some coaches may require additional charging after returning from routes where roadworks are being carried out. To prepare for this, the EmberOS system can compare the GPS location of the vehicle against where it is predicted to travel to understand instances where it deviates from its usual route. In addition, Ember's operations team stores live and planned roadworks data into the system.

There are also environmental factors that are worth noting, as Mason explains that operating an electric coach through a headwind at -3°C on a route between Inverness and Thurso uses more battery than in the summer.

"We can feed the wind direction and temperature into the system. Generally speaking, an additional 1% charge may be necessary for minor weather conditions, while severe weather conditions may require 8-9% in the north of Scotland," says Mason.

### ALL-ELECTRIC FUTURE

The benefits of electrification are also being recognised by the wider industry. Bradbury refers to a report from the Climate Change Committee, an independent statutory body advising government, when elaborating upon the reasons why he feels this option is

superior to hydrogen.

"The report said that hydrogen has no part to play in surface transport, and I think that comes down to well-to-wheel efficiency, which is taking energy from source, going through the chain of conversion, storage and usage," he explains.

"The well-to-wheel efficiency for hydrogen at best is 20-30% compared to electric, which is currently at 80%. This difference means energy is being wasted going through a value chain, and to me, that is pure madness."

Mason also feels positive about electrification, noting how colleges are equipping technicians with a broad skillset to enter this space.

"We want to hire people who are comfortable working with this technology because so much of what we do is through EmberOS. We are non-traditional in that sense because a lot of garages are still fairly focused on using a pen and paper, which leaves room for human error," he explains.

Bradbury concludes: "I think there has been a mindset shift in engineers who are now starting to see a pathway to electric vehicles as the future in a way that was not clear five to 10 years ago. People are now very keen to undertake the training and understand how an EV works so they can work on it safely."

As the coach operator continues to reap the benefits of EmberOS, perhaps there has never been a better time for tech-savvy engineers to enter the electrification space. [TE](#)

## MICHELIN RUBBER

The Ember coaches are fitted with a mixture of 295/80 R22.5 Michelin X Coach Z and X Multi Z 2s all round. Carl Williams, customer engineering support team manager, says these tyres utilise Michelin's Regenion and Infinicoil technologies.

"Regenion ensures a high level of grip is maintained throughout the tyre's life. It is a self-regenerating tread pattern which includes hidden grooves that appear as the tread wears down, helping to maintain grip, traction and safety right down to the last millimetre of tread," he says.

"Infinicoil technology sees a continuous steel wire - which can be as long as 400 metres - wrapped around the tyre to provide enhanced endurance and greater resistance to accidental damage."

The Michelin X Multi Z2 and the X Coach Z offer more mileage potential than their predecessors, reducing the overall CPK (cost per kilometre). In addition, Williams explains that a longer tyre life reduces costly and time-consuming wheel interventions and, therefore, the risk of loose wheels.

Michelin X Coach D Remix fitments are used on the rear once the new OE tyres have worn. All tyres are regrooved in-house, extending their life by around 25%.

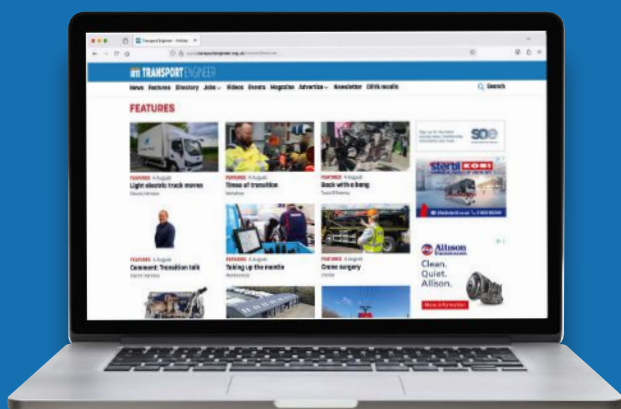
"The X Coach D is used as this is the most suitable Remix tyre that we make for coach operation. The use of Remix tyres reduces the use of raw materials and reduces waste, improving the sustainability of Ember's operation. The mileage is similar to that of a new tyre, while saving around 50kg of raw material," Williams adds.





OFFICIAL IRTE JOURNAL

# TRANSPORT ENGINEER



**OUR OCTOBER ISSUE  
PUBLISHING  
3RD OCTOBER,  
WILL BE FEATURING:**

**TYRES AND RETREADS**

**BUSES**

**STANDARDS & PRACTICES**

**WINTER PREPARATION**

Advertising your products/services increases your visibility amongst your competitors in front of our highly targeted audience, whilst increasing your response potential

**THE ADVERTISING COPY DEADLINE FOR OUR  
OCTOBER ISSUE IS 17TH SEPTEMBER**

To find out more or to advertise, please contact:  
**Lesley.Evans@markallengroup.com**  
**Tel: +44 (0)7785 613 142**



## Relief from Maintenance Headaches and Migraines

Proven cure for:

- ✓ Paperwork
- ✓ DVSA Inspections
- ✓ Budget Overspend
- ✓ Illegible Scrawl
- ✓ Lost Files
- ✓ Incomplete Reports
- ✓ Recurring Defects
- ✓ Non-Compliance
- ✓ Out of Stock Parts



**freeway**  
Fleet management in your pocket

[www.freewayfleet.com](http://www.freewayfleet.com)

@freewayfleet



OEM bodybuilding platforms are streamlining specification and integration. Tom Austin-Morgan reports on the latest developments taking place



# BUILDING BETTER

Bodybuilding has always been central to the commercial vehicle industry, bridging the gap between a chassis and its final, revenue-generating application. But as vehicle configurations become more complex, and customer demands more specific, the pressure on OEMs to support rapid, precise and cost-effective body integration has never been greater.

