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President
Shaun Stephenson EngTech FSOE FIRTE

Managing Director
Ian Chisholm BA IEng FSOE FIRTE FCIIT
MCMi MIMi

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Registered Office
22 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PR
Tel: 020 7630 1111
Fax: 020 7630 6677
Email: soe@soe.org.uk
www.soe.org.uk

Editor
Brian Tingham BSc CEng MInstMC FSOE
FIPlantE FIRTE
Email: btingham@findlay.co.uk

Contributing Editors
Brian Weatherley, Dan Gilkes,
John Challen, Ian Norwell, Laura Cork,
Steve Banner, Toby Clark

Art Editors
Martin Cherry, Neil Young

Production Manager
Nicki McKenna
Email: nmckenna@findlay.co.uk

Advertisement Manager
Craig Molloy
Email: cmolloy@findlay.co.uk
Tel: 01322 221144

Publisher
Peter Knutton

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Change is one of the few certainties left

We're just a few short weeks into 2016, yet the CV Show (26-28 April, NEC) marketing machine appears to be in top gear, with visitor registration already live on the website. Early, maybe. But, with the pace of change - technical, legislative and market driven - this premier event can't come a moment too soon.

Analysis of the SMMT's (Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders) 2015 CV registration data (pages 5 and 21) demonstrates operators' changing requirements: shifting away from mid-range to heavier but also lighter trucks and vans. And that's just in terms of gvw. As city authorities increasingly bear down on emissions, safety fitments, noise and congestion, we must expect more movement.

Developing technologies - the art of the possible - will doubtless play an important part in determining directions. Operators seeking new efficiencies to fit their evolving businesses will rightly take advantage. And winners and losers will inevitably follow - not only among suppliers, but also operators that fail to spot the turning tide.

As ever, timing is everything. Too early and the risks include high costs of ownership and poor support. Too late and you're into an unedifying spiral of catch-up, attempting to make uncompetitive assets pay and turning reluctantly to the banks to fight your way back.

And we can forget support. For high-profile bus operators, funding is still readily available not only to encourage investment in shiny green vehicles, but also for renewing older fleets with emissions-busting equipment. It is a matter of great regret that for the rest of the transport industry - the vast majority - that luxury isn't on the table.

So, yes, roll on the CV Show. Given the challenges facing the industry and still conflicting advice on everything from aerodynamics to telematics, it behoves us all to hear it from the proverbial horses' mouths. Remember, making ill-informed choices isn't an option.

Brian Tingham BSc CEng MInstMC FSOE FIPlantE FIRTE
Editor