



02 Celebrating female engineers at the IRTE Skills Challenge



05 Lilian Iheukwumere-Esotu talks about her Progression Pathway



06 SOE Discusses Professional Development in Engineering



07 Summer Series Kicks Off with a Diverse Line-Up of Visits

# soe News



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THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR SOE MEMBERS

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## Celebrations all round at the 2024 IRTE Skills Challenge Awards

**O**n July 11th, the IRTE hosted the 12th annual Skills Challenge at the British Motor Museum in Warwick, gathering industry leaders for a day of celebration, networking and camaraderie. Hosted by Robin Bates, Membership Registration and Professional Standards Lead at the Society of Operations Engineers, the 12th edition of IRTE Skills Challenge welcomed over 150 guests made up of operators, managers, technicians, sponsors, regulators, press and supporters of Skills Challenge.

Endorsed and sponsored by a plethora of industry leaders, sponsors Alexander Dennis, Freeway Fleet Systems, VARTA, Imperial Engineering and new prize sponsors BYD, the 2024 edition of the IRTE Skills Challenge saw an increase in the number of operators and competitors who participated. With an increase in both overall competitors and female competitors this year, Skills Challenge stays true to its objective of upskilling and celebrating talent across the bus and coach industry.

The Skills Challenge awards lunch also served as a platform for several insightful speeches. The first of the speeches was given by SOE's very own Emma Thompson MSOE, Designate



*"I had the immense pleasure to attend one of the days of testing days and the level of skill and passion was awe-inspiring"*

Emma Thompson MSOE, Designate Executive Director at the Society of Operations Engineers

Executive Director at the Society of Operations Engineers, in which she emphasised the importance of initiatives like the Skills Challenge for upskilling the bus and coach industry.

Emma took the opportunity to reflect on the success of both the testing week and the awards lunch as well as hinting at exciting developments for next year's challenges.

Following Emma's speech Laura Tofts, Head of Product Information & Training from Premium Sponsor Alexander Dennis, delivered her keynote discussing

Alexander Dennis's plans to open more training centres to meet the increasing demand for upskilling. We were also joined by Sharon Kindleysides, Secretary General at The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport to talk about the future of skills in bus and coach. Her keynote was an inspiring anecdote on the importance but also underappreciation of engineers and how celebrations like the IRTE Skills Challenge are crucial for the industry.

The 2024 IRTE Skills Challenge once again showcased some of the exceptional talents within the bus and coach industry. Not only this but the Skills Challenge also underscored the importance of continuous professional development and industry collaboration.

With inspiring speeches, well-deserved recognitions, and the promise of even more innovative challenges next year, the event successfully celebrated the achievements of the present while paving the way for future advancements.

Congratulations to all the winners, runners-up, and participants for their outstanding contributions to the industry. We look forward to seeing the incredible progress and innovations that the 2025 IRTE Skills Challenge will undoubtedly bring.



### FACTS & FIGURES

64

apprentices and technicians competed in this year's challenges

150+

guests gathered to celebrate the remarkable talent

6

First Bus took home the most awards with 3 winners and 3 runners-up

3

insightful speeches by leading women in the bus and coach industry

INDUSTRY  
UPDATESUK SET TO IMPORT  
RECORD AMOUNTS OF  
ELECTRICITY

The Nuclear Industry Association (NIA), analysis of National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO) data shows that net electricity imports to Great Britain reached 9TWh in the first quarter of 2024, and 14.95TWh from January through May. Net imports accounted for 15 per cent of the UK's power, putting the nation on track to import nearly 36TWh this year, 46 per cent higher than the previous record set in 2021.

This import level surpasses the planned output of Hinkley Point C (25TWh) and the previously planned Wylfa Newydd power station (22TWh). The UK's main source of imported electricity is French nuclear power, which totalled 12.7TWh last year. Norway is the second-largest exporter, mainly supplying hydroelectric power.

National Grid's interconnectors send power to countries with higher prices, leading to increased UK imports during the summer. June saw the highest ever proportion of imported electricity at 19 per cent.

"Other countries get the jobs, and we get the bill because we have not invested enough in our own nuclear power and other sovereign power sources. We must approve new nuclear power stations alongside renewable investments to secure jobs and energy security." Tom Greatrex, NIA chief executive.

REPORT FORECASTS  
SIGNIFICANT GROWTH  
IN HYDROGEN  
WORKFORCE BY 2030

The latest jobs assessment reveals that achieving the British Energy Security Strategy's target of producing 10GW of hydrogen by 2030 necessitates a 10,000-fold increase in hydrogen production.

According to the Hydrogen Skills Alliance, the hydrogen economy in 2030 will require a substantial workforce, with 29,000 direct and 64,500 indirect jobs, utilising a mix of new and existing skills. This assessment, drawing on national and international sources including employer input, studies, workshops, and information from overseas hydrogen bodies, outlines the anticipated workforce demand in hydrogen production, storage, distribution, and usage. The report identifies several critical actions needed to address sector challenges. "Understanding the future labour market is vital for the smooth transition to a net zero economy. The nascency of our hydrogen economy, featuring new and emerging technologies, presents a unique set of skills challenges that can only be addressed through cross-sector collaboration." Justine Fosh, CEO of Cogent Skills and a founding member of the Hydrogen Skills Alliance.

## Welcome Back...

## FROM THE EDITOR

**W**elcome back to the Summer edition of SOE News. I am once again delighted to bring you a plethora of stories that highlight the exceptional achievements and dynamic developments within the engineering community.