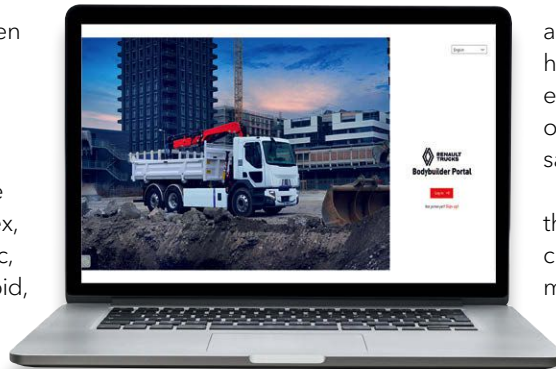
Today, all major truck manufacturers offer advanced online portals, plug-and-play kits, or pre-approved body programmes designed to simplify the build process. Each takes a slightly different approach, but all enable operators and bodybuilders to deliver vehicles application-ready with maximum speed and minimum rework.

## PLUG AND PLAY

DAF Trucks supports a wide variety of body configurations through a combination of open-access and login-based digital platforms. "DAF supports bodybuilders through two dedicated websites," explains Phil Moon, marketing manager at DAF Trucks.

"DAF Bodybuilder Information is an open access site where essential but basic information is available to all, and BBI+ hosts more in-depth and technical information."

DAF also offers a Paccar range of box and curtainsided bodies designed, manufactured and installed at its



UK production plant Leyland Trucks. Paccar bodies are offered in a range of customer selectable variants to suit distribution applications on the DAF XB and XD ranges from 7.5t to 19t gross vehicle weight (gvw), with diesel and electric drivetrains. The Paccar Body range is said to supply over 1,000 bodies per year in the UK alone.

DAF's flexibility is particularly evident in how chassis components and attachment modules can be repositioned or specified pre-delivery. That modularity carries through to electronic integration, too, where bodywork can be controlled via analogue signals or a dedicated CAN-bus connection, which allows signals and warnings to be passed on to the cab and clearly projected on a large digital display, via up to 51 icons and 31 text alerts displayed on the digital dash.

"Plug and Play is a series of packages for applications such as tippers, hookloaders, cranes, mixers

and skiploaders – they bring the right hardware and software together to ensure the most seamless integration of bodywork and ancillary equipment," says Moon.

"The underlying aim is to make the 'marriage' of a body with the DAF chassis as simple as possible. After mounting the body onto the chassis, the connectors are connected, and the body is immediately ready for use."

## COLLABORATION IS KEY

Renault Trucks offers an extensive online platform known as the Bodybuilder Portal, which provides installation guides and homologation documents.

It has been upgraded to include 3D CAD drawings for both diesel and electric vehicles. Its intent is to enable all bodybuilders to have a safe and compliant build from initial design to registration. The Bodybuilder Portal improves communication between OEM and bodybuilder, and anticipates complexity in final vehicle builds.

Lucy Holloway, head of product management at Renault Trucks UK, says: "All trucks are equipped with Bodybuilder Module interface as standard to facilitate the integration between body and chassis. Plus, from point of order, the bodybuilder can access their individual build specification and diagrams in the portal."

In a video walkthrough of the platform, Renault Trucks product

***"The possibilities are endless - with over 25 bodybuilders in the programme, just about every body imaginable is on the cards for customers"***

Mike Cutts

experts highlight how the portal simplifies communication between internal engineering teams, bodybuilders and end users by offering consistent technical documentation and updates.

One development is its integration of electric driveline requirements into bodybuilding guidance – a sign of how OEM support must evolve alongside the shift to zero-emission vehicles.

"As increased volumes of electric chassis are now going through the build process, we have identified the need for extra training to support bodybuilders," adds Holloway. "As part of our safety commitment to customers, we offer bodybuilders free familiarisation training on Renault Trucks E-Tech chassis to ensure our partners can safely store and work on our vehicles."

### BOXING CLEVER

The Iveco Bodybuilder Portal is said to help dramatically reduce lead times by working with partnered bodybuilders to enable fully priced and complete vehicles that are available for almost immediate delivery.

The Portal includes the latest fitting guidelines, 3D technical drawings, homologation and WLTP data plus direct updates from Iveco's product engineering and applications team.

"The possibilities are endless," says Mike Cutts, Iveco UK business line director (full range). "With over 25 bodybuilders in the programme, just about every body imaginable is on the cards for customers." According to Cutts, the Iveco Daily platform has been built with bodybuilders in mind, with its truck-based chassis capable of up to 7.2 tonnes gvw. The Iveco eDaily is said to be capable of making any "mission" all-electric thanks to a no-compromise mentality to its construction.



