

Heroes of ZERO

The government's Road to Zero strategy and its commitment to a steep increase in reducing CO₂ emissions has focused the minds of hauliers on this issue. Help is at hand through various enabling schemes that focus on just that, finds Dan Parton

When the government launched its Road to Zero strategy last July, it set out an ambitious – albeit voluntary – target to reduce HGV greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2025, from 2015 levels. Reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels is a key part of that, which links into the drive to introduce low emission zones in cities around the UK to improve air quality.

Of course, reducing CO₂ goes hand in hand with reducing fuel consumption and therefore costs, and this is where operators stand to benefit. With fuel costs the largest outgoing for hauliers after paying drivers, any way to bring that bill down is eagerly welcomed.

But it isn't just about reducing emissions and fuel consumption. Evidence of reduced CO₂ can also help to win business. Today, an increasing number of customers – from local authorities to supermarkets – want to see evidence of hauliers' environmental credentials when they are tendering for contracts.

So the incentives are there for hauliers to reduce their carbon and fuel

emissions, and there are various national and local schemes they can join to help them to achieve reductions. For instance, the Freight Transport Association (FTA) operates the Logistics Emissions Reduction Scheme (LERS), which is approaching its tenth anniversary and currently has 135 members operating more than 88,000 HGVs and vans in the UK. In its initial phase from 2010 to 2015, it set a target for members to reduce their CO₂ emissions by 8%. In the event, they achieved a reduction of 7%, according to Rebecca Kite, environmental policy manager at the FTA. Now, the scheme has aligned its targets with the Road to Zero strategy.

In the LERS, hauliers record and report the carbon emissions from their fleet and take up strategies to reduce emissions. Says Kite: "We have added a lot more information pages [to the website] to try to inform members about what they can be doing, not

-  Groups of councils: four in South Yorkshire formed the first ECO Stars programme in 2009
-  But today, single councils outnumber regional groups in the scheme

just to reduce CO₂ emissions, but fuel costs, too."

TECHNOLOGY AND LOGISTICS INTERVENTIONS

The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF), a collaboration between Cambridge, Heriot-Watt and Westminster Universities and organisations in the freight and logistics sector, has also aligned itself with the Road to Zero target with its own '15by25' scheme, although it launched



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this ahead of the government’s strategy (available via www.is.gd/aroviq).

The SRF helps its members to decarbonise through various tools it has developed, including vehicle technology interventions and logistics interventions, according to David Cebon, SRF director. “The idea is that we team up a couple of researchers with each of our member companies, and work with them to review the current position of the company’s fleet and the freight tasks they are undertaking, to come up with a decarbonisation plan to hit the 15% reduction by 2025. We will then measure the performance against plan over a period of time,” he says.

The Centre also offers for free the SRF Optimiser (www.is.gd/tihoyu), which produces a ranked list of possible ways to save costs and CO₂ emissions based on fleet and operations data entered by operators.

OPERATOR RECOGNITION

Meanwhile, the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) is also now pushing its environmental side. For instance, companies working for FORS Bronze recognition are now required to track their fuel use, have anti-idling policies in place, and

introduce a FORS fuel and emissions champion – someone who focuses on how fuel is managed in the fleet and looks for areas where they can reduce it, according to Paul Wilkes, FORS business services manager. And the scheme ramps up from there: at FORS Silver level, hauliers have to demonstrate how they are managing and reducing their fuel and CO₂ usage, while Gold standard hauliers have to show long-term improvement in reducing emissions.

Explains Wilkes: “We have created a framework they have to work towards, but then we also have various things to help them with it. At Silver, we have introduced an e-learning [course] for drivers to do with use of alternative fuel vehicles, and things to get their head around how they improve their driving styles. At Gold, they do a classroom course that takes them through fuel consumption and emissions, and some of the longer term things they can do to improve performance.”

On a regional level – and taken up by local councils and authorities – there is the ECO Stars scheme. As with the others, it is voluntary, but it is also free to join – all it costs is time, according to Jim Chappell, freight and fleet lead for

TRL, which operates the scheme.

The process is simple, too; prospective members fill out a form that looks at the company’s environmental credentials, such as the emissions rating of the vehicle’s engine and fitment of exhaust aftertreatment (on older vehicles), anti-idling systems, or telematics packages that can give the driver feedback on their driving style (see also pp49-50).

From that, each vehicle is awarded a star rating from one to five, with five being the highest. A face-to-face meeting is then convened with the company’s transport manager (for example) to discuss fuel management and issues such as driver behaviour: are they using the Driver CPC as an opportunity to deliver eco-friendly driving training, for example. They then agree an action plan, which ECO Stars writes up and sends to the haulier. Following that, ECO Stars will return to visit the company again about six months later to see how it has progressed, as well as to provide further advice.

The goal of all of these schemes is to reduce emissions. Is the 15% reduction target realistic? Kite says that she believes it is, but achieving it will take backing from the government. She says that FTA supports the target, but qualified that endorsement by adding that government should also consider the definition of an ultra-low emission truck, as well as the provision of enabling infrastructure. She adds: “We said that the industry is willing to move across, but there are certain things they can’t do. It is about having that cooperation.” 

FURTHER INFORMATION

- LEERS – www.is.gd/vubuwo
- Centre for Sustainable Road Freight – www.is.gd/refamo
- FORS – www.is.gd/voxize
- ECO Stars – www.is.gd/ehekes