In this edition, we highlight several noteworthy events and updates from the Society of Operations Engineers. One of the highlights of this quarter was the 2024 IRTE Skills Challenge Awards. This momentous event brought together over 150 guests, including operators, managers, technicians, and industry leaders, at the British Motor Museum in Warwick. The Skills Challenge continues to grow, with increased participation and a notable rise in female competitors, showcasing the diverse talent in our industry.

We are also pleased to share the success of our Pathways to Progress: Navigating Career Growth in Engineering guide. This guide has garnered widespread acclaim, promoting professional registration and career progression within the engineering sector. A recent panel event at our London headquarters brought together speakers from the Engineering Council, Society for the Environment and more

"As we navigate these exciting and dynamic times, our focus remains on nurturing strong relationships with our members and engaging proactively with our stakeholders"



demonstrating our commitment to fostering professional growth and industry engagement.

Our dedication to innovation and member support is further exemplified by the announcement of the upcoming launch of our new mentoring platform. Set to debut later this year, this platform aims to bridge the skills gap by facilitating knowledge transfer between seasoned professionals and emerging talent.

In this edition, you will also find updates on our strategic initiatives. We are taking a comprehensive look at our strategy to ensure it aligns with our long-term goals and the evolving needs of our members. This involves evaluating our current initiatives, exploring new opportunities, and recalibrating our focus to maximise impact and value.

One significant update is our decision to bid farewell to our 24-year partnership with

the Commercial Vehicle Show. As we refocus our strategic priorities, we remain committed to providing exceptional value through innovative solutions and strategic partnerships. Our IRTE sector will continue to be involved in the Commercial Vehicle Show with a refined presence, ensuring we remain connected with the industry.

Additionally, we have several projects in the pipeline including a new CPD platform in partnership with our publisher, Mark Allen Group. These initiatives are designed to support our members and drive the industry forward.

As we navigate these exciting and dynamic times, our focus remains on nurturing strong relationships with our members and engaging proactively with our stakeholders. This commitment is reflected in our strategic initiatives, which aim to bridge the skills gap in our industry.

We are excited about the future and the opportunities it holds for our members. As a part of this commitment to you, our members, we are ramping up our efforts to celebrate your achievements by highlighting the industry's mavericks with the SOE Safety and Resilience in Engineering Awards which is set to take place this October. In this edition, you'll read all about Lilian Iheukwumere-Esotu PhD, CEng, MSOE, MIAM, her progression pathway and how she has become a force to be reckoned with in the industry.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Enjoy this edition of SOE News and stay tuned for more updates as we embark on this journey together.

**Chris Knight**  
PR & Communications Officer

**Do you have a story to share?**  
Get in touch with me at:  
[editor@soe.org.uk](mailto:editor@soe.org.uk)

Empowering Women in Engineering:  
A Milestone at the IRTE Skills Challenge

**T**he 2024 IRTE Skills Challenge was a landmark event, not only for its celebration of technical excellence but also for its significant strides in promoting gender diversity within the engineering sector. This year's competition saw a notable increase in female participation, with four competitors, two of whom emerged victorious, taking home prestigious awards. Their achievements underscore the growing presence and influence of women in fields traditionally dominated by men.

The event was further elevated by the contributions of female leaders who played a pivotal role in shaping the discussions. Sharon Kindleysides, Secretary General of The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, delivered an impactful keynote, highlighting the importance of breaking down barriers and creating opportunities in the industry.

Laura Tofts, Head of Product Information and Training at



Alexander Dennis, brought her expertise to the stage with a focus on education, training, and the continuous development of skills.

Emma Thompson, Designate Executive Director of the Society of Operations Engineers, added to the discussion with her keynote

providing valuable insights into leadership and the need for a more inclusive culture within the industry.

The 2024 IRTE Skills Challenge not only celebrated the technical achievements of its participants but also marked a significant step forward in gender diversity. The

increased female participation and leadership at the event set a powerful precedent, inspiring future generations of women to pursue and excel in careers in engineering and logistics. The full list of winners and a gallery of photos capturing the celebrations can be found on the SOE website.

# Member Update from the SOE



**W**e are delighted to share some exciting updates and innovations that are on the near horizon for our members. At the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE), we are committed to continuous improvement and strategic growth. As we navigate through these dynamic times, we want to share a number of key initiatives and strategic priorities that we believe will benefit our members and the wider industry.

We are taking a comprehensive look at our strategy to ensure it aligns with our long-term goals and the evolving needs of our members. This involves evaluating our current initiatives, exploring new opportunities, and recalibrating our focus to maximise impact and value.

Our Pathways to Progress: Navigating Career Growth in Engineering guide was met with widespread success across both membership and the engineering space with key figures within the industry endorsing the guide.

SOE is spearheading conversations to raise the profile of Professional Registration as well as boost awareness around the many possibilities of progression



within engineering. Our panel event which took place at our headquarters in London was an example of this. With speakers from the Engineering Council, Society for the Environment, Flixbus, National Gas and Zurich, the event was a testament to SOE's new strategic focus.

The success of the Pathways to Progress guide is just one example of the exciting direction that SOE is heading towards and proof of our commitment to both members and the wider industry. In addition to this, we have several projects already in the pipeline, and with some being launched later this year, the future of SOE is exciting.

Our brand-new mentoring platform, launching later this year, is one of the many innovations we're investing in. By facilitating a space in which some of the most experienced engineers can mentor and pass their knowledge on, we will tackle the skills shortage plaguing the industry.

As well as the mentoring

“As we prepare to launch our new mentoring platform, we are thrilled about the opportunities it will create for our members”

**Robin Bates MSOE MBES, Membership, Registration, and Professional Standards Lead**

platform, we are also developing a CPD platform in partnership with our publisher Mark Allen Group. More on that later this year.