"There are no protruding elements from the chassis with battery modules sitting within the ladder frame, meaning any body that is compatible with the diesel will fit the electric model," Cutts says. "Up to 50kW electric power take-off (ePTO) also enables the eDaily to power just about any body or piece of equipment, from lifesaving ambulances to powerful gully cleaners."

To highlight its bodybuilding versatility, Iveco has developed the all-electric eDaily 'Box Clever' vehicle, on display across the UK this year.

Transforming from van to mobile stage, a large hydraulically assisted side door and deployable stairs grant access to an interior powered by the vehicle's up to 50kW ePTO. Inside is a VR simulator and 85in QLED TV to virtually test drive the new Iveco S-Way or set a 'hot lap' in an Iveco racing truck.

David Sims, bodywork solutions director, says: "The Iveco Daily has always been a popular platform for bodybuilders, and the eDaily takes up the mantle for those going electric – it even features the same body mounting points as the diesel model."

### STANDARDISATION

Across all OEMs, a common tension remains how to balance the efficiencies

of standardisation with the operational realities of customisation. Modular chassis and predefined body options, such as DAF's Paccar bodies or Iveco's pre-approved body types, deliver faster lead times and lower cost. But in some sectors, such as utilities or emergency services, customisation is non-negotiable.

"Flexibility is part of the DNA of each and every DAF truck," says Phil Moon. His comments reflect a wider trend: no matter how advanced a portal or bodybuilder programme becomes, the ability to tailor the vehicle to the job remains the OEMs' top priority.

Many OEMs now offer 'plug and play' packages that combine wiring, brackets and digital interfaces in a single kit, allowing equipment to be installed rapidly. Increased digitisation and the use of CAN-bus integration has made it possible for vehicle functions to be monitored and managed via the cab, improving safety and maintenance.

As electrification accelerates and urban delivery becomes more complex, the role of bodybuilder support platforms will only grow. As these platforms evolve, the shared goal of OEMs remains the same: to ensure that every truck, no matter how specialised, is built to perform from day one. [ITE](#)





# nets

truck & trailer parts

## KEEP YOUR FLEET MOVING WITH NETS PARTS

**Quality, Value & Service Since 1974**

**Your Trusted Source for Genuine OE Truck & Trailer Parts**

Since 1974, **NETS Parts** has been the trusted distributor of high-quality commercial vehicle spares from all leading manufacturers.

We supply **manufacturer-quality components**—without the manufacturer price tag, helping you reduce costs without compromising on performance or safety.

With **six strategically located branches across the North**, NETS serves a wide range of customers with **precision, speed, and a personal touch**.

Our **genuine OE parts** are sourced directly from manufacturers and delivered **same day**, keeping your fleet on the road and your business on track.



### Why Choose NETS?

- ✓ High-Quality Original Equipment (OE) Products
- ✓ Competitive Pricing Across Our Entire Range
- ✓ Manned Stores Available for VMU & Fleet Garages
- ✓ Extensive Inventory Always in Stock
- ✓ Fast, Reliable Same-Day Delivery
- ✓ 6 Branches Strategically Located Across the North
- ✓ Exceptional Customer Service & Expert Support
- ✓ Tailored Solutions for Your Fleet's Unique Needs

#### Contact Your Local NETS Branch

**Carlisle** 01228 511312

**Newcastle** 0191 2680093

**Sunderland** 0191 5263753

**Stockton** 01642 613514

**Newton Aycliffe** 01325 353030

**Rotherham** 01709 718758

Visit: [www.netsparts.co.uk](http://www.netsparts.co.uk)

**NETS PARTS - THE NAME YOU CAN TRUST FOR QUALITY, RELIABILITY, AND VALUE.**

## KILIMANJARO TO COAST

17-26  
SEP  
2026

454 KILOMETRES  
2702M ELEVATION  
£399 REGISTRATION FEE  
£4295 FUNDRAISING PLEDGE

Scan to find  
out more

[www.transaid.org](http://www.transaid.org)

Registered charity number 1072105

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal



# What VECTO means to you

**Mandated better fuel economy can only be a good thing, right?**

**Richard Simpson raises some important questions to consider**

It still is not clear as to when, how or even if the European Union's (EU) VECTO fuel consumption regulations will be enforced on the UK truck market, but the regulations are likely to have an impact on our trucks.

VECTO came into force in 2019, with all new heavy trucks sold in the EU having a certified CO<sub>2</sub> and fuel consumption declaration, created by a theoretical calculation tool dubbed VECTO. EU regulations aimed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from heavy-duty vehicles by 15% by 2025 and 30% by 2030, compared to 2019 levels. VECTO offers a standardised tool for tracking each truck manufacturer's progress in cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and to ensure compliance with EU regulations.

VECTO no doubt provided a powerful incentive for the introduction

of aerodynamic cabs by manufacturers including DAF, Volvo and Mercedes-Benz, but truck engineers have worked hard on every aspect of truck design to achieve the 2025 VECTO target.

