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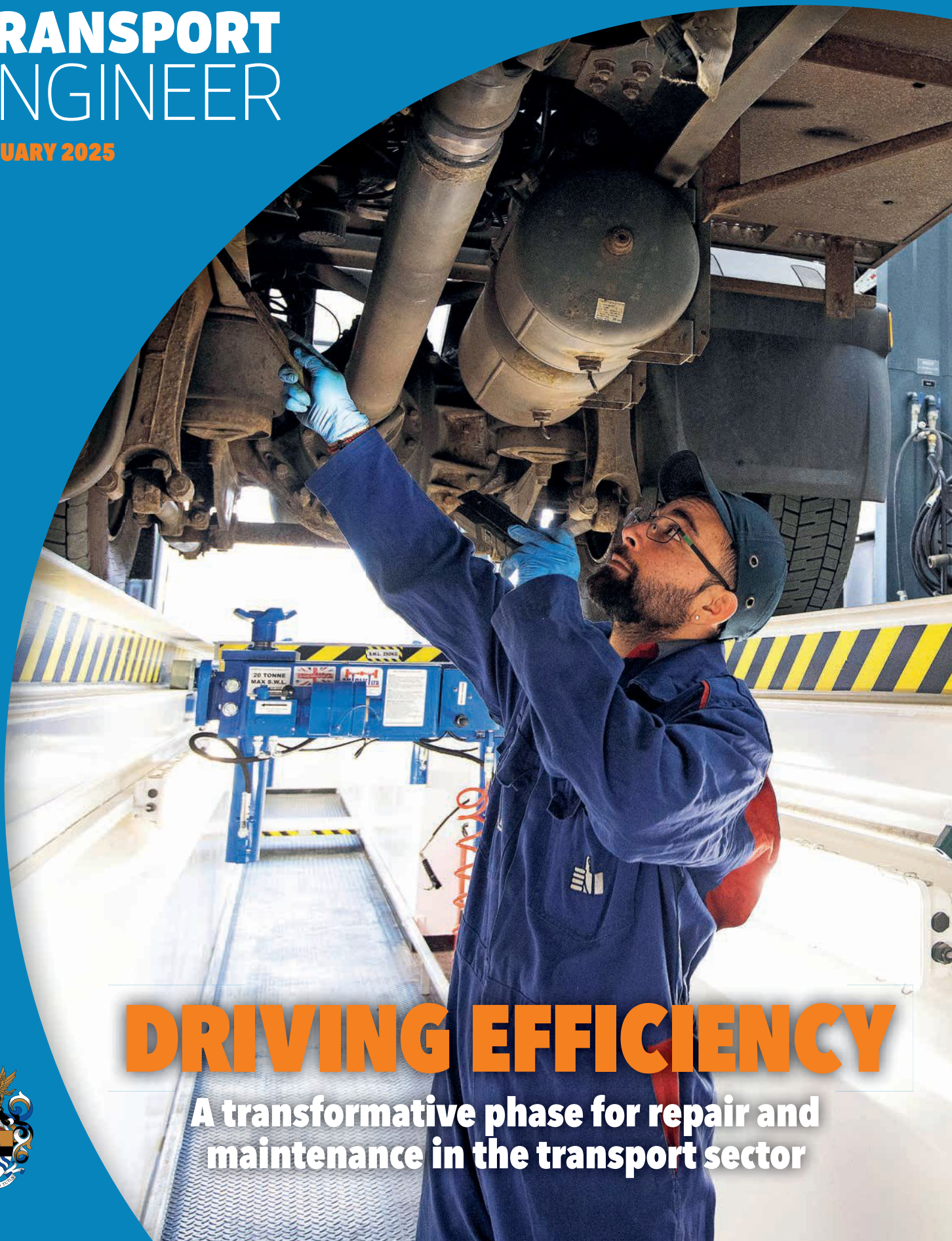

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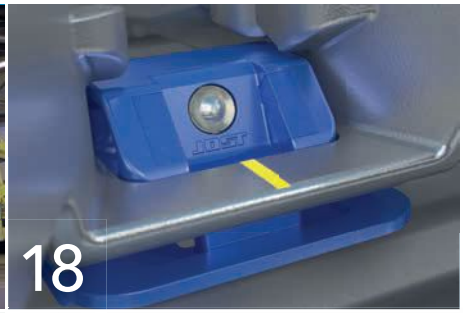

REGULARS

FEATURES

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Moving into 2025

To think we are starting the year 2025 seems a little surreal and we are already almost a quarter of the way through the 21st century – something that seemed such a long way off just a few years ago when we were all mulling the likelihood of a millennium bug. Times have certainly changed and continue to evolve at pace, across society in general and, indeed, the transport industry and engineering landscape.

Looking ahead to 2025, it is clear that technology will be a talking point across every sector of the industry, whether that is high-tech cameras using artificial intelligence to advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), apps to monitor data or new coupling and uncoupling tractor-trailer combos.

The decarbonisation drive is also set to be a theme throughout this year, with more electric vehicles and more efficient trucks, buses and coaches in general on the roads, all fitted with the latest technology to reduce carbon emissions. It is set to be an interesting year ahead.

As for the first issue of 2025, we hear what upgrades truck manufacturers and service providers are bringing to the table in 2025 in R&M, servicing and workshop improvements (p10), as legislative changes in cybersecurity are poised to redefine maintenance practices.

Our annual look at operator costs is featured across five pages (p20), where we find that, despite a new UK government coming into power, the same macroeconomic situation remains – compounded by continued conflict and uncertainty around the world.

Finally, it was great to see the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) launch a new mentoring platform, designed to empower the next generation of engineering professionals.

The platform will connect SOE members with experienced mentors from diverse engineering fields – from road transport and plant operations to engineering surveyors – providing an unrivalled opportunity for knowledge-sharing and career development.

For more information on the mentoring platform and to register as a mentor or mentee, please visit *www.tinyurl.com/5n8hztw2*.

Justin Burns
Editor

To reach shortened URLs in the magazine – *www.tinyurl.com/xxxxxx* – type the whole link into the address window of your web browser.

in brief

Maha recently hosted the winners of a selfie competition, held during Road Transport Expo, at Brands Hatch for the British Truck Racing Championship finale. Despite the murky conditions, the on-track action was hot, with the five-tonne trucks employing the 1,000bhp engines around Paddock Hill Bend and Pilgrim's Rise before hitting the brakes at Druids. During three races, the Maha UK contingent enjoyed the hospitality of the Jenkins Development Motorsport and Bowler Racing teams, both prominent partners of the workshop equipment supplier. Drivers Dave Jenkins and John Bowler, both competing in division one of the British Truck Racing Championship, welcomed Maha's guests to their paddocks. There, they showed them the inner workings of their trucks, allowed them to sit in the cockpit to a get a first-hand view of what life is like behind the wheel of a racing truck, and treated them to signed merchandise and photos – ensuring the guests enjoyed a memorable experience.

Wakefield-based **Pelican Engineering** has secured a contract for up to 600 battery-electric buses with the support of a £93.5m funding package from HSBC UK. The move sees Pelican Engineering expand its existing Green Loan and Sustainable Trade Instrument Facility from HSBC UK, previously borrowing £60m in 2022. Yutong will supply the new battery-electric buses. Pelican Bus and Coach, part of Pelican Engineering, is a UK and Ireland importer and distributor of the Zhengzhou Yutong Bus. The new vehicle order will grow the number of Pelican-supplied Yutong buses operating in the UK to nearly 1,000.

Castrol has launched a new Vecton commercial vehicle lubricant for use in a variety of Ford Trucks. Castrol 5W-30 F-Trucks CK-4 has been designed to meet Ford Trucks' WSS-M2C213-A1 specification, which is based on the Association of European Automobile Manufacturers' Oil Sequences E6 and E9 standard. The new lubricant is suitable for use in F-Max trucks featuring Ford's Ecotorq Euro 6 engine. The product is also compliant with API's CK-4 specification. The new product has also been designed to meet the demands of the European market. Dana Spicer Driveline Systems obtained information in 2017, which shows that modern trucks can generate up to 30% higher torque, which can head to greater engine temperatures and pressures.

Johnson Haulage bolsters fleet with Krone quartet

Yorkshire-based transport firm Johnson Haulage has expanded its fleet with four new Krone Profi Liner HD flatbed trailers.

Johnson Haulage specialises in general haulage and heavy-duty plant and machinery transport in the UK and Europe. Its fleet comprises 24 trucks and 54 trailers and it also operates a storage yard.

As transport manager Wayne Johnson said: "We already had some Krone trailers on the fleet that we'd purchased second-hand, so we were also familiar with the product.

"We needed a couple more trailers adding to the fleet anyway, because we were looking to replace some older ones. Krone have always been easy to deal with, so we just rang them up and asked about the new ones."

The new Profi Liner HD flatbed is designed for use in demanding transport applications, particularly for export markets. The trailers feature a reinforced chassis with 15,000kg load coupling and 24,000kg bogie to suit UK 44t applications.

The Profi Liners come with premium 385/65R22.5 super single tyres and Krone Smart

Tyre Monitoring combined with TPMS system which, conforming to regulation UN ECE R-141 (mandatory from 6 July 2024), identifies tyre pressure and temperature.