At SOE, our members are at the heart of everything we do. To ensure we continue to meet your needs effectively, we are refocusing our strategic priorities. This involves a thorough review of our investments to determine which initiatives provide the most value. By doing so, we can concentrate our efforts and resources on areas that deliver significant benefits and drive the industry forward.

Over the past 24 years, our Commercial Vehicle Show partnership has been both fruitful and enjoyable, providing numerous opportunities for growth and collaboration within the industry. As part

of refocusing our strategic priorities, the SOE will be bidding adieu to this long partnership in September. However, SOE's IRTE (Institute of Road Transport Engineers) sector will very much be involved in the Commercial Vehicle Show next year with a refined presence.

While we are in the process of decoupling from the partnership, we want to wish Nineteen Group and our old friends at the Commercial Vehicle Show LLP (Limited Liability Partnership) good luck, and we are excited for what CV Show 2025 brings.

Later this year, SOE will announce new partnerships and initiatives that will elevate the value of membership.

Our dedication to our members remains unwavering. By taking a strategic look at our investments and partnerships, we aim to maximise the benefits for our community. We are committed to providing exceptional value through innovative solutions, strategic partnerships, and a member-centric approach.

Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to work towards these exciting developments. Your support and engagement are crucial to our success, and we look forward to embarking on this journey together.

“As we chart our course towards our 2030 strategy, our focus remains steadfast on nurturing strong relationships with our members and engaging proactively with our stakeholders”

Emma Thompson MSOE, Designate Executive Director at the Society of Operations Engineers

## Meet the SOE Team

| OPERATIONS  | MARKETING   | MEMBERSHIP  | PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS   | CRM   | FINANCE  |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Emma Thompson</b><br>Designate Executive Director            | <b>Greeshma Suresh</b><br>Marketing and Strategy Lead | <b>Oliver Teasell</b><br>Membership and Registration Manager        | <b>Robin Bates</b><br>Professional Standards, Membership and Registration Lead | <b>Richard Pacy</b><br>CRM Manager            | <b>Deva Wijeyesekera</b><br>Head of Finance    |
| <b>Chelsea Gilkes</b><br>PA & Office Administrator              | <b>Jack Spence</b><br>Digital Marketing Specialist    | <b>Claire Collins</b><br>Professional Standards Coordinator         | <b>Leo Hubbard</b><br>Product Coordinator                                      | <b>Debbie Carroll</b><br>Database Coordinator | <b>John Dempster</b><br>Assistant Accountant   |
| <b>Laila Saidi</b><br>Receptionist and Administration Assistant | <b>Chris Knight</b><br>PR & Communications Officer    | <b>Theo Nelson-Bavin</b><br>Membership and Registration Coordinator | <b>Robbie Goose</b><br>Administrator (PT)                                      |   | <b>Farhat Iftikhar</b><br>Assistant Accountant |
|   | <b>Shabana Shajahan</b><br>Events Coordinator         | <b>Iveta Samsonova</b><br>Membership and Registration Coordinator   |  |   |  |
|   | <b>Holly Swinburne</b><br>Website Administrator (PT)  |   |  |   |  |

### GOVERNMENT'S MISSION CONTROL SETS 2030 TARGETS FOR CHEAPER AND CLEANER POWER

The UK government has unveiled its “Mission Control” strategy, setting ambitious targets for 2030 aimed at delivering cheaper and cleaner energy. The plan is designed to reduce electricity costs while significantly cutting carbon emissions, supporting the transition to a greener energy system.

“Tackling the climate crisis and accelerating the transition to clean power is the country's biggest challenge, and its greatest opportunity, by taking action now, we can put the UK at the forefront of the global race to net zero – driving down our carbon emissions but also cutting bills for households.” Chris Stark, former chief executive of the Climate Change Committee, and former director of Energy and Climate Change in the Scottish Government,

Key objectives of the strategy include driving down energy bills through increased competition and innovation in the energy market. The government aims to accelerate the development and deployment of low-carbon technologies, enhance energy efficiency, and boost the use of renewable energy sources.

The strategy also outlines measures to improve the efficiency of the electricity grid and increase investment in energy storage solutions. By focusing on these areas, the government seeks to create a more resilient and sustainable energy infrastructure, ultimately benefiting both consumers and businesses.

This initiative represents a significant step towards meeting the UK's climate goals and ensuring a reliable, affordable energy future.

### AI AND COOLING DRIVE ELECTRICITY DEMAND

A recent report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) reveals that global electricity demand is projected to surge due to the increasing use of AI and rising cooling needs. The study highlights that AI technologies are significantly contributing to electricity consumption as data centres and related infrastructure expand. Additionally, the growing global demand for air conditioning, driven by higher temperatures and economic growth in emerging markets, is set to further elevate electricity usage.

IEA's executive director, Fatih Birol, emphasised the importance of enhancing energy efficiency and investing in renewable energy sources to meet this rising demand sustainably. The report urges policymakers and industry leaders to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy systems.

GOOD MONTH 

## UK LEADS THE WAY IN WATER TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

A recent report from the European Patent Office (EPO) has ranked the UK among the top countries for water technology innovation. The study highlights the UK's significant contributions to developing advanced water management and treatment technologies, positioning it as a global leader in this critical sector.

According to the EPO report, the UK ranks fourth in Europe for water-related patent filings, demonstrating a strong commitment to addressing global water challenges through innovation. The country's leading position is attributed to its robust research and development ecosystem, supported by both academic institutions and industry players.

Key areas of innovation include sustainable water treatment processes, efficient water usage systems, and advanced filtration technologies. These innovations are essential for tackling issues such as water scarcity, pollution, and the impacts of climate change on water resources.