## FUEL SAVINGS

Some of the 'best case' trucks now return independently-measured improvements in fuel consumption of 18% achieved in just four years.

Most operators will welcome this: not only do fuel savings boost the bottom line, but they also have a favourable impact on reportable CO<sub>2</sub> output and are a useful tool in winning work from large corporates anxious to lower their Scope 3 carbon emissions.

However, some of the measures taken will have an impact on the maintenance and operation of 'post-VECTO' trucks,

and fleet engineers need to be aware of the implications of this when choosing and maintaining new trucks.

The truck manufacturers have taken a holistic view in achieving fuel savings, but the savings have come easier in some areas than others.

It would, for example, be a relatively easy win to improve fuel efficiency by better combustion, raising cylinder pressures and temperatures. However, this has the unfortunate downside of increasing heavily regulated NO<sub>x</sub> gas emissions, which in turn need to be curbed by fitting larger post-combustion treatment catalysts, which will increase exhaust back pressure, and thus lose some of the gains from improved combustion.

A less problematic approach as far as the engine designer is concerned is to reduce the engine's internal losses: effectively gaining 'something for nothing'. The Miller Cycle, adopted by DAF and now Scania, leaves the inlet valve open for a defined angle of crank rotation as the piston commences its compression stroke. This sounds at first like an act of stupidity, but it reduces the cylinder's compression ratio in comparison to its expansion ratio, making the engine intrinsically more efficient than its conventional counterpart.

## FASTER FLOWING

Another area coming under increasing scrutiny is engine lubrication. Engine oil obviously serves two key roles: reducing friction and conducting heat away from key components such as piston crowns. But it is also a source of drag on the engine in terms of pumping and churning loss.

The engine's oil pumps consume energy, as does the drag on rotating components as they pass through the oil itself. Reducing pump and churn is an obvious easy gain. But a thinner, faster-flowing oil may have a



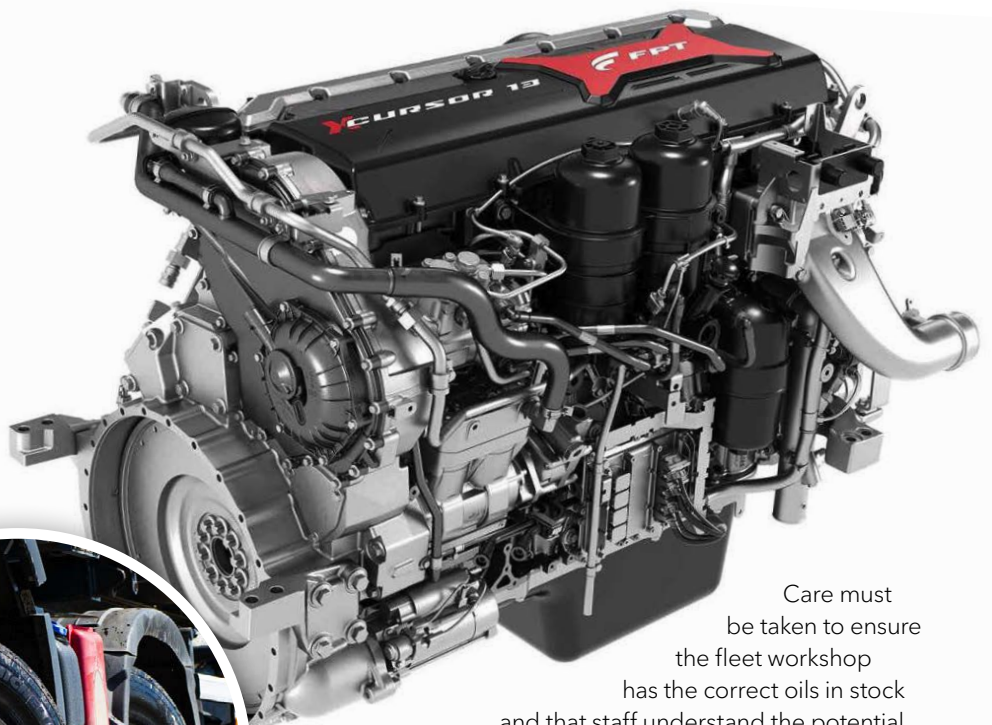
compromised film strength, unless appropriate additives are used in the finished lubricants. Texaco looked at this when it developed the new Delo 400 XSP SAE 5W-20 full synthetic engine oil, engineered to reduce internal friction and improve fuel economy without compromising engine durability by maintaining film strength under extremes of temperature and pressure.

Engine manufacturers can use thinner oils by specifying high-tech coatings, sometimes incorporating carbon in diamond form, for high-friction applications such as piston rings and plain bearings. Such coatings enable the components to survive without the thick oil films provided by the 15W-40 viscosity index (VI) oils typically used in legacy trucks.

This move to thinner oils prompted by VECTO spurred the introduction of a new oil standard (or sequence, as they are known) by European industry body ACEA. The new F01-24 sequence has the same requirements as the existing E11-24 sequence but applies only to the new generation of multigrades of 'X'W-30 viscosities, and relates to the oil's ability to retain performance in high-temperature, high-shear conditions.