Other key features include a heavy-duty BPW 420x200mm drum brake axle assembly as standard, complete with reinforced parking brake (spring brake chambers) on all three axles and an additional air tank.

For optimum load security, the heavy-duty 225mm-deep side raves have side rave holes for strapping at 1m intervals, with 13 pairs of rope hooks under each side. Also included for Johnson's are the optional PSK twist locks for container loading and nine pairs sockets in the outer frame, to suit 80mm x 80mm TATA-specification posts.

Melett offers winter maintenance tips

Aftermarket brand Melett is urging technicians to stay on top of turbo maintenance this winter and has offered best practice tips to help customers.

Lubrication is a key element to ensuring a turbocharger is doing its job correctly. Therefore, it is essential to check that a vehicle's oil is the correct grade. When fitting a replacement turbo, it is important that the oil system has been primed and is in working order. If this is not the case, it can lead to premature failure.

A poll taken by This Is Money in 2022 revealed that many turbo-related issues are down to neglect, and with more than a third of drivers expected to skip servicing their vehicle, Melett is advising technicians to not only encourage regular servicing, but also to ensure the vehicle's oil and oil filter is checked and replaced to protect the turbo from damage cause by contamination.

Another tip for motorists is to adapt their driving habits during the colder weather, especially if the vehicle has not been run for long periods. Changes include waiting a few minutes before driving at high revs to allow the engine to warm and oil to flow through the turbocharger. This prevents damage to components within the turbocharger. By avoiding revving the engine, unnecessary stress on the turbo is avoided.

Graduated driving licences should cover all new drivers

Plans to introduce graduated driving licences (GDLs) in the UK should cover all new drivers and not just younger ones, according to FleetCheck.

The fleet software specialist said any inexperienced driver represents a risk, and GDLs could help fleets to manage them in their risk strategies.

Peter Golding, managing director, said: "Last week, the AA released its thinking on GDLs and their ideas were very much centred on under-21s. That's understandable because road safety statistics show that this is very much an at-risk group.

"However, our argument is that is all new drivers are inexperienced and represent a risk. If someone doesn't pass their test until 30, they might not have the same statistical

likelihood of being involved in an accident as a 17-year-old but it would still be arguably irresponsible for them to be immediately allowed to drive a 3.5-tonne van or a powerful car.

"This kind of scenario is especially important in a fleet context, where an employee might be given access to a wider range of vehicles than is likely to happen to a private motorist. Of course, some fleets already have rules in place designed to protect new and inexperienced drivers but certainly not all, and there is a strong argument for supporting GDLs."

Golding said, however, that older motorists passing their test should not be treated identically to younger ones when it came to all of the ideas being mooted for GDLs. "One of the AA's ideas is that under-21s should not be allowed to carry passengers of a similar age. There's a general acceptance that some people of that age will drive in an irresponsible manner to try and impress their friends, with attendant risks.

"Really, the same arguments are unlikely to apply to older people. In fact, carrying someone of a similar age who is an experienced driver in this scenario is probably a benefit."

He added a full consultancy needs to be carried out by the government as soon as possible.

SOE launches mentoring programme

The Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) has launched its new mentoring platform, designed to empower the next generation of engineering professionals.

This platform connects SOE members with experienced mentors from diverse engineering fields, from road transport and plant operations to engineering surveyors and environmental, providing an opportunity for knowledge-sharing and career development.

Ahead of its launch, more than 90 engineering experts registered their interest in becoming mentors. The platform, built on PLD Mentoring Software, leverages advanced matching technology to pair mentees with mentors based on specific skills and expertise.

The platform allows users to create a profile and search for mentors that align with their areas of expertise and it adds to SOE's list of member benefits.

"We're thrilled to offer this platform as an additional benefit to our members," said

Robin Bates, membership and professional standards lead. "By bringing together experts from all corners of engineering, we're fostering a community that drives innovation and excellence." For more, visit *www/tinyurl.com/5n8hztw2*.

in brief

Merritts has bolstered its capabilities with a new £400,000 investment in a Scania S560 rigid crane lorry to meet rising demand for advanced heavy machinery lifting and transport solutions. The Scania S560 features a 13-litre engine and SCR emissions-reducing technology. The vehicle has been customised to provide lifting and transport options. James Merritt, co-owner, said: "In the past year, we've seen a significant increase in enquiries, driving a higher demand for specialised lifting equipment and transport solutions. Ongoing investment in the latest technology is a core part of our strategy." The acquisition enhances the capabilities of Merritts's transport fleet, which already includes a range of low loaders, curtain siders, flat trailers, 3- and 4-axle semi-low loaders.

Novadata has introduced three online courses that can be used in combination with home study, as an alternative to a full-time classroom-based transport manager CPC course. The new Transport Manager CPC Road Haulage courses can also be used as a revision tool for those wishing to resit an exam module or to access extra revision before sitting the examinations for the first time. Novadata also offers a full classroom-based Transport Manager CPC Road Haulage or Passenger Transport course, which includes sitting SEGA examinations; either in the classroom in paper format, or remotely, using SEGA's online proctored option.

Firestone has launched the Firestone Vanhawk 3, a new summer, EV-ready van tyre for light commercial vehicles. Replacing the Vanhawk 2, the Firestone Vanhawk 3 is said to deliver higher mileage, improved fuel/energy efficiency and enhanced wet braking versus its predecessor. Compared to the Vanhawk 2, the latest van tyre is claimed to provide 13% more mileage, a 10% rolling resistance reduction and a 13% improvement in wet braking. These enhancements earned the Vanhawk 3 an EU label B-grade for wet grip, as well as a B-grade for fuel efficiency in selected sizes. The new tyre also integrates Enliten Technology, the manufacturer's technology development platform.

in brief

Burges Salmon has advised Schenk Tanktransport, a tank transport company that is backed by private equity firm Argos Wityu, on its acquisition of Suttons Tankers. Suttons Tankers is a 100-year-old family-owned UK road tanker logistics provider. The company will continue to operate under the name of Schenk UK under the leadership of managing director Michael Cundy and finance director Chris Orger. Burges Salmon partner Andrew Mills said: "It was a pleasure to advise Schenk and Argos Wityu on such a significant transaction, which will strengthen Schenk's market position and geographic reach."

New Era Energy is to enhance its fuelling and lubricants product and service offering with the acquisition of Commercial Fuel Solutions (CFS). New Era Energy is said to have the largest distribution network of renewable fuels and customers of both companies are expected to benefit from access to a wider range of products and services from the newly formed organisation. CFS was founded in 2007 and has established itself as an independent supplier of AdBlue, with one in 50 heavy goods vehicles on the road benefiting from its lower carbon intensity products.

Tyre manufacturer **Yokohama** has donated a retired lorry for mechanical students at Northampton College to practice their skills on. It was after Yokohama's transport supervisor Chris Reed delivered the Scania 94D that he was asked by the college if he would be happy to return and talk to the students about his insight into the logistics sector. Reed said: "I'm really looking forward to giving my logistics talks to the students at Northampton College, which is not far away from Yokohama's UK headquarters in Milton Keynes. I'll give them some background about myself, what my job involves on a day-to-day basis, what we're doing differently at Yokohama and what we aim to do going forward. I hope they find it educational and entertaining."

The **Independent Automotive Aftermarket Federation** (IAAF) has announced its latest new member, Fuchs Lubricants, as the federation continues its member expansion. Fuchs is a global supplier of manufacturer-approved lubricants to the OEM and aftermarket automotive sectors.

Work-related stress negatively impacting majority of drivers

Nine out of 10 UK commercial vehicle drivers say that work-related stress has a negative impact on their driving, according to a survey by Geotab.

Half of the UK's lorry and van drivers feel uncomfortable approaching their employer for support with stress and other mental health concerns, while 39% of those surveyed say their employer offers only a low level of support or worse for managing stress and other mental health concerns.

Nearly all of the 500 UK commercial vehicle drivers surveyed (97%) said that the risk of accidents has increased over the last five years, and this is backed by real-world data. Geotab has found that the total distance per collision driven by lorry and van operators in the UK decreased by almost one-fifth (19.12%) in 2023, from 920,000 miles to 740,000 miles. For a large British company running a fleet of 1,000 heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) each driving 75,000 miles per year, the 2023 data could potentially represent an additional 20 collisions annually.

"The results of this survey are a stark reminder of the stresses of driving for a living, and we feel it's our collective duty to raise awareness of the potential impact for drivers and other road users," said Edward Kulperger, senior vice president at Geotab EMEA.

"Commercial vehicle drivers keep our economy moving and have come under increased pressure following the Covid-19 pandemic and massive uplift in home and business deliveries. It's concerning to see how drivers feel under-supported when it comes to managing stress and other mental health concerns."

Geotab held a webinar for Road Safety Week 2024, in which industry experts discussed key findings of this survey. They included Kirsty Birch, founder of Work It Well; Peter Milchard, director of the Association of Fleet Professionals; Lucy Straker from Brake, the road safety charity; and Paul Atkinson, retired police officer and driver. For more, see *www.tinyurl.com/4ncn2n3a.*

Webfleet and Schmitz link on trailer telematics

Webleet, Bridgestone's fleet management solution, has welcomed Schmitz Cargobull as the first trailer manufacturer to join its OEM.connect partner programme.