The EPO report underscores the importance of continued investment in water technology research and development. It also highlights the need for collaboration between public and private sectors to drive further advancements and ensure the widespread adoption of these technologies.

BAD MONTH 

## WORRYING SPIKE IN WOMEN AGED 35-44 LEAVING ENGINEERING

Recent data from EngineeringUK reveals a concerning trend of women aged 35 to 44 leaving the engineering profession. Despite efforts to increase diversity in engineering, this age group has seen a small but significant rise in departures, highlighting ongoing challenges in retaining female talent.

The report suggests that factors such as work-life balance, career progression barriers, and workplace culture contribute to this exodus. This trend is particularly troubling given the industry's push for greater gender diversity and the recognised benefits of a diverse workforce in driving innovation and addressing skill shortages.

EngineeringUK emphasises the need for targeted interventions to support women at this career stage, including flexible working arrangements, mentoring programmes, and initiatives to improve workplace inclusivity.

Addressing these issues is crucial to not only retaining experienced female engineers but also ensuring the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the engineering sector.

# SOE Safety and Resilience in Engineering Awards 2024

**T**he SOE Safety and Resilience in Engineering Awards 2024 has drum up anticipation across the industry as engineers who have entered eagerly wait to find out the results. Scheduled to take place in October this year, these awards celebrate excellence in engineering, with a focus on safety and resilience.

As the event approaches, excitement is building within the engineering community, underscoring the importance of these awards in recognising and promoting best practices across the industry.

The SOE Safety and Resilience in Engineering Awards honour individuals and organisations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to safety and resilience. These awards acknowledge those who have implemented innovative solutions, shown outstanding leadership, and set new standards in engineering safety and resilience.

This year's awards will feature several categories, recognising different aspects of safety and resilience. From the Helix Award, celebrating resilience during adversity, to the People Development Champion category, honouring organisations excelling in career progression initiatives, the awards cover a broad spectrum of achievements.

## CATEGORIES

## SPECIAL AWARD

- Helix Award

## INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

- Environmental Engineer of the Year
- Road Transport Engineer of the Year
- Plant Engineer of the Year
- Engineer Surveyor of the Year
- SOE Volunteer of the Year (via nominations only by SOE members)
- Future Leader (via nominations only by managers/mentors/coaches)
- Safety Specialist of the Year

## COMPANY CATEGORIES

- Engineering Company of the Year
- Safety Innovation of the Year
- People Development Champion

## REGIONS

- SOE Region of the Year (via nominations only by SOE members)

Anticipation for the 2024 awards is heightened by the participation of industry leaders and experts who will serve as judges and speakers. These professionals bring a wealth of knowledge and



experience, ensuring the awards maintain their high standards of excellence.

The judging panel includes renowned figures from various engineering sectors, evaluating entries based on innovation, impact, and sustainability. Their involvement underscores the prestige of the awards and the rigorous selection process.

The awards ceremony is not only about recognition; it also serves as a vital networking opportunity for attendees. Industry professionals from various sectors will gather to

celebrate, share knowledge, and discuss the latest trends and challenges in engineering.

As the date of the SOE Safety and Resilience in Engineering Awards 2024 approaches, the engineering community eagerly awaits this memorable occasion. The event will celebrate the best in safety and resilience, setting the stage for future innovations and improvements.

**Stay tuned for SOE's brand new podcast and follow #SOEchampions to stay on top of the awards news.**

## SOE Grows Library of CPD Webinars

**A**s part of our commitment to fostering lifelong learning and professional growth among our members and the wider engineering community, we are dedicated to growing our library of on-demand CPD webinars.

CPD is a cornerstone of professional development, particularly in the rapidly evolving field of engineering. It ensures that professionals remain competent in their respective fields, keeps their skills up to date, and allows them to adapt to new technologies and methodologies.

Engaging in CPD activities helps engineers maintain their professional standards, improves their career prospects, and enhances their ability to contribute effectively to their organisations. CPD is integral to maintaining professional registration and chartered status. Regulatory bodies and professional institutions often require proof of ongoing CPD to ensure that engineers

continue to meet the high standards expected of them. This ongoing education is crucial for ensuring safety, compliance, and innovation within the engineering sector.

At SOE, our mission is to promote the advancement and development of operations engineering. Expanding our CPD webinar library aligns perfectly with this mission, offering accessible and flexible learning opportunities that cater to the diverse needs of our members. Our webinars cover a wide range of topics, from technical skills and industry

trends to career growth and legal updates, ensuring comprehensive professional development.

By providing these resources, we aim to support our members in their pursuit of excellence and encourage a culture of continuous improvement. This initiative also reflects our strategic priority to enhance member value through innovative solutions and educational offerings.

Our on-demand CPD webinars are designed by industry experts and cover both fundamental and advanced

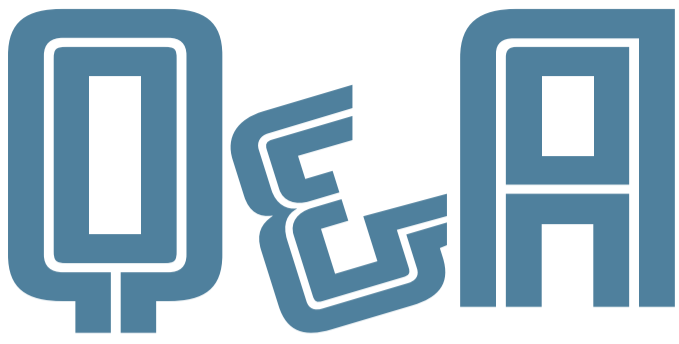
topics. This ensures that no matter where you are in your career, there's something valuable for you to learn. The webinars are accessible anytime, allowing you to learn at your own pace and fit your professional development around your busy schedule.