David Brass, a commercial vehicle lubricant product manager at oil additive manufacturer Infineum, says: "Many OEMs have already adopted or are considering the use of lower HTHS grades, aligned with F01-24, for factory fill fluids to help deliver fleet-wide fuel economy improvements.

"However, in Europe the service fill market is currently dominated by SAE 10W-40 and 15W-40 grades, which means demand for F01-24 could be



Care must be taken to ensure the fleet workshop has the correct oils in stock and that staff understand the potential hazards of mis-fills.

limited, but growth can be expected over time."

## NO SUBSTITUTE

Iveco has worked hard with oil giant Petronas, the lubricants division of which has its roots in Fiat's one-time in-house lube supplier FL Selenia. The oil company is still working closely with Iveco. 'Co-engineering' between the two enabled Petronas to produce the Urania NEXT engine lube for Iveco/FPT's Cursor XC13 engine.

The ultra-low VI 0W-16 oil is offered for this engine only, and cannot be substituted for the 0W-20 oil recommended for other Iveco Cursor engines that are fitted with the manufacturer's fuel economy package, which includes 'improved thermal management' of the oil to prevent overheating and film breakdown.

Renault Trucks has not gone as far but still specifies a 5W-30 for long-haul applications.

And here's an issue for fleet engineers. The increasing pressure on all manufacturers to use thinner oils as first-fill on new trucks means more care must be taken when choosing oil for servicing. The thin and ultra-thin 0W-20 and 0W-16 oils will not be suitable for an engine designed to run on 15W-40, but using a 15W-40 in a modern engine will probably harm its fuel consumption.

## TREAD CAREFULLY

Fitting the best 'fuel-saving' tyres is an even quicker win for truck manufacturers: compared to tyres with a D-grade rating, Bridgestone working with Coventry University calculates fuel savings of up to third can be achieved by switching all axles to an A-grade tyre, or 31% by changing to a B-grade tyre.

The temptation then is for truck manufacturers to deliver all new trucks on A-grade tyres. But this may not be in the best interest of the operator.

Most A-grade tyres are intended for long-haul applications on well-maintained highways and could prove less than ideal on the pot-holed nightmare of the UK's road network, with premature wear and failure quickly absorbing any fuel savings.

For most British trucks a less-delicate 'regional' tyre will probably be a better choice, and this may well have a C or lower grading for fuel economy.

There is progress. Tipper tyre designs put durability and traction ahead of fuel economy. But Michelin's new X-Works 2 tyre claims a B grade for the steer-axle variant, along with a 10% increase in tyre life over its predecessor.

As a truck's functionality is virtually defined by the tyres it is shod with, new truck customers should interrogate their suppliers over the type of tyres the truck will be delivered on. The tyres you need may not be the ones the truck manufacturer wants you to have. [TE](#)

# INSTALLING BRAKE TEST SYSTEMS

When you're looking at brake testing systems, you've got a huge range of options, for any new workshop, the options can be overwhelming. So we've laid out some of the most common setups for brake testing systems - and the types of workshops who need them most. Here's what you need to know...

## IN-GROUND BRAKE TESTERS

### Good for:

- Workshops that mostly use inspection pits
- Larger workshops with plenty of space
- Workshops with a high volume of tests

An in-ground brake tester is a fixed installation requiring groundworks and flooring changes, making it ideal for larger workshops. For smaller workshops, a mobile brake tester may be better.

Installation costs for in-ground testers are higher, but they provide a durable, long-lasting solution. They're often installed over a vehicle pit, letting teams perform multiple services without moving vehicles, but some models can also be installed without the pit.



vehicles as our in-ground testers - giving you flexibility without compromise.



Our load simulation brake tester uses a skate and chain to apply the force, with raised roller beds on hydraulic cylinders to measure laden brake performance. The result: more accurate data, safer vehicles, and confidence they'll perform the same in their official MOTs.

## MOBILE BRAKE TESTERS

### Good for:

- Workshops that need flexibility
- Smaller workshops with limited space
- Workshops with an outdoor area

This is the most flexible brake testing system, offering more options for storage, floor space, and extra workstations.

No fixed installation or groundworks are required, so you can move it as your schedule changes. With additional units in storage, you can set up new stations during busy periods or use outdoor space to increase throughput.

Despite its mobility, it matches the performance of fixed installations: with a maximum axle load of 20,000 kg (model-dependent), our mobile brake testers handle the same heavy-duty

## IN-GROUND WITH LOAD SIMULATION

### Good for:

- The most realistic brake performance data
- Workshops with diverse fleets
- Fleets with strict regulation compliance

DVSA guidance now requires goods vehicles to be 'appropriately laden' for annual MOTs.

For the most accurate results, you need a brake testing system with load simulation. By applying a downward force during testing, you can replicate real-world conditions.

## STILL NOT SURE WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

Our teams have installed brake testing systems for workshops and fleet operators of every type and size - from simple mobile brake testers to advanced in-ground testers with integrated load simulation.

Our expert installers can help you to choose the system that's the best fit for your business and the vehicles you service. So if you're not sure what you need, we're ready to help - start a chat with one of our brake-testing specialists to see exactly what we can do.