Schmitz Cargobull is a manufacturer of semi-trailers for temperature-controlled freight, general cargo and bulk goods in Europe.

Commercial fleet operators can now connect Schmitz Cargobull trailers with Webfleet via factory-fitted telematics, eliminating the need for aftermarket hardware installations, enabling them to access trailer data to boost trailer

utilisation, reduce downtime and improve safety and security.

"Trailers are the backbone of long-haul goods transportation, but managing a trailer fleet can be challenging," said Taco van der Leij, vice president Webfleet Europe at Bridgestone Mobility Solutions.

"Making our proven Webfleet Trailer solution now easily accessible via OEM data will help even more businesses with real-time data insights and actionable intelligence to maximise trailer performance."

Commercial fleet operators can connect their trailers to the Webfleet platform via the Schmitz Cargobull TrailerConnect telematics portal with their VIN number. Sören Danielsen, manager for strategy and business development at Schmitz Cargobull, said it gives hauliers full control over their data.

The solution is available to European Webfleet customers. Webfleet intends to expand the programme to include trailers from more manufacturers.

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DRIVING EFFICIENCY

What does 2025 hold for repair and maintenance (R&M) in the transport sector? Tom Austin-Morgan talks to truck manufacturers and service providers about what improvements they are offering in R&M, servicing and workshop improvements as we head into the new year

Repair and maintenance (R&M) in transport operations is entering a transformative phase, driven by advancements that are taking place in technology, sustainability and compliance.

With innovations such as predictive analytics, cyber-secure fleet updates, and enhanced workshop practices, manufacturers and service providers are reshaping the future of transport engineering.

PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE

One of the most significant developments in maintenance is the shift toward predictive systems, which aim to anticipate vehicle issues before they result in costly breakdowns.

Renault Trucks is launching its Start & Drive Excellence Predict predictive maintenance contract in 2025 after an 18-month pilot scheme in the UK and after successful launch across the wider European markets. 'Predict' is based on a carefully managed maintenance schedule and the analysis of technical data collected in real time to help halve vehicle downtime.

Derek Leech, service market & retail development director at Renault Trucks UK, says: "We extract data constantly from the vehicles we service, and the teams build algorithms to look at the deterioration of components so we can change them before it comes to an unplanned stop.

"Generally, we get a notification 7-21 days before the vehicle would develop either a fault or the driver would have any notifications or feel any effects from it."

Leech adds that the key to Predict's success is to make sure vehicles are serviced exactly as they should be so that false flag events do not occur.

The system is integrated into Renault Trucks' service ecosystem, providing fleet operators with actionable data to plan interventions efficiently. By adopting predictive maintenance, operators can ensure their vehicles stay on the road longer, meeting delivery deadlines and customer expectations.

ENHANCED PORTFOLIOS

Philip Moon, marketing manager at DAF Trucks, highlights the company's upcoming Customer R&M Portal, which will streamline contract management.

He says the portal will "enable customers to seamlessly manage the vehicles on contract with DAF, and request, for example, contract extensions".

DAF's commitment to fleet optimisation extends to its DAF Fleet Services, which integrates with DAF MultiSupport and DAFcheck to provide in-depth fleet oversight and compliance, helping to maximise uptime.

The recent inclusion of loaded brake tests during inspections, aligning with DVSA recommendations, underscores DAF's emphasis on compliance and safety.

"From April 2025, these tests will become a standard feature of the MultiSupport R&M contract," Moon states, "offering customers a proactive approach to vehicle maintenance."

Legislative changes in cybersecurity are poised to redefine maintenance practices. DAF Trucks has also embraced secure over-the-air updates for its new vehicles, according to Moon, reducing downtime and ensuring that trucks operate with the latest software and settings.

By remotely delivering essential updates, operators can avoid unscheduled workshop visits, enhancing

INTO 2025

fleet productivity. For transport engineers, the ability to remotely optimise vehicle performance represents a major leap forward in efficiency.

SUSTAINABLE MAINTENANCE

Sustainability remains a priority for manufacturers and operators alike. Renault Trucks has invested in reducing the environmental impact of its vehicles and maintenance processes.

The Model Year 2025 heavy-duty trucks feature improved aerodynamics, turbo-compound engines, and A+ energy-rated tyres, collectively achieving up to 3% additional fuel savings compared to previous models. These advancements align with the industry's push toward reduced emissions and lower total cost of ownership.

DAF Trucks is also contributing to sustainable practices by integrating IRTEC accreditation across its workshops. Moon says this will ensure that technicians are trained to deliver high-quality service, reducing resource wastage during repairs.

Advancements in workshops are playing a critical role in supporting modern fleets. The integration of augmented reality tools is one example, enabling technicians to visualise complex repairs and diagnose issues with unprecedented accuracy. Automated inventory systems ensure that parts are readily available, minimising downtime for vehicles under maintenance.

ADAPTING TO ELECTRIFICATION

The rise of electric vehicles (EVs) is shaping new maintenance requirements. Not since the transition from steam engines to combustion engines has there been such a major revolution in technology. For engineers, this shift demands expertise in battery lifecycle management, charging infrastructure and software integration.

Renault Trucks' electric range, including the E-Tech T and C models, incorporates features such as energy-efficient designs and OTA capabilities, ensuring EVs are as reliable and efficient as their diesel counterparts. As EV adoption grows, workshops will need to adapt their tooling, training and facilities to accommodate these vehicles.

"We extract data constantly from the vehicles we service, and the teams build algorithms to look at the deterioration of components so we can change them before it comes to an unplanned stop"
Derek Leech

"We have an extensive training programme for EVs," says Leech, adding: "Firstly, from a health and safety perspective, making sure engineers know what they are doing and working safely on these vehicles, and secondly, we are building knowledge, especially for young apprentices.

"For the first time in a long time, being at the forefront of this new EV HGV technology will allow some of these youngsters to jump up the ladder as the technology develops in the marketplace."

INDUSTRY FRAMEWORKS

The upcoming Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS) aims to become the first universal rating scheme that can be applied to all types of workshops, from single-person outfits to international dealers, promoting transparency and consistency across commercial vehicle maintenance.

MPRS brings together industry experts and manufacturers including SOE, IRTE, Logistics UK, RHA, CPT, Daimler Trucks, DVSA, Office of the Traffic Commissioner, RMIF, SMMT, DfT and BVRLA.

The scheme's pilot will continue through the first quarter of 2025, during which time other major truck and bus manufacturers are keen to become involved and will help the steering group by providing feedback on the audit process to benefit the scheme.

Once the MPRS is launched at the Commercial Vehicle Show at the NEC in April 2025, workshops of any size can choose to apply for a rating scheme but, because it is not a government regulation, rather an industry initiative, it will not be compulsory. However, for transport engineers, adherence to such frameworks not only enhances compliance but also builds trust with clients and regulators.

The latest meeting of the steering group reviewed progress and discussed future developments. According to Nick Elliott, chair of IRTE Professional Sector Council, initial trials with Daimler Trucks demonstrated that implementing MPRS standards improved workshop focus, particularly in staff training guidance.

A limited "referral period" is being considered, enabling workshops to address issues and potentially enhance their ratings proactively. Discussions also explored allowing workshops to challenge audit outcomes legitimately.

Timelines for scheme elements are set to be established and published to ensure clarity for applicants and the awarding body (IRTE). The group confirmed that ratings would be valid for a defined period, with a mid-term validation to confirm continued compliance. A clause will permit rating withdrawal or downgrades if workshops fail validation or compliance checks.

The scheme will also accommodate subcontractor activities, such as tyre fitment, provided formal agreements are in place. Positive engagement with additional OEMs is ongoing, with updates expected soon. Discussions emphasised the importance of engaging Level 1 and 2 workshops to test processes across all levels.

SOE and IRTE presented a marketing plan developed with Daimler Trucks, with rollout planned for January 2025. Steering group members agreed to provide marketing contacts to ensure broad promotion.

LOOKING AHEAD

The trends emerging in 2025 reflect a transport industry that is increasingly reliant on technology and collaboration. For transport engineers, the ability to navigate these innovations will be key to maintaining competitive and efficient operations.

With manufacturers such as Renault Trucks and DAF Trucks leading the charge, the future of R&M promises enhanced reliability, safety and sustainability.

By embracing predictive maintenance, investing in cybersecurity, and modernising workshops, the UK transport sector is well-positioned to tackle the challenges ahead. Transport engineers must remain at the forefront of these changes, leveraging new tools and frameworks to drive the industry forward. TE

GAS AND AIR

It is difficult to think of a harder case for electrification than emergency vehicles, but that has not stopped organisations from trying. Richard Simpson looks at what has been done so far

Electric police cars, fire engines and ambulances are all being tried by various authorities in the UK, anxious to move closer to decarbonisation targets.

No organisation is keener on this than the seemingly perpetually 'cash-strapped' National Health Service (NHS) which has established a Green NHS Team, employing 48 people who between them command an annual payroll bill of £3m.