We invite all SOE members and industry professionals to explore our growing library of on-demand CPD webinars. Whether you're looking to enhance your technical skills, stay updated on industry trends, or develop your leadership capabilities, our webinars offer valuable insights and knowledge to help you succeed.

To access our webinars and start your journey of continuous learning, visit the SOE website and navigate to the Resources section. Embrace the opportunity to advance your career and stay at the forefront of the engineering industry.

**For more information, visit: [www.soe.org.uk/resources-home/webinars.html](http://www.soe.org.uk/resources-home/webinars.html). If you wish to host a webinar, drop us a note at: [webinars@soe.org.uk](mailto:webinars@soe.org.uk)**





## Lilian Iheukwumere-Esotu

Meet Lilian Iheukwumere-Esotu PhD CEng MSOE MIAM and discover her progression pathway.

### Can you tell us about your educational background and how you got into engineering?

I graduated from Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria with a Bachelors in Petroleum Engineering. I did further my studies at postgraduate level and obtained an MSc in Reliability Engineering and Asset Management and subsequently a PhD in Management of Engineering Projects, both at the University of Manchester.

### What inspired you to pursue a career in engineering?

I enjoyed mathematics in high school and it just felt like a natural progression to study engineering. Although my first degree was in Petroleum Engineering, I wanted to have broader opportunities across different industries as I felt that it was too niche. Reliability Engineering and Asset Management provided a mix of tactical and strategic background that I craved.

### Could you tell us a bit about your career journey?

My academic background and strong numerical skills prompted me to pursue a career in engineering.

I was in academia for a while pursuing a PhD, my research interest was on developing a knowledge management and experience transfer platform for managing major maintenance projects. I then started work in the water sector as an Asset Management Consultant. My primary duties were to consult for Water companies and the Environment Agency on developing proactive maintenance plans, asset operations and maintenance management reporting metrics, conducting reliability centred maintenance and developing medium term asset management plans. Currently, I lead the asset strategy implementation for assets at National Gas.

### What are some key milestones or achievements in your career?

I have published journal papers outlining the application of multi-criteria decision-making techniques during major maintenance activities, developed a knowledge management and experience transfer platform to transform tacit to explicit knowledge during major maintenance projects.

I received recognition from the Institute of Asset



Management UK Chapter for my involvement in the development of a Value-Framework (VF) utilised in the water industry to determine the selection of high benefits scoring non-infrastructure projects in the water industry.

I was a lead engineer in the development of a medium-term asset management plan for the Environment Agency across 17 schemes for their strategic important assets. This required massive data capture exercises, asset function definitions, site level and asset level criticality assessments, development of contingency and robust resilience plans.

### What is your current role, and what are your primary responsibilities?

I have been on maternity leave and have only briefly held my current role. However, my responsibilities for my current role are to lead the implementation and integration of the asset strategy of my company based on the company wide stated business priorities for assets. My current company is an asset intensive company and

major operational activities are dependent on the identification, appraisal, optimisation and prioritisation of whole lifecycle options (maintenance, reliability, spares, capital delivery) for the different asset class strategies.

### What are some of the biggest challenges you face in your current position?

One of the anticipated challenges would be balancing the needs and wants of stakeholders. To be effective in my current position, understanding key stakeholders and their expectations are both crucial.

### Can you tell us about a project you've worked on that you are particularly proud of?

I worked on delivering medium term asset management plans for strategic important assets across different schemes for the Environment Agency. I was particularly proud of this project due to the workshop sessions that led to engagement of strategy teams with the operations and field personnels. This led to one of

the biggest captures of tacit knowledge from experts and transformation into explicit knowledge which enhanced the development of criticality scoring/appraisals as well as proactive/predictive maintenance.

### How do you approach problem-solving and innovation in your projects?

I like to understand the initial expectations of stakeholders. I also like to consider attributes such as operational contexts, sources of failures, critical path as well as resource allocations. This ensures that I am able to balance the triple constraints within projects that is, time, cost and scope. While I am able to carry forward the experiences gained from previous projects, it is often important for me to initiate, plan and execute projects based on their unique attributes, that way the project outcomes are specific to the individual projects.

### What key skills do you think are essential for success in your field?

Ability to problem solve, being analytic, great negotiation skills, enjoy writing technical reports and being able to quickly adapt to new norms.

### What made you join the SOE? How has the SOE helped your career?

My career journey is quite dynamic and not a lot of people have progressed from academia the way I have into the industry in my field. I was searching for a professional membership institution that was relatable to my career journey. SOE was instrumental in attaining my chartership status and subsequent registration with the Engineering Council. I was supported through my membership process and also encouraged to pursue my chartership after submitting my curriculum vitae and other required evidences. There were genuine efforts to see me succeed and while the process was quite tasking, I never felt alone.

### What advice would you give to aspiring engineers or those early in their careers?

Have a mentor as quickly as you can. Join your preferred professional membership institution and stay active.

### Can you share any memorable experiences or lessons learned during your career?

Do not be afraid to volunteer for activities even if you aren't quite experienced. You will grow twice as fast and learn so much when you are less fearful of making mistakes. The quickest path to becoming a subject matter expert is by involving yourself in as many activities as you can find when you are a young engineer and going through the brunt of learning to set up each task as you go along.

### What are your professional goals for the future?

A major part of my professional goals was attaining chartership status and engineering registration with the Engineering Council. Having now met this goal, I would continue to advance my knowledge in the field of Engineering, especially with capital project deliveries and management of assets through the asset lifecycle.