Contact Totalkare for further information:  
**0121 585 2724** [sales@totalkare.co.uk](mailto:sales@totalkare.co.uk)



# McCulloch reduces speeding and fuel costs

McCulloch Group has improved fleet safety and efficiency after rolling out Webfleet, Bridgestone's fleet management solution, across its vehicles.

The Ayrshire-based company operates a fleet of 50 vans and 13 HGVs to support its work maintaining, repairing and constructing rail infrastructure across the UK. Since installing Webfleet in October 2024, speeding incidents have been reduced across the entire fleet.

"With constant pressure to meet tight turnaround times, but strict working hour regulations in place to protect employee wellbeing, tackling speeding

between jobs had become a top priority," said David Hume, McCulloch Group's transport manager.

"Coupled with a high-profile internal campaign to raise awareness of the safety risks of speeding, Webfleet's OptiDrive insights have helped us completely transform driver behaviour."

Fuel consumption has also improved, saving the company thousands of pounds and helping to reduce its carbon footprint. Less idling and better driving have led to a sharp uplift in mpg, allowing McCulloch Group to recoup the cost of the Webfleet system in under six months.



"Idling used to total 72 hours in a 24-hour period across the full fleet," said Hume. "That's now been reduced by over 80%. It's an amazing result."

"Our engineers often work in cold conditions trackside and used to keep the engine constantly running for heating. Now, they briefly switch it on every 20 minutes to top up the temperature, which makes a big difference to fuel use and emissions."

## A1 Group cuts distraction

Road transport specialist A1 Group has adopted an AI-powered video telematics and Progressive Safe System (PSS) solution from Ctrack to meet its driver safety and Direct Vision Standard (DVS) commitments.

The company is rolling out Ctrack's AI dashcam to a total of 110 commercial vehicles, having reduced driver distraction events by 40% since an initial installation at the beginning of this year. All vehicles over 12 tonnes that operate in London have also been fitted with an AI PSS to meet the latest DVS regulations.

"The Ctrack AI cameras are already making a positive impact across our commercial fleet giving us greater

visibility of operational performance, improving driver behaviour and helping to reduce road risk," explained Stuart Cawthorne, transport manager at A1 Group.

"We have previously installed forward-facing dashcams, but these latest devices provide an added layer of protection to our staff and other road users."

The AI dashcam features a forward-facing camera to capture footage of the road ahead in the event of a collision and a driver-facing lens to assess levels of risk and distraction in real time. This means the device can detect, alert and report on a range of risky behaviours.



## Roadside Safety incorporates CogLock

An independent training organisation for the haulage, logistics, roadside recovery and tyre fitting industry has added its support to a new wheel security solution called CogLock.

Roadside Safety was set up in 2011 by Stuart Powell, who previously worked as national training manager at Goodyear Dunlop where he created many of the qualifications for tyre fitting accredited by IMI.

He has been so impressed by CogLock – which is specifically designed to prevent wheel detachment and provides a visual indicator, secure locking mechanism, and streamlines maintenance – that he has incorporated it into his truck tyre fitting training.

Powell, managing director of Roadside Safety, said: "Having seen the aftermath of wheels coming off and witnessed some of the consequences, anything that helps



to reduce the incidence of loose wheels has to be a good thing.

"CogLock and its simple but effective method of securing the wheel to the hub is a good step forward in wheel security for trucks."

Chris Coghill, founder and director of CogLock, said: "One of the biggest challenges with bringing a new product to market is awareness as anyone removing a wheel with CogLocks needs to know how the system works."

"By partnering with Roadside Safety this helps to increase exposure of the product to the technicians on the roadside or in the workshop."

## Michelin continues long-haul at John Sutch



Adopting a Michelin tyre policy across its fleet of mobile cranes and heavy haulage equipment has paid off for John Sutch Cranes, with a boost in longevity and reliability.

The mobile crane and contract hire specialist was convinced to make the move in 2020 after a trial set of 445/95 R25 Michelin X Crane+ covered more than twice the distance normally seen from other tyre brands.

Ian Seddon, service and engineering manager at John Sutch

Cranes, said: "With other mobile crane all-terrain products that we have used the tyre would start suffering from various irregular wear patterns early in the life of the crane, including tyre delamination, after travelling up to or more than 20,000 to 30,000km, with the sidewalls noticeably an area of weakness.

"The tyres would overheat, suffer blowouts and cause unwanted breakdowns. Tyre loss is enough to massively impact on the monetary return from a daily hire. Since fitting

Michelin X Crane+ tyres, we have noticed a remarkably better tyre performance, and the vehicles, irrespective of wheel rim size or lifting equipment capacity, have covered 40,000 to 50,000km with reduced tyre incidents."

With 38 mobile cranes for hire operating from two locations, John Sutch Cranes believes the extra longevity of the Michelin product gives an average uplift of 20,000km per tyre compared with rival products.



## City Lifting saves with alignment system

City Lifting is reporting cost savings and improved workshop efficiency since the introduction of a Josam Laser AM wheel alignment system supplied by AES UK.

Based in Purfleet, Essex, the crane and lifting services hire firm operates a fleet of mobile cranes and trucks, many of which feature complex multi-axle configurations.