They have drawn up a 135-question process to assess the environmental impact of every NHS procurement decision. These environmental pressures have led some NHS Trusts to reduce or suspend the use of nitrous oxide (N_20, or 'gas and air') for general anaesthesia and even as pain relief for mothers in labour.

In the words of Dr Kate Gardner, a consultant anaesthetist at Colchester Hospital: "Nitrous oxide is incredibly damaging and has 300 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. It remains in the atmosphere for 114 years."

N_2O is also one of the two gases which are recorded as NOx when vehicle exhaust emissions are measured. It is generally thought to be less harmful than the 'other' NOx gas, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), but together their presence in vehicle exhausts has been said to contribute to the causes of up to 23,500 premature deaths in the UK each year.

ELECTRIC MOVE

Unsurprising, then, that parts of the NHS are taking a hard look at their use of diesel vehicles. The London Ambulance Service (LAS) saw in 2024 with its first all-electric emergency ambulance on the road on New Years Eve 2023.

Based on a Ford eTransit, and with a body built in Britain by German specialist WAS, the vehicle is claimed to have sufficient battery capacity to power it for a 12-hour shift, including all the HVAC and other equipment that is a requirement for a front-line ambulance.

Time to recharge on DC from 10% to 80% is said by Ford to be 28 minutes, and a range of 211 miles is claimed. Three more have since joined it in service.

"It has been estimated that providing sufficient charging infrastructure at hospitals and ambulance stations to support a 100% electric fleet would cost £100m..."

Unlike some other emergency ambulances, the eTransit-based vehicle can be driven on a car licence. LAS has also invested in electric cars with some enthusiasm: the highest profile vehicles in its BEV fleet are 42 Ford Mustang Mach-E sportscars, which are used as rapid response vehicles alongside many, humbler BEVs in less glamourous roles. The Mustang's claimed range is some 300 miles (said to be 10 times that of the average milage travelled in a single shift), and charge time to 80% is 40 minutes.

Supporting a BEV fleet of this size is not a cheap exercise: LAS is also investing £31m in charging infrastructure and the recruitment and training of technical staff.

It has been estimated that providing sufficient charging infrastructure at hospitals and ambulance stations to support a 100% electric fleet would cost £100m, and with electric ambulances costing around £150,000 each it might take up to 15 years in service for an electric ambulance to recoup the price premium over a diesel equivalent through fuel saving. Normally, the NHS replaces ambulances on a cycle of around five years.

These vehicles are the first of 12 fully electric ambulances that will be piloted by NHS England's Net Zero Travel and Transport team in partnership with LAS and four other ambulance trusts, and will enable the collection of 'real-life' data. This will be used to inform the wider rollout of zero-emission emergency ambulances in the future.

The total cost of electrifying the NHS ambulance fleet has been reported by the *Daily Telegraph* as half a billion pounds. To put this in context, the organisation's total annual budget is a staggering £192bn, so an electric ambulance fleet may not be as proportionately expensive as it seems.

Over in Gloucestershire, the local police force was less than enamoured with its initial intake of BEVs, undertaken as part of a pledge to be net zero by 2035.

In 2022 Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, Chris Nelson complained that while the county had the highest proportion of BEVs on its fleet of any British police force, the cars were hindering operational efficiency.

He told the county's Police and Crime Panel that: "I have heard lots of problems with officers driving around in electric vehicles having problems trying to find recharging facilities. Running out of puff and then having to get another vehicle."

However, such concerns may have been overstated. The Local Democracy Reporting Service subsequently submitted an FOI request on the matter to the force and it emerged that there had been only two instances of its BEVs running out of power: one in 2019 and another in 2021.

The force added that its electric vehicles were not authorised to respond to emergency incidents and were only used to move officers, staff and volunteers to complete enquiries or travel to other locations.

FIRING UP

One vehicle type that is required to respond to emergency incidents is the fire appliance. The excellent low-speed acceleration from a cold standing-start of a powerful electric truck would certainly prove advantageous in this application.

Payload might be a concern on specialist fire service water-carriers which

"Additional electrical systems, most notably lighting, will also serve to drain the batteries on an electric fire appliance. The difficulty in recharging an electric fire appliance in anything like the time required to refuel a diesel one is self-evident"

have a capacity of around 1000 litres: every kilo of unladen weight costs a litre of water which is vital when attending fires in rural areas where there may not be a convenient hydrant, or indeed in urban areas where the requirement to deal with a major conflagration can outstrip local mains supply.

But it is of far less concern on most multi-purpose fire tenders. The two-axle Volvo chassis-cabs popular with fire appliance builders are around 2.2 tonnes heavier in electric form than their diesel counterparts.

Although a two-tonne ZEV allowance permits them to operate at 20 rather than 18 tonnes gross weight, this is largely irrelevant as most fire appliances operate at gross weights of around 13 tonnes, including 1800 litres of water.

More important than payload is endurance. Fire appliances may be on-scene for many hours with their engine-driven water pumps running off the vehicle's PTO and their water supply being replenished either from the mains or by the specialist carriers mentioned above.

Additional electrical systems, most notably lighting, will also serve to drain the batteries on an electric fire appliance. The difficulty in recharging an electric fire appliance in anything like the time required to refuel a diesel one is self-evident.

But this is not the biggest issue. Anxious to reduce its annual fuel bill of £2.6m, local councillors asked Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Brigade if it had considered switching to electric fire engines. The answer was no because the quoted cost had been some £1m per unit.

British manufacturer Emergency One can claim to have built the first electric fire-pump to EN1846. It was ordered by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in 2022, with partial funding of £500,000 from Transport Scotland and has a claimed range of 220 miles on an 80% charge.

Built on an MAN TGM chassis-cab, it is propelled by an Allison eGen Power 100D electric drive axle: a drop-in component designed for easy installation into production vehicle frames. This integrates two high-speed electric motors and a multi-speed transmission within the axle structure, eliminating the need for an external prop-shaft.

One of the most powerful electric axles on the market, the eGen Power has a continuous output of 454kW and peak power of 652kW, way over the maximum of 235kW from the most powerful diesel offered for the standard TGM. TE

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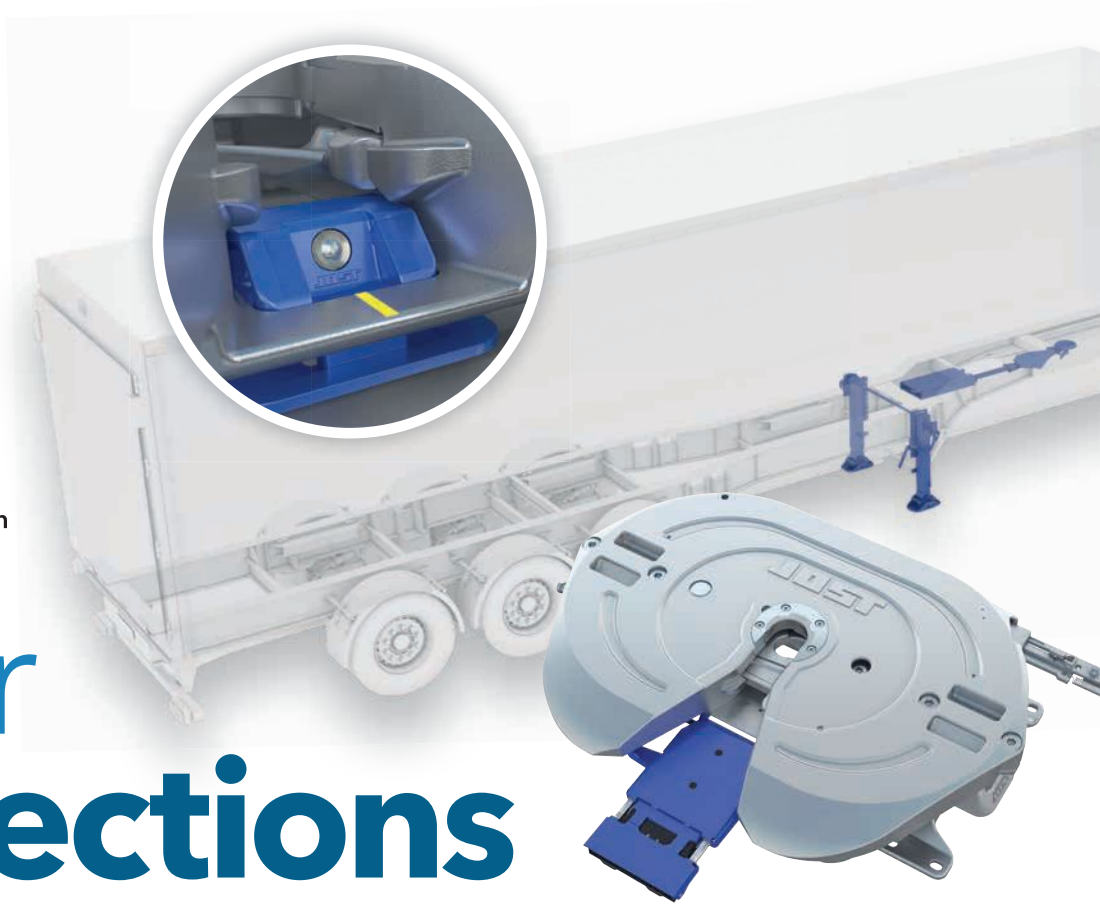


Technology is helping transport operators to couple and uncouple tractor-trailer combos with more safety and efficiency, reports John Challen

Better connections

Loading bays are often fraught with drama – drivers want to get in and out as quickly as possible and the business on the receiving end of the goods needs to keep track of what is being delivered and where. Logistically, it is demanding and there is often so much movement in and around the delivery and collection areas, it can be difficult to keep track of the vehicle and the people.