### How do you see the field of engineering evolving in the next decade?

We have now entered into Industry 5.0 powered by artificial intelligence and characterised by big data. engineering will become more standardised with less human errors as industries tends towards the acquisitions of AI powered tools. The principles of engineering will remain long lasting, however as added advantage, engineers in the next decade should strive to master tools which can assist them with delivering the day-to-day task. Acceptance of AI which is inevitable will lead to fast engineering explosion of ideas which will then generate innovative engineering solutions.

### Are there any upcoming projects or initiatives you're excited about?

The focus of my industry is on actualisation of hydrogen powered energy as a clean energy source to ensure that net zero carbon commitments are met. There are lots of initiatives to achieve different milestones and I am quite excited to be working within a company that is at the forefront of leading the change.

“The quickest path to becoming a subject matter expert is by involving yourself in as many activities as you can find when you are a young engineer and going through the brunt of learning to set up each task as you go along”

# Mentoring and Professional Registration take Centre Stage at Engineering Career Event

**SOE Head Office saw a well-attended and engaging seminar and panel discussion on career paths and professional development in engineering.**

After an introduction from Designate Executive Director Emma Thompson, keynote speaker Dominic Dawson took us through his career journey, from fixing bikes in rural Staffordshire, via the Royal Navy, to leaving to work as an Electrical Engineer, then finally switching to becoming an Engineer Surveyor.

Dominic told the packed room how a focus on accumulating experience through volunteering for extra courses whenever possible, networking widely and a succession of supportive mentors had driven his career forwards.

He emphasised how Professional Registration is 'your armour and your shield', demonstrating that an engineer is up to date and competent with external verification of competence if they ever need to defend themselves or their work.

These themes were echoed in the panel discussion that followed featuring Francesca Hand, Operations Manager with Flixbus, Ian Macdonald IEng HonFSOE HonFIRTE HonFIPlantE, Chair of the Membership and Professional Standards Committee and Board Member of the SOE, David Titmas, Head of Data & Communications for the Engineering Council and Peter Egan, Head of Critical Infrastructure, British Museum



and Board Member at the Society for the Environment

Francesca highlighted how the transferrable skills of an engineer, an aptitude for problem-solving as well as working and communicating well as a team, contributed to engineering being one of the most employable industries. Many non-engineering roles increasingly require data skills and other STEM skills.

Peter Egan brought a valuable client-side perspective on the value of Professional Registration and CPD. For Peter, a lot of his work involves unpicking mistakes from 10-15 years ago. To make sure that

these mistakes are not being repeated he insists on only employing registered engineers. By holding Professional Registration, these engineers are committing to being up-to-date on current practices.

David Titmus shared that the non-academic route to professional registration had now overtaken the traditional route, showing that it was open to all, regardless of where they started their career.

Ian Macdonald shared how the most rewarding aspect of Professional Registration mentoring was in helping people realise that they were good enough to achieve their potential.

After the panel session ended, the closing keynote was given by Lilian Iheukwumere-Esotu CEng MIAM MSOE. Lilian took attendees through her career story, and her success in academia followed

## “Registration benchmarks progress”

**Peter Egan**

by a transition into asset management, now Asset Management Strategy Implementation Lead at National Gas. She identified encouragement from her mentors, an active presence on LinkedIn and documenting her career successes as crucial on the journey.

She described how, due to her background in academia, she often tried different approaches, for example using templates from her time as a researcher to document her colleagues' knowledge. This took knowledge

out of silos and unlocked it for the whole organisation.

Lilian also took the audience through her professional registration journey, emphasising how important documenting evidence was to the process, a lesson she has taken forward in her career. As someone who transitioned from academia, her Chartered status has won her the respect of more experienced colleagues by providing assurance as a demonstration of her competence.

Emma Thompson closed the session, noting the recurring themes of network building, the role of professional registration and mentoring that all the speakers had touched upon. She called attention to SOE's soon-to-be launched mentoring platform, that would empower members to grow together, sharing their knowledge and driving each other forwards.

## “Professional Registration is your armour and your Shield”

**Dominic Dawson**

## Are your details up-to-date?

**To ensure we send you relevant news, event invitations and product updates, log into MySOE and check that your details and preferences are up to date.**

Over the last year, the Society of Operators Engineers has continued to provide support for our members through the popular webinar series of technical presentations, professional development opportunities and thought leadership.

As we continue to develop

our benefits for members we are delighted to announce the launch of several new initiatives. Keep an eye out for more announcements towards the end of this year.

Once logged in, you will be able to view and update your personal details, which includes addresses, job information and contact preferences in the 'My SOE' area of the website.

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**Contact us at [editor@soe.org.uk](mailto:editor@soe.org.uk)**



# Exclusive Inspection of the Latest Morris JE Van for Centre Members

**M**embers of the IRTE Brunel and Wiltshire Centres had the privilege of inspecting the latest line of the Morris JE van, developed by Morris Commercial Ltd.

This special event took place at the NSB & RC Swindon as part of the 'Festival of Sustainability.' The festival aims to showcase innovations and advancements in sustainable technology, providing a fitting backdrop for the unveiling of the Morris JE Van. The group was treated to Development Engineer John Killick's detailed explanation of the vehicle's advanced engineering. He highlighted the innovative use of a lightweight bonded aluminium chassis, combined with a body made entirely from recycled carbon fibre. This design not only reduces the vehicle's weight

## IRTE BRUNEL AND WILTSHIRE CENTRES



but also minimises the power required from its battery, enabling a remarkable range of 250 miles on a single charge. The Morris JE Van, with an unladen weight of only 1500kg, promises a competitive and legal payload capacity of 1 tonne in its standard form.