Previously reliant on external contractors for wheel alignment, the company faced growing costs, scheduling delays, and unnecessary tyre wear due to mis-alignment and vehicles being dispatched before alignment could be completed.

"We were spending a lot on contractor alignments, and when timing didn't line up, we'd end up sending out vehicles before they could be aligned properly," said Simon Sanderson, workshop manager at City Lifting. "That sometimes meant we'd ruin tyres that can cost around £1,600 each. We knew we needed to take control of the process."

The Josam Laser AM is an analogue, laser-based wheel alignment and chassis measurement system designed for heavy-duty commercial vehicles. It works by projecting precise laser beams from mounted brackets on each axle to measure toe and camber angles.

Technicians can then compare the readings against manufacturer specifications and make accurate adjustments quickly.

## JHS Logistics cuts breakdown time

A port logistics provider has reduced vehicle downtime after switching to a new breakdown repair and recovery specialist.

Based in Southampton, JHS Logistics operates nationwide, providing container haulage and other logistics services to all major UK ports. The company runs a fleet of 44 tractors and 50 trailers, comprised of skeletal and splitter units for dual containers.

TNS 365 is a specialist in commercial vehicle and trailer breakdown repair. The company has an extensive network of dedicated commercial vehicle technicians, meaning that the JHS vehicles are never more than 90 minutes from a mechanic – and most are less than an



hour away.

The company decided to try TNS 365's breakdown cover after feeling let down by its previous provider. "We felt that we were not getting value for money from our existing provider," said Scott Manser, operations manager for JHS Logistics. "We liked TNS 365's business model so it was a no-brainer for us to give it a try."

TNS 365 is a pay-as-you-go rather than subscription-based offer, helping hauliers to keep costs down. Users simply log a breakdown online, upload details and images, and TNS 365 does the rest.

"The way the platform is set up is perfect for us," added Manser.

"We just log into the system, record our breakdown and upload the photos. Being able to add pictures is great as it means the mechanic can see which parts they need to bring to the vehicle – which has massively reduced downtime. With our previous provider, they would often come out, take a look, realise they didn't have the right part and then would have to go back for it."





# IRTE HGV Skills Challenge 2025: In Partnership with DAF Trucks

30 September – 1 October 2025,  
DAF Apprentice Academy, Nottingham

We want to discover our industry's  
best engineers at the first-ever HGV  
Skills Challenge.

If you know that you or your team  
have what it takes, then sign up today.

**Have you got what  
it takes?**

Find out more  
and sign up:



**Get involved**



Visit [soe.org.uk/hgvskills](https://soe.org.uk/hgvskills) Email [irteskills@soe.org.uk](mailto:irteskills@soe.org.uk)



# BODYWORK

A range of bodies and body repair equipment to optimise fleet operations

## 1 TIGER TRAILERS

Tiger Trailers offers a curtainsider range that has been continuously enhanced through decades of design and manufacturing experience. With a bolted body design and EN 12642-XL compliance as standard, Tiger curtainsiders can be customised, with options including lightweight design, a number of roof options and chassis galvanisation. Standard features include a 'Clearspan', pillarless roof design for obstruction-free side loading; a choice of premium brand electrics, braking system, axles and tyres; galvanised chassis and bodywork components for maximum durability; and the option for galvanised or KTL-coated chassis for enhanced anti-corrosion warranty.

[www.tinyurl.com/2242ynyh](http://www.tinyurl.com/2242ynyh)



## 2 DON-BUR

Don-Bur Double Decks are designed to give twice the carrying capacity of a standard single deck, reducing the number of trips and associated costs by half. They are now commonplace in the transport industry and are predominantly used for the trunking distribution of light/medium weight goods. With a potential increase of up to 100%, Don-Bur's Double Decks can provide operators with a 52 UK pallet carrying capacity, which is an additional 26 UK pallets when compared to a standard 13.6m-long single-deck trailer. This can reduce the number of deliveries by 50%. In addition, a variable height Ratchet Deck system offers an adjustable, multi-positional deck, ideal for diverse payloads.

[www.tinyurl.com/3dn2dnv9](http://www.tinyurl.com/3dn2dnv9)

## 3 ALLOY BODIES

Alloy Bodies' box body conversions provide a secure method to transport goods, usually with single point entry to the rear and fitted with a compliant load restraint system as standard. The FRP (fibreglass reinforced plywood) box van body is constructed using high quality materials and is of a bonded construction utilising specially designed anodised profiles, providing a strong, secure solution for rear loading. Available with lightweight options for payload-sensitive applications and with a variety of door options, load restraint and a choice of tail lifts. The box body is a versatile workhorse that can be adapted to suit specific operational needs and can be painted or liveried to customer requirements.

[www.tinyurl.com/4bwj2un8](http://www.tinyurl.com/4bwj2un8)



## 4 BONDRITE ADHESIVES

Bondrite Adhesives offers a Paintless Dent Remover kit that can remove dents in vans. It is suitable for the removal of door dings, hail damage, minor body creases and minor bumper indentations. Unlike more established methods of dent removal, glue PDR has the advantage of being more precise and effective, as well as being compatible with both aluminium and steel doors. Using this technique also makes it easier to correct dents in hard to reach areas. The T-bar design allows for more pulling force to be applied to the tabs to enable an easier dent repair. 100% of its adhesive products are from UK-based manufacturers, meaning the journey has minimal carbon footprint.