Central to the delivery process is the componentry that links trailer to truck, which has not fundamentally changed over the years. The mechanical structure and design of the fifth wheel has essentially remained the same, only now it is supported by advanced technologies that make the whole process easier for all parties.

One of the companies at the forefront of fifth wheel technologies and developments is Jost, which has been involved in the commercial vehicle sector for more than 60 years. One of the biggest forward steps it has made recently is embracing camera and sensor technology in order to improve the coupling and uncoupling process.

One such innovation is the King Pin Finder (pictured in the circle above). "We have put a camera in the jaw of the fifth wheel, so it acts like a reversing camera in the truck. The output can be on a separate monitor inside the cab or, if you have got the capability, it will display on the dash like it does on a car," explains Danny Broomfield, managing director, Jost.

"The idea is that the driver who is backing towards the trailer can see the pin right up to the point of contact, so they never miss the target. They also do not ride over it and risk damaging components or encountering any other problems. When the connection is made, the camera automatically switches off, so the driver knows a safe connection has been made."

The feedback on the new approach has been mixed, depending on what type of driver gives it, says Broomfield. "One of our customers for the King Pin Finder, which is a major logistics company, surveyed its drivers about what we had provided it with," he recalls.

"While the experienced ones claimed that their mirrors were fine and they did not need any help from our products, the newer drivers said the system was absolutely brilliant and had made a massive difference!"

RANGE FINDERS

The King Pin Finder is actually part of a wider product portfolio from Jost called KKS (the initials standing for the German abbreviation for comfort coupling system). Designed to be an autonomous coupling system, KKS is built around Jost's KKS 42 fifth wheel, which features sensors, a KKS connector and a pneumatic release valve. Fitted to the underside are two connectors: KKS-U and KKS-I.

With the KKS-U, all of the cable and hose handling takes place under the trailer during cornering, whereas the handling in the KKS-I happens on the trailer floor. Essentially, the former is designed to be offered as a retrofit option, so will appeal to fleets looking to make incremental upgrades to their fleet.

"The KKS essentially showcases all of our specialised advanced services and operators can specify

"While the experienced ones claimed that their mirrors were fine and they didn't need any help from our products, the newer drivers said the system was absolutely brilliant and had made a massive difference!"
Danny Broomfield

all of them, or have them as individual items," confirms Broomfield.

Sensor technology – as in pretty much every modern vehicle – is key to the operation of the KSS. "The sensor fifth wheel has three sensors within it, to tell you that the skid plate of the trailer has come into contact with the top plate of the fifth wheel when you raise your air suspension," Broomfield explains.

"That means you are at the right height for the kingpin to be locked into the jaw properly. The next sensor lets the driver know the jaw is locked, and the third sensor tells you that the handle has moved and locked, and the truck and trailer are ready to go. The three points of contact are indicated by three green lights – and drivers can't pull away until those three green lights are showing."

NEW SKIDS ON THE BLOCK

At Saf-Holland, the latest fifth wheel technology enables drivers to unlock vertical loads of up to 20 tonnes with one hand, according to the company.

The SK-S 36.20 series fifth wheel is designed for silo, tanker and volume transport and works with two- and three-axle tractor units for long-distance haulage operations. "The SK-S 36.20 is the best in its class: the coupling variants really stand out thanks to their power, level of safety and low weight of just 116kg, at a mounting height of 150mm," claims Claudio Bertini, engineering director of couplings and fifth wheels at Saf-Holland.

The safety aspect is clearly one of the main reasons for Saf-Holland introducing the SK-S 36.20 – and the ability to minimise the risk of personal injury or damage to vehicle or trailer – but that emphasis hasn't come at the cost of quality or attention to detail. Built from graphite cast iron, it ensures strength for

holding those vertical loads, while a lube-free variant is available.

"The tops of the special NoLube wear plates and components in the locking mechanism and in the bearing inserts between coupling and mounting brackets no longer require lubrication," says the company. "The use of grease-free fifth wheels are environmentally friendly and economically viable because grease does not have to be purchased, stored, topped up or monitored."

Elsewhere, in other environmental-based lubrication developments, Saf-Holland's Recolube lubricant pump (pictured, p18) can automatically supply fifth wheels with the optimum amount of grease to ensure the best possible connection with the saddle plate. The company also claims that maintenance can be reduced – or even eliminated – in this area. Another sustainability benefit is using a biodegradable lubricant, which features 80% renewable raw materials and has minimal impact on the environment.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

At last year's IAA Transportation in Hannover, Germany, Fontaine debuted its latest range of fifth wheel couplings and technologies, including TechLock which, like Jost's system, is designed to minimise any mis-coupling and improve safety in the loading bay.

Essentially, the system uses a jaw-height sensor to prevent the fifth wheel from closing if the kingpin enters at the wrong height or position.

One of the latest products to use TechLock know-how was Fontaine's 170CI fifth wheel, for on- and off-road use. Designed using advanced FEA, the 170CI weighs in at just 140kg, but is rated at 170kN and supports loads of up to 25 tonnes.

Fontaine also demonstrated its dual-height fifth wheel technology in Germany, with the 3000 FFH. This product allows both mega-trailers and conventional ones to be towed using one truck, with a straightforward height adjustment. The 3000 FFH is available in three models, with height adjustments from 167mm to 367mm.

Despite the world of coupling and uncoupling being quite a conventional and conservative area of transport, Broomfield believes that more developments will be on the way to further help drivers and fleets.

"There is obviously a big, big push towards autonomous driving – and while we are not necessarily going to see that in our market for decades, in projects such as Neom in Saudi Arabia they are building transport solutions to suit a particular environment for people to live in. There, they will want autonomous vehicles running up and down the highway that runs alongside that hub operation – and these ideas are being adapted quickly inside our own yard environments," he reasons.

Broomfield recognises the push from operators with yard operations to have automated shuttles, which is essentially where KKS started from. "Operators wanted a concept where the driver drives up to the gatehouse and they do not enter the yard at all. They come out of the vehicle and everything else is then remote controlled, either by a shunter picking up the trailer, or an autonomous truck driving it around in the yard. I think that's where we'll see autonomy first before it then rolls out into more traditional haulage operations." TE

Uncertainty but a glimmer of hope

A new UK government, but the same macroeconomic situation remains – compounded by continued conflict and uncertainty around the world. John Challen assesses the impact all those factors have on the costs for businesses in transport

Anyone who thought that the world might be an easier place to live (or survive) in 2024, given the difficult years that had preceded it, was to be disappointed as the year went on. Battles still raged between Ukraine and Russian forces, while the Middle East showed no signs of achieving – or even wanting – peace. Closer to home, while Covid remained, it was less of a concern and there were breakthroughs with unions to bring an end to the industrial action that had plagued the country for too long.

A change of government brought positivity and relief for many UK residents, but it was not long before Sir Keir Starmer's honeymoon was deemed over, after divisive policy decisions and a budget that seemed to create more problems than it solved.

After gross domestic product (GDP) dropped to -0.3% in Q4 2023, there was a sharp recovery in Q1 2024 to 0.7% – the highest figure since the corresponding quarter two years earlier. While there were further drops in Q2 and Q3 (0.5% and 0.1%, respectively), there were optimistic predictions for GDP in 2025 and beyond.

After 2023's best first quarter since the pandemic, there was a 3.9% fall in truck registrations (11,068) for the corresponding period in 2024. Rigids were up 8.4% in Q1, but registrations for artics plummeted by 16.5%. There was better news by Q2, as the market achieved year-on-year growth of 2.6% and 11,469 registrations.

However, it then felt like the sector was back to square one by Q3, with a 6.0% reverse on Q3 2023 and just 10,839 units registered. Again, rigids performed better than artics – the former was up 6.0%, but the latter dropped 20.4%. Last year's version of this report suggested "hope and expectation for the good times to continue" through 2024, but that did not really materialise. Total vehicle numbers for 2024 to the end of Q3 were, at 33,376 registrations, 2.5% down on the equivalent timescale in 2023.

Total goods vehicle numbers in the UK's vehicle parc dropped in the 2023-24 period from 2022-23 (down 5,763 to 373,318). There was also a fall in the number of O licences to 66,821 from 69,022 (down 2,201).

One glimmer of hope for operators is that, compared with previous years (2023: 9.21%; 2022: 11.6%), the rate that costs increased last year is much reduced. RHA's annual survey of cost movements (Haulage Cost Movement 2024), which informs this text, calculates the overall percentage increase for 2024 was 5.95% (3.51% including fuel). Logistics UK has supplied tables in this article; for its commentary, see p24.