Additionally, the majority of components are both recycled and recyclable, enhancing its

environmental appeal. The van's retro-inspired body styling pays homage to the iconic Morris Commercial J series, which was produced between 1949 and 1961 and exported globally. The latest Morris JE model is set to enter limited production in 2025, continuing the legacy of its predecessor while incorporating modern sustainable technologies.

## IRTE Wiltshire visits the REME Museum

**T**he IRTE Wiltshire Centre group visited the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME) Museum at the MOD Defence School Lyneham.

This museum provides a comprehensive portrayal of the REME's support for HM Army regiments since its inception in 1942. The members were particularly interested in the numerous interactive displays and the completed craft test pieces, which showcase the essential skills developed by REME apprentices. These

exhibits reflect the extensive training required to master the various REME trade specialisations available today.

As the day drew to an end the visit concluded with a gathering at the REME Café, where the group enjoyed a sense of fellowship among engineers from diverse specialisations and career backgrounds. The day's events provided a unique opportunity for members to engage with cutting-edge automotive technology and to appreciate the rich history and ongoing contributions of the REME.

## IRTE CORNWALL CENTRE

# Summer Series Kicks Off with a Diverse Line-Up of Visits

**T**he IRTE Cornwall Centre commenced its summer series of visits with a comprehensive itinerary that included the Commercial Vehicle Show (CV Show) in April, followed by trips to the County Classics Motor Museum in Taunton and Watsonian Squire Sidecar manufacturers in Moreton in the Marsh.

The first stop was the County Classics Motor Museum in Taunton. Housed in a repurposed departmental store, the museum features a collection of approximately 100 cars and 80 motorcycles, displayed across multiple floors. The exhibit focuses on vehicles from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s, including models such as the Ford Anglia 105E and the Jaguar E-Type. The museum offers a diverse range of makes

and models, accompanied by a café for visitor convenience. The layout and presentation were noted for their effectiveness in showcasing the collection.

In the afternoon, members visited Watsonian Squire in Moreton in the Marsh. The facility produces sidecars using traditional manufacturing techniques, with original tooling and equipment. Managing Director Ben Hall provided a detailed overview of the production process. The company has a significant global demand, resulting in a six-month waiting list for orders. Additionally, Watsonian Squire has expanded its offerings to include small, high-quality caravans under the Barefoot Caravans brand. The visit included a tour of both the sidecar and caravan manufacturing areas.

Following the day's visits, members stayed overnight at The Limes Country Hotel in Solihull. The hotel, located approximately 15 minutes from the NEC, was noted for its quality of food, bar services, and overall comfort. The proximity to the NEC was considered a significant advantage for attending the CV Show, the next day. The CV Show attended on the following morning, highlighted a notable increase in the presence of electric vehicles from various manufacturers. This development was of particular interest to members, underscoring a growing trend in the industry.

In May, the IRTE Cornwall Centre visited Hawkins Motors in Blackwater, a long-established family-owned dealership. James Hawkins provided an in-depth presentation on the company's history and its current operations. Hawkins Motors, which operates franchises for brands including Kia, Hyundai, Nissan, Peugeot, Citroën, and MG, has expanded its offerings to include electric vehicles. The visit included a tour of the dealership and a detailed review of the available electric models.

The summer series of visits provided valuable insights into various aspects of the commercial vehicle and automotive sectors. The tours and presentations offered a comprehensive understanding of industry trends and operational practices.



## Henwood Engineering

**I**n July, Cornwall IRTE members had the great privilege of visiting Henwood Engineering in Summer court, Cornwall. Henwood Engineering is a prestigious specialist in the full restoration of steam engines, also known as traction engines. With a global reputation for excellence, the company undertakes meticulous restorations that can span up to three years, drawing clients from as far afield as New Zealand.

Founded by Sam Henwood, the company blends traditional craftsmanship with modern technology. While Henwood Engineering employs original tooling and historical techniques, it also incorporates contemporary CNC machines to enhance precision in fabrication. Their services extend to a dedicated paint shop where detailed finishing touches, including hand-done pin-striping, are applied to achieve a gallery-quality finish.

Henwood Engineering is

renowned for its commitment to preserving the heritage and functionality of steam engines, making it a leading name in the field of restoration. Restorations at Henwood Engineering can take up to three years, with engines arriving from as far away as New Zealand.

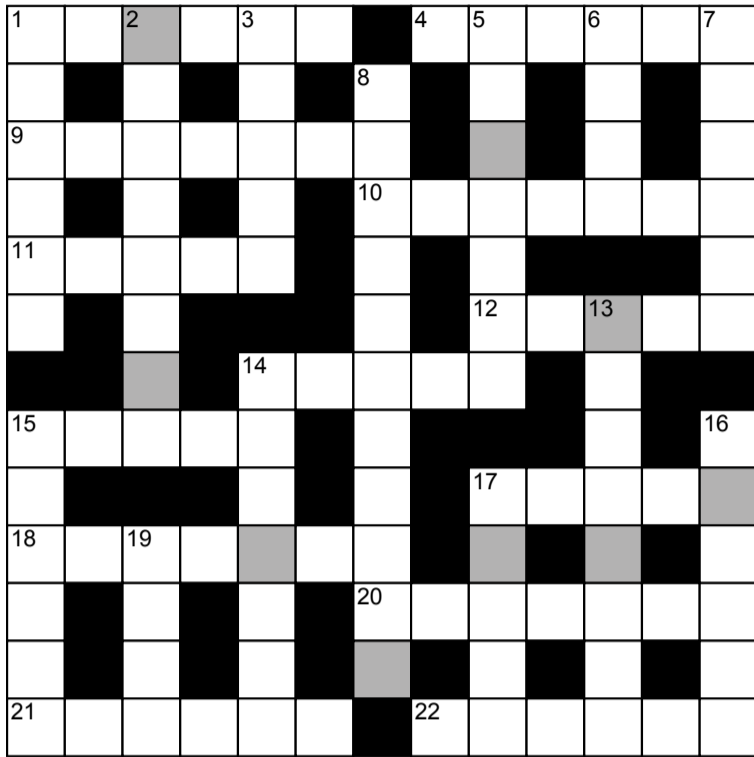
The workshops proprietor Sam Henwood delivered a fascinating presentation on the company's work, highlighting the use of original tooling and time-honoured techniques. Despite these traditional methods, modern CNC machines are now part of the fabrication process. Henwood Engineering also boasts a paint shop where meticulous detailing, including fine hand-done pin-striping, is completed. This level of craftsmanship would be at home in any fine art gallery.

