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Published by: The Society of Operations Engineers

President: Gerry Fleming IEng CEnv **FSOF FIRTE** 

Chief Executive: Peter Walsh CEng

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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 www.soe.org.uk

Editor: Brian Tinham BSc CEng MInstMC FS0E FIPIantE FIRTE Email: btinham@findlay.co.uk

Industry Editor: John Challen Email: jchallen@findlay.co.uk

Contributing Editors: Brian Weatherley, John Kendall, Ian Norwell, Laura Cork, Robin Dickeson, Steve

Art Editors: Martin Cherry, Neil Young **Illustrations: Phil Holmes** Production Manager: Nicki McKenna Email: nmckenna@findlay.co.uk

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

**Publisher: Peter Knutton** 

Transport Engineer is the official Produced on behalf of IRTE by Findlay Media Ltd, Hawley Mill, Hawley Road, Dartford, Kent DA2 7TJ Tel: 01322 221144

www.transportengineer.org.uk



distributed free of charge to SOE members dependent on membership sector. For non-members.

the annual subscription rate (12 issues) is £75 UK and EU, or £77 airmail outside EU. For other SOE members, the discounted rate is £30.

Printed by: Pensord Press UK ISSN: 0020-3122



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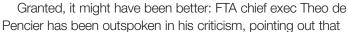
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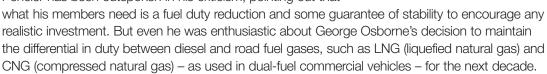
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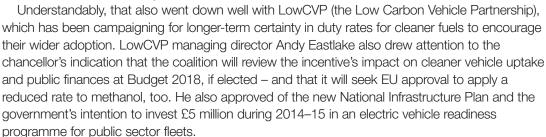
## Will 2014 be the year of dual-fuel and gas trucks?

appy New Year to all our readers. And while it is now 2014, as we go to press 2013 remains the big issue. On the one hand, operators are still digesting the Autumn Statement. On the other, OEMs are worrying about the truck market, now that Euro 6 is upon us and even derogated Euro 5 vehicles aren't moving fast.

What's the thinking? Well, for operators, the chancellor's widely-anticipated cancellation of the 1.61 pence per litre fuel duty hike was good news, saving the industry an estimated £186 million, according to the Freight Transport Association.







For some, all this is about as green a light as you're likely to get to invest in more environmentally-friendly engines. The RHA (Road Haulage Association), which held a post-Statement briefing - supported by major industry players, including DAF, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo Trucks and dual-fuel technology supplier Hardstaff Group – certainly thinks so. It is one among many now stating openly that operators need to take gas and dual-fuel trucks more seriously. "We know, from member surveys, that [the initiative] will create new interest in the gas option... It is important that members are aware of the funding, technical, commercial and political issues surrounding gas that affect their businesses," commented RHA director of policy Jack Semple.

Yes indeed. And operators can also now get advice from big names such as Asda, Brit European, DHL, Eddie Stobart, Howard Tenens and Sainsbury's - all of which have taken the plunge with significant dual-fuel diesel-and-methane haulage fleets, plus their own refuelling stations. The only remaining stumbling blocks are the up-front cost (still around £20,000), the relatively few OEMs offering dual-fuel trucks and the still 'patchy' gas infrastructure.

All these will be resolved, however, as demand grows and the economies of scale kick in. And, as they do, so the cost-benefits around running and financing dual-fuel will also become more attractive. Look forward to a virtuous circle of environmentally-friendly, cost-cutting technology in 2014 and beyond. And when that happens, manufacturers, too, may see their fortunes improve.

Brian Tinham BSc CEng MInstMC FSOE FIPlantE FIRTE