ECONOMIC BACKDROP

The peak inflation rates of late 2022 and early 2023 were long forgotten in 2024, as January started off at 4% and, by April, the rate had fallen to 2.3%, before further drops to 2% in May and June. Slight rises then came before September's rate of 1.7%, which was the first time it had been below the Bank of England's target in over three years.

Unemployment rates in the UK in 2024 were mixed. Leaving 2023 at 3.8%, there was a rise to 4.0% in January and then a steady increase to 4.4% by April. There was then a drop over the summer months, the rate getting back down to 4.0% in August, before heading back up to 4.3% in September.

Maintaining the ability to predict the fortunes of interest rates, our January 2024 report's statement that the rate of 5.25% 'will remain in place until mid-2024, before dropping to 4.75% by the end of the year' was largely correct. August saw a reduction in rates from 5.25% to 5%, before the Bank of England made a further cut in November, to 4.75%. At the time of going to press, the OECD has stated that rates could be higher for longer

through 2025, due to the budget, with a fall to 3.5% by early 2026.

TYRES

Beyond the ever-increasing prices for tyres, other cost-related problems have become more prominent for operators over the past year. One of the hurdles is delayed call-outs for roadside encounters, due to a general shortage of tyre technicians across the country.

This deficit is part of the wider skills shortage across the industry, something that many transport organisations, including the IRTE, will be working hard to address throughout 2025. The cost of natural rubber, which is increasing by 24%, does not help the situation.

FUEL

Thankfully, the cost of diesel reduced in 2024. The first RHA fuel survey report of the year gave an average price for bulk/bunkered diesel at 113.30ppl ex-VAT and by August it reached a 2024-low of 103.58ppl. The average, though, from January to end of September and the figure used in the RHA's costs consideration was 113.46ppl compared to 117.67ppl last year – so a reduction of 3.58%.

In that time, Brent ranged from $71 to $91 per barrel and averaged around $80.70 for the year to 19 November 2024. In a nutshell, poor economic scenarios around the globe – in particular, China – caused the downward force and to the opposite effect was the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian/Iranian conflict.

Operator costs for 2024: LCVs up to 3.5 tonnes gvw

	Car derivative vans – diesel	Vans of 3.5 tonnes gvw – diesel
General information		
Annual mileage	26,000	36,000
Life (years)	6.0	6.0
Life (miles)	156,000	216,000
Replacement cost (£)	19,668	37,502
Fuel consumption (mpg)	40.0	28.0
Annual fuel usage (litres)	2,955	5,845
Fuel price (pence per litre)	104.45	104.45
Tyre life (miles)	25,000	24,000
Standing costs		
Vehicle excise duty	335	335
Insurance	1,036	1,860
Depreciation	2,229	5,125
	3,600	**7,320**
Running costs		
Fuel	3,086	6,105
Tyres	279	637
Maintenance	3,160	3,637
	6,525	**10,379**
Total vehicle cost	**10,125**	**17,699**
Overheads		
Transport	2,304	2,304
TOTAL COST	**12,429**	**20,003**
ANNUAL CO_2 FOOTPRINT (TONNES PER YEAR)	7.42	14.68

Source of Data: *Manager's Guide to Distribution Costs,* Logistics UK, October 2024

DIESEL EXHAUST FLUID (DEF)

Another bit of positive pricing news has come from AdBlue, the cost of which has fallen again over 2024. The RHA has used its 1,000-litre IBC price of 47.5ppl compared to the previous year at 56.5ppl: over a distance of 75,000 miles, this means the total AdBlue costs dropped from £1,409 to £1,185 based on 6% of fuel used.

VEHICLE AND DEPRECIATION

Leasing remains popular with larger companies, but smaller operators typically use purchase arrangements to acquire their trucks. The only exceptions are if they are short-term rentals to cover ad-hoc work or trialling net-zero vehicles such as an electric 18-tonner.

New vehicle costs have increased partly due to the new General Safety Regulations (EU) (GSR) – and DVS requirements for those operating in London. For trucks already on the road, these regulations have affected R&M budgets, too. The GSR requirement (from July 2024) is a road safety directive that means new registrations must comply in the EU and have eight safety features included – and this, we are advised, will add around £3,500 per vehicle. The Department for Transport delayed this matter and has still not agreed to the EU standard despite the UK previously being at the fore when it comes to vehicle safety in general.

The number of transport companies sliding into administration has resulted in considerable numbers of second-hand trailers appearing on the market. This scenario has affected used values and means that the rental fleets are likely to get less for their assets

Operator costs for 2024: rigids 7.5-32 tonnes gvw

	7.5 tonnes gvw – box or curtainsided	12 to 14 tonnes gvw – box or curtainsided	16 to 18 tonnes gvw – box or curtainsided	3-axle rigid vehicle of 26 tonnes gvw – box or curtainsided	4-axle rigid tipper – 32 tonnes gvw
General information					
Annual mileage	40,000	40,000	50,000	60,000	55,000
Life (years)	6.0	7.0	8.0	6.0	7.0
Life (miles)	240,000	280,000	400,000	360,000	385,000
Replacement cost (£)	59,004	80,605	83,005	125,954	140,707
Fuel consumption - mpg	17.0	15.0	12.0	10.0	8.2
Annual fuel usage (litres)	10,696	12,123	18,942	27,276	30,491
Fuel price - pence per litre	104.45	104.45	104.45	104.45	104.45
Tyre life (miles)	35,000	50,000	50,000	55,000	50,000
Standing costs					
VED and RUL*	165	245	450	450	920
Insurance	3,047	3,489	3,882	3,468	3,714
Depreciation	8,359	9,327	8,301	16,794	16,885
	11,570	**13,061**	**12,633**	**20,712**	**21,518**
Running costs					
Fuel	11,172	12,662	19,785	28,490	31,848
Tyres	608	1,042	1,437	2,094	2,221
Maintenance	6,003	6,280	9,810	13,734	15,368
	17,784	**19,984**	**31,031**	**44,318**	**49,437**
Total vehicle cost	**29,355**	**33,046**	**43,664**	**65,030**	**70,955**
Employment cost of driver	36,116	38,568	42,481	43,334	44,220
Cost of vehicle and driver	**65,470**	**71,614**	**86,146**	**108,364**	**115,176**
Overheads					
Transport	7,627	8,417	8,417	10,291	11,423
Business	7,520	8,299	8,299	10,146	11,262
TOTAL COST	**80,618**	**88,331**	**102,862**	**128,801**	**137,860**
ANNUAL CO_2 FOOTPRINT (TONNES PER YEAR)	26.87	30.46	47.59	68.53	76.60

*RUL applies to vehicles 12t gvw and above.

Source of Data: *Manager's Guide to Distribution Costs, Logistics UK, October 2024*

when disposal times come around. It may also mean that hauliers may be more inclined to buy used rather than rent, lease, or buy new if they can pick up a bargain.

INSURANCE

There was another rise in the overall cost of insurance according to RHA members in 2024 – this year being 7.9%, compared with 7% in 2023. There were reports of 'extraordinary' insurance premiums in the aftermath of a big claim or a series of too many smaller claims mounting up to a poor rating.

In the first half of the year, the Association of British Insurers appears to have campaigned for an immediate drop in the Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) rate (currently 12%) as

Operator costs for 2024: tractor units and semi-trailers, 33-44 tonnes gvw

	33-tonne gvw artic: 2-axle tractor, 2-axle curtainsided semi-trailer	38-tonne gvw artic: 2-axle tractor, 3-axle curtainsided semi-trailer	38-tonne gvw artic: 3-axle tractor, 2-axle curtainsided semi-trailer	44-tonne gvw artic: 3-axle tractor, 3-axle curtainsided semi-trailer
General information				
Annual mileage	75,000	75,000	70,000	80,000
Life (years) - tractor	8.0	7.0	6.0	6.0
Life (years) - trailer	11.0	11.0	11.0	12.0
Life (miles) - tractor	600,000	525,000	420,000	480,000
Replacement cost (£) - tractor	82,588	97,673	97,673	117,071
Replacement cost (£) - trailer	31,002	31,002	31,002	31,002
Fuel consumption - mpg	9.0	8.5	8.0	8.5
Annual fuel usage (litres)	37,883	40,112	39,778	42,786
Fuel price - pence per litre	104.45	104.45	104.45	104.45
Tyre life (miles) - tractor	65,000	80,000	95,000	80,000
Tyre life (miles) - trailer	80,000	70,000	80,000	70,000
Standing costs				
VED and RUL*	920	920	920	1,136
Insurance	4,071	5,071	5,071	5,071
Depreciation - tractor	9,188	11,442	13,349	16,000
Depreciation - trailer	2,818	2,818	2,818	2,584
	16,998	**20,251**	**22,158**	**24,790**
Running costs				
Fuel	39,569	41,897	41,548	44,690
Tyres - tractor	2,204	2,021	2,011	1,933
Tyres - trailer	2,790	2,747	2,362	1,978
Maintenance - tractor	8,346	7,799	7,739	11,032
Maintenance - trailer	5,108	5,155	4,328	6,192
	58,017	**59,620**	**57,987**	**65,824**
Total vehicle cost	**75,015**	**79,871**	**80,145**	**90,614**
Employment cost of driver	47,393	48,705	48,705	48,705
Cost of vehicle and driver	**122,408**	**128,576**	**128,851**	**139,319**
Overheads				
Transport	13,365	14,795	14,795	14,795
Business	13,177	14,587	14,587	14,587
TOTAL COST	**148,949**	**157,958**	**158,233**	**168,702**
ANNUAL CO_2 FOOTPRINT (TONNES PER YEAR)	95.18	100.77	99.93	107.49

*RUL applies to vehicles 12t gvw and above.