[www.tinyurl.com/57a7j9r8](http://www.tinyurl.com/57a7j9r8)



This page is brought to you by Backhouse Jones Solicitors, which runs a frequent series of podcasts – see [www.tinyurl.com/2xbv3jzv](http://www.tinyurl.com/2xbv3jzv)

# Change of practice

## OPERATIONS

The Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) appears to have shifted its approach to issuing 'Propose to Revoke' (PTR) letters.

We are now seeing operators receive PTR letters shortly after a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) Maintenance Investigation Visit (MIVR) and/or a Traffic Examination Visit (TEVR) where the outcome was deemed "unsatisfactory" or flagged as "report to the OTC".

In other words, more cases where maintenance systems are found lacking or tachograph compliance systems are found wanting by the DVSA are now being met with a formal letter proposing revocation of the operator's licence, without first calling a public inquiry.

This marks a change from the practice over the past 40+ years, where such issues would typically be addressed at a public inquiry. This new tactic may be an attempt to clear a backlog of cases by testing whether the operator is prepared to continue holding its licence.

It is important to note that the traffic commissioner cannot revoke a licence without giving the operator the opportunity for a public inquiry. This new approach does not remove that right but instead requires the operator to proactively request a hearing, rather



than assuming one will be scheduled.

If you receive a PTR letter and do not request a public inquiry or fail to respond adequately to the highlighted shortcomings to the satisfaction of the traffic commissioner, your operator's licence could be revoked without further warning. This would require an immediate cessation of operations, without the opportunity to contest the decision before the traffic commissioner.

The Office of the Traffic Commissioner is increasingly focusing on operators with repeated or significant failings in their compliance systems. They are acting swiftly and, rather than issuing reminders or requesting additional information, they are moving directly to propose revocation.

When responding to an MIVR or TEVR, it is crucial that your response

is comprehensive, robust and timely. Given the OTC's enhanced enforcement approach, even seemingly minor observations by the DVSA should be addressed in detail at the earliest opportunity. Prompt remedial action is essential to protect your operator's licence.

If you receive one of these PTR letters, we strongly recommend seeking legal advice promptly, as these letters come with strict deadlines, after which revocation can proceed without further warning.

If you are unsure of how to respond, your first action should be to request a public inquiry – since the traffic commissioner is obligated to grant this request, it prevents summary revocation.

**For guidance, contact the regulatory team at Backhouse Jones on 01254 828 300 or [regulatory@backhouses.co.uk](mailto:regulatory@backhouses.co.uk)**

## DVSA moves to streamline communications

### COMPLIANCE

The DVSA has announced further enhancements to its roadside prohibition notification system, aiming to streamline communication with operators and improve access to enforcement information.

Since 18 June 2025, operators with a registered email address linked to their operator licence have been receiving prohibition notifications electronically. Updates are part of a push to modernise processes.

The DVSA has confirmed that, from 17 July 2025, these email notifications will now include a downloadable link to the official prohibition letter. This replaces the previous method of including the full wording of the notice within the email.

The process at the roadside remains unchanged as enforcement officers will continue to issue a physical copy of the prohibition during the vehicle stop, and operators will still receive clearance notices via post once the issue has been resolved.

For operators who have not provided an email address, the DVSA will continue to send prohibition notifications and related documentation to the business address on file.

Operators are encouraged to ensure their contact information is up to date by registering for the self-service portal on the Vehicle Operator Licensing (VOL) system. Visit [www.tinyurl.com/mry4z6fx](http://www.tinyurl.com/mry4z6fx).



# GET YOURSELF A MENTOR

**Your career, your connections, your future.**

The SOE mentoring platform connects experienced engineers with those looking to grow, offering guidance on career progression, professional registration, and industry challenges.

- Gain personalised guidance from industry professionals
- Build your network and grow your skills
- Navigate challenges with the help of a trusted advisor
- Achieve your career goals with tailored support

Learn more at [soe.org.uk/mentoring](https://soe.org.uk/mentoring)

Included in your SOE membership





VEHICLE  
LIFTS



BRAKE  
TESTING



DIAGNOSTIC  
EQUIPMENT



VEHICLE  
PITS



WHEEL  
SERVICING



WORKSHOP  
FIT-OUT



INSPECTION  
& SERVICE



ONLINE  
TRAINING



**TOTALKARE**  
WORKSHOP EQUIPMENT EXPERTS

FOR

# WORKSHOP EQUIPMENT

IT'S **TOTALKARE**



HEAVY DUTY  
**Y-MECH LIFT**



**TOTALKARE**  
WORKSHOP EQUIPMENT EXPERTS

From column lifts to brake testers, tyre changers to wheel alignment, vehicle pits to oil management and almost everything in between, for workshop equipment, it really is Totalkare. **Call us for a quote today.**

**T: 0121 585 2724 / WWW.TOTALKARE.CO.UK**

REQUEST A QUOTE

