

# Meeting of minds

John Parry, chair of irtec steering group, IRTE (JP): "I see real confusion in the industry as far as low-emission zones are concerned. The nightmare scenario is that we end up with low-emission zones in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Glasgow, all with different specifications and regulations. As a truck operator, what do you send where? It's an issue that keeps rolling along, and the transport industry in itself doesn't seem to be able to stop it."

Shaun Stephenson, director of engineering, Ryder (SS): "I think the challenge is some of the disconnected policy with some of the councils and ultra low emission zones, driven by DEFRA and government. At the moment, businesses in the UK are trying to plan for the outcome. As the majority of vehicles are Euro V or below, it's going to be a big investment to change."

Henry Brace, managing director, fleet, BT Fleet (HB): "What I have a real problem with is the one-upmanship going on between local politicians. When we talk to the authority in Liverpool, it says it wants to be the best - to have the most stringent air quality standards. That's not right; they need to be the same everywhere. We're not winning the argument about uniformity, and this is where central government needs to take the lead."

Michael Colbourne, UK fleet compliance and projects engineer, Veolia (MH): "In the field of waste management, there's a definite disconnect in understanding, especially about the depreciation scales of some of the more complex vehicle types. Our RCV fleet is on a 10-year depreciation rather than a

**The first of a series of IRTE discussions brought together 13 industry figures in April, at the CV Show. The wide-ranging conversation touched on emissions regulations, platooning, alternative fuels, and training and recruitment of young engineers. Will Dalrymple listened in**

six-year. Even in London, we deal with lots of different boroughs, and there are different emissions standards in each."

JP: "Another problem is, if you have a garage in a ULEZ, and are repairing trucks, how do you get the truck in and out, without having to pay the £100 levy? The same issue applies to car testing."

Beverley Bell, SOE patron and chair, Think Logistics (BB): "That's why it is so important to speak to government, because that becomes a disincentive to service vehicles."

JP: "Switching the topic to platooning. I am just imagining a platoon of vehicles coming down the M42 with me this morning, and how I would ever be able to get off the motorway? I'm exaggerating to make a point."

SS: "Do we have the road infrastructure in the UK - which has so many deviations - to actually support it, or do we need to invest in highways?"

BB: "It also raises the issue of the operational responsibility. If there is a driver in that vehicle, they are still responsible. I know that government is looking carefully at legislation on driving to say, where does that responsibility lie if the vehicle is driving itself?"

Russell Patmore, business planning director, DAF (RP): "It's also a question of communication. Media coverage has been misleading, stating that platoons are 20-long, and there's nobody inside them. The trial is only a trial; there are drivers in every truck; they communicate

with each other by a wireless network. What it could do is potentially reduce fuel use by 8%." [DAF is part of the trial.]

JP: "To make an observation about Earned Recognition, which launched yesterday, I would like to raise the potential of conflict with the schemes that operate around London - CLOCS and FORS. If I were an operator and went for Earned Recognition, would I really want to go for FORS as well?"

HB: "Sometimes your hand is forced by your customer. For some tenders, it's a requirement."

BB: "They are all trying to do the same thing, with different requirements. The burden on the operator is far too high. Actually, there is only one scheme: it's called operator licensing."

HB: "Our industry bodies and compliance standards feel like boxing, where you've got five different belts. We need to start unifying these things."

JP: "The one thing I can say is that irtec and Workshop Accreditation sit in the Earned Recognition scheme now; they are ticks for maintenance standards."

## ALTERNATIVE FUELS

Martin Flach, alternative fuels director, IVECO (MF): "Public opinion has moved anti-diesel, and the need to focus on alternatives is much stronger than it's ever been. We are working with electric vehicles at the small end of the range, and gas vehicles from 3.5t to 40 and 44t very shortly. From our point of view, the



*Standing, L-R: Brace; DVSA head of vehicle testing Hugh Rimmer; Belton; Manchester College head of department – logistics Steve Gannon; Bell; F & G Commercials managing director Frank Woodhead; Stephenson; Parry. Seated: Veolia UK fleet compliance & projects engineer Michael Colbourne; NRG Fleet Services training & development manager Helen Allera; chair of the IRTE professional sector council John Eastman; Flach; Patmore*

here-and-now technology is gas. The economics of running electric on heavy vehicles is just not there at the moment.”

**JP:** “Will electric vehicles be ready in 2040?”

**MF:** “For 2040 I think that we end up with a scenario where we use some form of internal combustion engine, maybe running on gas or diesel, that does the motorway leg of the journey, and by geomapping, the vehicle swaps over to pure electric when you reach the city boundary. We see that plug-in hybrid technology on the Mitsubishi Outlander, for example, and it is very effective.”

**JP:** “What about potential Euro VII emissions restrictions?”

**MF:** “They are still up for discussion. EU manufacturers are still focusing on CO<sub>2</sub> requirements. From 2019 we have to start declaring CO<sub>2</sub> based on the Vecto calculation. The risk is that we spend more time lowering that number than reducing emissions in real life. That is because after we declare the numbers we will be targeted and fined on them, so there will be an incentive to lower them.”

**JP:** “Turning to the future of the workforce, recruitment of transport engineers is an ongoing problem. Partly this is what people perceive the job to be: greasy, dirty, banging metal. But now, people are using computers; the role of a technician is different than it was, although you still need the same knowledge and ability. I don’t think

the trailblazer process has helped in terms of apprentices. And a number of operators pay the levy and run their own apprentice training programmes, in spite of the trailblazer schemes out there.”

#### **LEAVING THE EU**

**SS:** “As we migrate away from the EU, the problem of recruiting drivers and technicians is going to be compounded.”

**HB:** “We realised that 20% of our technicians recruited in the last three years were coming from EU countries, so we have ramped up our apprentice programme. We have problems attracting technicians who are qualified, but no problem with apprentices. It’s our own scheme, done with Warwick College. Two things have transformed our workshop culture for the better: having apprentices, and having female technicians.”

**RP:** “We’re doing more training than ever. It can be a struggle on occasion to fix the trucks; they’re that complicated, and will become more so as we go on; it’s a one-way track. The dealers are investing to keep our customers on the road; that’s our commitment. In our current apprenticeship programme, we need to raise the outcome, because the skills that the guys have at the end of three years need to be moved up a little bit. Government policy on this is not clear; it does not really understand, in our opinion, what it’s delivering in terms of the new programme. There

are concerns across industry about the changes made to apprenticeship schemes, and whether government is listening.”

Richard Belton, training and education director, S&B Automotive (**RB**): “Apprenticeships have fallen since the levy was introduced. The total is definitely down 25% overall, but it’s 18% down in automotive.”

**JP:** “IRTE, through irtec and Workshop Accreditation, is trying to give technicians a token of what they’ve achieved. We’ve now got badges for shop overalls coming that say: ‘I’m a licensed technician now’. It gives a bit more status to a technician.”

**BB:** “I went to two organisations doing training; one was a big CV manufacturer; the other was not. What was fascinating was the effect of the branding. The manufacturer’s apprentices were all wearing their uniform, and seemed to all feel part of the team. When they walked in, they had a quiet confidence. The others, who were scrimping and saving to get on the course, had borrowed some overalls, so none of them matched. The difference between the two groups was palpable.” [TE](#)

*IRTE is joining BVRLA and other trade associations to lobby government to raise concerns about the treatment of HGVs in clean air zones. It is also planning further discussions to help formulate an industry position statement.*