Source of Data: *Manager's Guide to Distribution Costs, Logistics UK, October 2024*

insurance costs rose. This tax, of course, brings the Exchequer a lot of cash – it is estimated that IPT receipts will surpass £8bn this tax year, with current receipts up 10% versus the previous financial year.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

The start of 2024 brought very large increases to R&M pricing specifically for older vehicles that were then out of warranty, but often for newer trucks, too. Examples given ranged from 11.7% on monthly R&M packages to a 23% increase in costs for inspections, MOT, and laden brake testing. Due to the high added costs in recent years, RHA members confirmed they are extending the life of their equipment, but this also comes at a cost.

Meanwhile the ongoing technician shortage continues to be a major concern, with the government being lobbied from different areas to try and bring about change in the way training is offered and financially covered.

VED AND LEVY

Last year saw campaigns against the reintroduction of the HGV Levy, which was reintroduced in August 2023 for HGVs over 12,000kg operating on a motorway or A roads. However, it was all in vain because, in the autumn budget, the chancellor announced that the government would uprate

the HGV VED rates in line with RPI from 1 April 2025. The government will also uprate the HGV Levy in line with RPI from the same date, putting further cost pressures onto vehicle operators at a time when the industry is facing a range of other rising costs.

OVERHEAD COSTS

The proposed changes to business rates to introduce a higher multiplier for the most valuable properties could unfairly penalise logistics businesses who operate large warehouses. These premises often require a larger footprint, but offer a relatively low return on land values. RHA believes that operators need a rates system that supports growth and incentivises success by not punishing those who are seeking to move to larger premises or operate in high-cost areas.

DRIVER EMPLOYMENT COSTS

RHA members explained that, on average, their driver employment cost had increased by 5%, which does not translate to a pay rise, it is the cost of covering. Just under 37% of RHA members, when surveyed, advised that driver availability was a major factor to them.

In RHA's autumn briefings, the traffic commissioners reminded operators that they need to be careful on how they employ drivers. Drivers are still routinely getting their tachograph information wrong; their concern is that if this is not monitored then what else does not get suitable attention.

The national living wage for 2025 (representing a 6.5% rise from £11.44 to £12.21 an hour from April 2025) was announced just prior to the budget and is, in some cases, a painful addition where some staff are concerned. The rate is still used by some for truck drivers, but it also affects the rates of others.

THE FUTURE

Yet again, in a scenario that seems familiar to every year since 2020, trying to predict what the future might hold is a very difficult exercise. One of the most recent assessments – courtesy of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – is that interest rates will fall slower than expected, partly due to chancellor Rachel Reeves' budget. After an initial boost to the economy, changes to tax and spending would result in the cost of borrowing taking longer to come down. The OECD predicted growth of 1.7% in 2025 (up from the previous prediction of 1.2%) and 1.3% in 2026.

Rising costs of elements such as insurance, tyres and drivers – not to mention the actual vehicles themselves – mean this predicted growth will be too little to reassure operators, who are continually seeing margins squeezed. The previously mentioned additional costs, such as the HGV Levy and GSR-related additions, will also be a concern. Then there is the transition to EVs, which has slowed and is showing signs of stalling in the wider passenger car market. There is no debate that the nation will eventually move across to battery-driven fleets, but as for when that will definitely take place, the jury is still out.

The costs of fuel and oil – as we have seen throughout this year and others – is likely to remain volatile, especially given ongoing tensions in Russia and its obsession with Ukraine and, quite possibly, other countries in the region. Whether the promises of president-elect Trump to end that conflict – and others around the world – come to fruition, remain to be seen. TE

THE VIEW FROM LOGISTICS UK

The logistics sector in 2024 navigated falling fuel costs, rising operational expenses, labour shortages in specialised roles and supply chain challenges, emphasising the need for efficiency, innovation and workforce development to maintain resilience.

In Q3 2024, Brent crude prices fell 10% year-on-year to $77 per barrel, reflecting weak demand from China, evolving OPEC strategies and disruptions caused by Hurricane Francine in the Gulf of Mexico. Despite escalating Middle East tensions adding volatility, the decline in oil prices brought a welcome reprieve for logistics operators.

Diesel costs – a cornerstone of logistics expenses – dropped by 19.9% in the year leading to October 2024, according to Logistics UK's Manager's Guide to Distribution Costs (MGDC). This sharp decline in diesel prices, influenced by increased global oil supply, renewable energy investments and surging electric vehicle adoption, has substantially reduced total vehicle operating costs.

There are continuing challenges in filling vacancies for certain roles within the logistics sector, particularly for mechanics and technicians, where 51.7% of respondents to Logistics UK's quarterly survey reported severe to very severe problems. HGV drivers also continue to face recruitment difficulties, with one-fifth of respondents experiencing severe issues with filling vacancies, although total HGV driver employment rose by 20.9% between Q3 2023 and Q3 2024 meaning there is not an acute shortage of HGV drivers at present. In contrast to drivers, roles such as forklift drivers and van drivers are easier to fill, with 47.3% and 38.9% reporting no problems, respectively.

Operators predict road congestion, delivery times and cost-of-living pressures will create the most significant headwinds in the coming months. Vehicle maintenance staff shortages and supply chain disruptions from China and the EU are also pressing concerns.

These trends highlight the growing importance of cost-efficient technologies and a skilled workforce. Investments in automation, electric vehicles and workforce training are no longer optional but essential strategies for navigating this evolving landscape.

SARAH WATKINS
Deputy director of policy information

Pathway to net zero

Johnson Matthey's chief technology officer for clean air, Dr Tauseef Salma, and global product development and applications director, Paul Phillips, explore the key factors in the technology transition

As the commercial vehicle industry navigates the complex shift from fossil fuel-powered internal combustion engines (ICE) to zero-emission powertrains, OEMs and engineers must align their technology evolution with sustainability goals while considering the varied operational demands of heavy-duty vehicles.

In this article, we explore the challenges and strategic considerations that will shape this transition, on how the industry can chart a practical and sustainable path forward.

ENDURING ROLE

The internal combustion engine remains a significant player in heavy-duty applications, particularly in industries where battery-electric and hydrogen powertrains are not yet practical.

Sectors such as agriculture and construction require high power on demand and consistent operation, often in remote areas where access to electricity is limited and durability is a requisite.

In these contexts, ICE is likely to persist, with alternative fuels such as biodiesel, compressed natural gas (CNG) and e-fuels offering effective interim solutions to reduce emissions without compromising performance.

At Johnson Matthey (JM), we continue to develop innovative catalytic solutions to reduce emissions from ICE, especially as fleets begin adopting these bridging fuels. It is essential that catalyst technologies target pollutants such as methane, particulate matter (soot), and nitrogen oxides (NOx), and support emissions reduction across a range of alternative fuels.

By developing efficient catalytic systems for diesel and alternative fuels, we aim to make ICE cleaner and more sustainable as OEMs refine their zero-emission powertrains.

HYDROGEN

Hydrogen powertrains are a promising solution for long-haul commercial vehicles, given their high energy density and suitability for transporting heavy loads over long distances.

However, hydrogen's full ecosystem is still developing, and limited access points remain a significant barrier. This impacts the scalability and cost effectiveness needed to make hydrogen competitive with other powertrain options.

Hydrogen powertrains offer distinct configurations for different applications: fuel cells, suited for medium-load and medium-distance transport, and hydrogen internal combustion engines (ICE), which perform efficiently under high-load conditions.

Hydrogen ICE, for example, is particularly well-suited for long-haul transport where heavy payloads and sustained power are required. An additional advantage of hydrogen ICE is its flexibility in fuel quality; unlike fuel cells, which need high-purity hydrogen, hydrogen ICE can operate on lower-purity sources, expanding potential access points.

As hydrogen infrastructure expands, fuel cells will likely become a more viable option, particularly in urban or medium-range applications where high-purity hydrogen is available. In the meantime, hydrogen ICE provides OEMs with an adaptable solution for heavy-duty transport, especially as hydrogen infrastructure and availability

"Hydrogen powertrains are a promising solution for long-haul commercial vehicles, given their high energy density and suitability for transporting heavy loads over long distances"

are expected to grow over the next five to 10 years.

BATTERY-ELECTRIC POWERTRAINS

For short-haul, urban applications, battery-electric powertrains provide a practical zero-emission solution. These powertrains align well with lower power demands, shorter ranges and urban infrastructure, making them ideal for last-mile delivery and inner-city transport.

Unlike long-haul applications, where payload and range requirements remain challenging for current battery technologies, urban settings provide more accessible charging infrastructure and consistent route planning, facilitating the adoption of electric vehicles.