The visit was a tremendous opportunity for members to see how a local company, respected worldwide, restores these iconic machines to the highest standards.



COFFEE BREAK

# Crossword



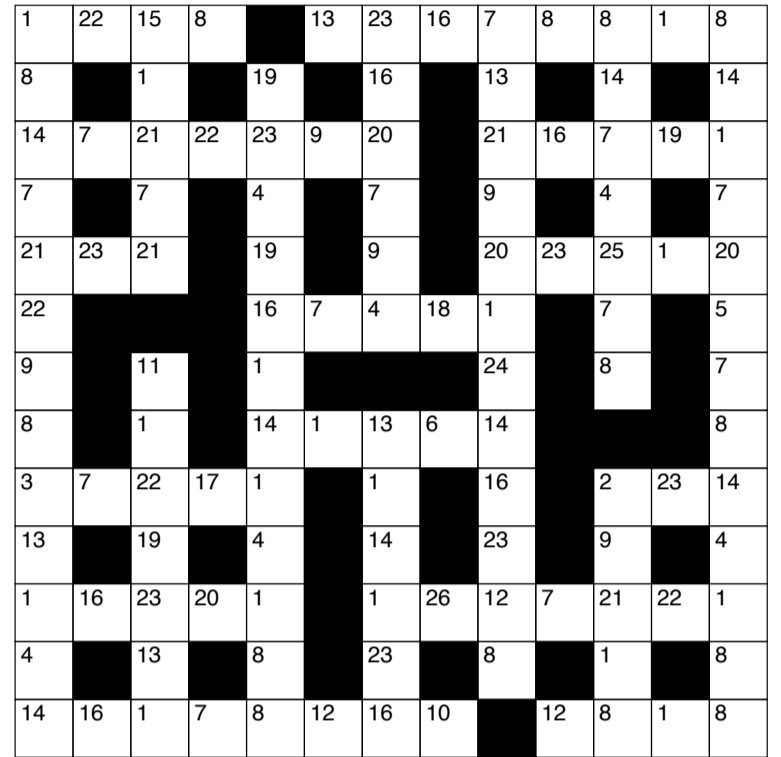
- Across**
- 1 Indentation (6)
  - 4 Less fresh (of bread) (6)
  - 9 Pasta pockets (7)
  - 10 Back up (7)
  - 11 Peers (5)
  - 12 The spirit of a people (5)
  - 14 Became less intense (5)
  - 15 Spoken for (5)
  - 17 First Greek letter (5)
  - 18 River of southeastern Africa (7)
  - 20 Convent (7)
  - 21 Extinguished (6)
  - 22 Substance present in some cereal grains (6)
- Down**
- 1 Not as light (6)
  - 2 Unorthodox person (8)
  - 3 Pools (anag) (5)
  - 5 Pushed over (7)
  - 6 Luxurious car (abbrev.) (4)
  - 7 Paths (6)
  - 8 Debates (11)
  - 13 Most pleased (8)
  - 14 Approve of publicly (7)
  - 15 Inclined at an angle (6)
  - 16 Deep gorge (6)
  - 17 Cancel (5)
  - 19 List of food options (4)

## Unscramble

Unscramble the letters in the shaded squares in the crossword to reveal a themed word:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

# Codeword



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|    |    | H  |    |    |    | A  |    |    | Y  |    |    |    |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |

A codeword is a completed crossword grid where each letter of the alphabet has been substituted for a number from 1-26. There will be at least one occurrence of each letter of the alphabet. Certain letters are given as starters. The solver must decipher the rest of the code to discover the words in the completed puzzle.

# SuDoku

The rules of the game are simple: each of the nine blocks has to contain all the numbers 1-9 within its squares. Each number can only appear once in a row, column or box. Each vertical nine-square column, or horizontal nine-square line across, within the larger square, must also contain the numbers 1-9, without repetition or omission.

Every puzzle has just one correct solution.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |     |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|-----|
|   |   |   | 9 |   |   |   |  | 3   |
|   |   | 1 | 7 |   |   |   |  | 2   |
|   | 9 |   | 1 |   |   |   |  | 5   |
|   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   |  | 1   |
| 1 | 3 |   |   | 8 |   |   |  | 9 2 |
| 8 |   |   |   |   |   |   |  | 6   |
| 6 |   |   |   |   | 7 |   |  | 5   |
|   | 4 |   |   |   | 6 | 7 |  |     |
| 3 |   |   |   |   | 1 |   |  |     |

Find this month's puzzle solutions on our website: [soe.org.uk](http://soe.org.uk)

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|   |   |   |   |
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