Our expectation is that battery-electric vehicles will play a leading role in decarbonising urban transport as charging networks expand. While battery electric powertrains currently have limitations for heavy-duty, long-haul transport, advancements in battery density and charging speed may improve their feasibility in broader applications over time. In the near term, however, their deployment in urban areas represents a significant step toward reducing urban emissions.

POLICY

The regulatory landscape significantly influences the adoption of new technologies. In Europe, for instance, stringent CO_2 reduction targets drive innovation across powertrains and fuel efficiency.

However, achieving these targets requires flexibility in the types of technologies and fuels allowed under emissions regulations. Technology-neutral policies would permit OEMs to use various options, from biofuels and CNG to hydrogen and electric powertrains, helping to ensure optimal technologies go to scale, while the industry continues to evolve.

Policy adjustments that permit alternative fuels, such as biofuels and hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), would allow ICE to remain part of a sustainable solution during the transition to full zero-emission technologies. While hydrogen and electric solutions hold promise for the future, biofuels can provide substantial carbon savings in the near term, making them a valuable addition to the emissions reduction toolkit.

Such policies align with international examples, such as China's legislative framework, which allows a range of alternative fuel options alongside electric vehicles. A flexible policy framework would enable OEMs to tailor their approach to CO_2 reduction, retain adaptability across varied applications, and meet specific operational needs while working toward the broader goal of net-zero emissions.

CONTROL TECHNOLOGIES

While zero-emission powertrains represent the ultimate goal, ICE will remain a critical part of the commercial vehicle landscape during the transition. As such, continued innovation in emissions control technologies is essential to mitigate the industry's environmental impact.

To this end, advancements in catalytic systems are enabling significant reductions in pollutants from both traditional diesel and alternative fuels.

Modular approaches to catalyst design – pioneered by JM – allow solutions to be tailored to specific engine configurations and fuel types. This flexibility ensures that each catalytic solution is optimally suited to reduce pollutants while meeting the unique demands of diverse powertrains.

For example, JM's dual injection systems, which integrate two AdBlue injection points, enhance emissions control in heavy-duty applications, achieving cleaner tailpipe emissions and helping OEMs comply with strict emissions standards. Our solutions address not only traditional pollutants like soot and NOx but also greenhouse gases, including methane, ensuring that even unconventional fuels such as CNG operate with minimal environmental impact.

COLLABORATIVE PATH

The pathway to net-zero emissions for commercial vehicles will not be defined by a single solution. Instead, it requires a combination of technologies tailored to the demands of different applications. The industry must balance immediate emissions reductions with the need to develop scalable, long-term solutions.

Hydrogen and battery electric powertrains will play leading roles, but their adoption must be supported by continued investment in infrastructure and policy frameworks that enable flexibility. In the meantime, alternative fuels and advanced emissions control technologies provide critical tools for bridging the gap to zero emissions.

As engineers and policymakers work together to navigate this transition, the focus must remain on practical solutions that meet today's operational challenges while laying the groundwork for tomorrow's sustainable transport systems. TE

Opening up new prospects

Renault Trucks is the latest truck manufacturer to launch a long-distance electric model with the extension of its E-Tech T model that comes with a 600km range on a single charge

The development of next-generation long-range electric trucks on a single charge has been a recent trend in the market, with different OEMs bringing new technology to the marketplace.

Renault Trucks has now announced that, from the second half of 2025, it will be taking orders for an extension of its Renault Trucks E-Tech T model that will come with a sizeable 600km range on a single charge.

Renault Trucks says it "opens up new prospects for the decarbonisation of long-haul transport" to operators.

The increased range of the Renault Trucks E-Tech T is achieved by integrating a new component, namely in the shape of an electric axle. E-axle technology enables all the elements of the powertrain – electric motors and transmission – to be grouped together at the rear of the vehicle.

This development frees up space between the side members so that they can accommodate additional battery packs. Renault Trucks E-Tech T equipped with e-axle can cover 600km on a single charge.

"The advent of this electric truck will boost the transition to electric mobility," explains Emmanuel Duperray, senior vice president electromobility at Renault Trucks. "We believe that a range of 600km on a single charge, combined with the development of public charging infrastructure networks by 2026 – in particular through our joint venture Milence – will enable us to achieve the operational parity (with diesel technology) that our customers expect."

Designed for long-haul transport, this Renault Trucks E-Tech T with an extended range will enhance the manufacturer's electric offering without replacing the current solutions it offers.

Renault Trucks says it will continue to offer a wide range of autonomies, configurations and equipment tailored to specific uses. In order to help hauliers find the ideal solution, Renault Trucks is also providing them with advanced simulation tools enabling each electric truck to be configured according to their specific needs.

The manufacturer was also keen to point out that customers will continue to find a wide portfolio of ranges, configurations and equipment. "We're not looking to enter a race for autonomy on a single charge," stresses Duperray.

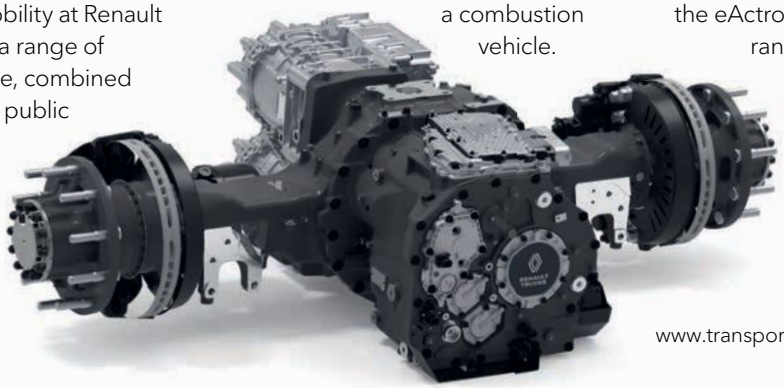
He adds: "Oversized batteries penalise the payload, raise total operating costs and increase the environmental footprint. In essence, an electric truck is more expensive than a combustion vehicle.

"We need to rethink low-carbon logistics: in other words, reconsider transport patterns to optimise the use of transport vehicles and therefore reduce the cost per kilometre."

Renault Trucks states that it encourages its customers to adjust the size of the batteries according to their actual needs and provides support in optimising the solution, including the charging strategy. "This approach is already enabling us to achieve daily mileage of over 700 kilometres with our series production Renault Trucks E Tech T," the company notes.

Orders for this new E-Tech T model with a 600km range will open in the second half of 2025, with production handled by the company's Bourg-en-Bresse plant, which has been assembling the brand's high-end electric ranges since the end of 2023.

There is increasing competition in the long-distance electric market segment. Earlier last year, Volvo Trucks revealed it was upgrading its FH Electric so that it can do 600km. Daimler Truck has already presented the eActros 600 electric truck with a range of 500km. MAN, DAF and Iveco are also looking to grow their business in the long-distance electric segment with their eTruck, XF and S-eWay models, respectively. TE



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RTS upgrades with Totalkare equipment

RTS Waste Management has upgraded its workshop facilities with the introduction of several pieces of equipment from Totalkare.

The new equipment includes a 35,000kg-capacity, 10m platform Y-Mech Lift, a mobile brake tester, a set of six T8AC cabled mobile column lifts, headlamp tester, compressor and ancillaries including axle stands and a transmission jack.

As RTS is expanding, the demand for more advanced workshop equipment has increased to ensure the fleet remains operational and adheres to industry regulations. The introduction of Totalkare workshop equipment will allow the operator to fulfil this requirement.

The 35,000kg Y-Mech Lift provides RTS with the capacity to maintain even the largest waste and recycling vehicles in its fleet. This lift offers stability and ease of use, enabling the company's technicians to perform maintenance tasks efficiently and safely.

Complementing the Y-Mech Lift, the T8AC cabled mobile column lifts offer flexibility in the workshop, allowing for easy manoeuvring and use across multiple vehicles simultaneously. Each column is capable of lifting up to 7,500kg, which features adjustable forks to cater for a variety of wheel diameters.

The DVSA-approved mobile brake tester from Totalkare allows RTS to conduct brake tests, ensuring that all vehicles meet the standards required for roadworthiness. Totalkare's standard model can test up to 16,000kg axle load. For heavier axle loads, an upgraded version that can test up to 20,000kg is also available.

Additionally, the headlamp tester is a tool for checking and adjusting vehicle headlights. James Atkins, projects manager for Totalkare, said: "The combination of lifting and testing equipment will help RTS Waste Management to keep their fleet in top condition and minimise downtime."

Harsh underfloors stabilise Peacock tippers

Harsh has fitted its K110 twin ram underfloor tipping gear to two Iveco X-Way 8x4 tippers which have gone into service with Peacock Brothers of Minskip, North Yorkshire.

Peacock Brothers is involved in earthmoving, site clearance, plant hire, haulage, crushing and screening. As such, its tipper fleet has been specified to carry the full variety of arduous payloads, from muck and rubble through to demolition spoil, stone and crushed concrete.

The underfloor provides the tippers with stability and safety when working on uneven ground and tipping out difficult loads such as clay and soil.

The key feature of the K110 is its integral stabiliser arms, located outside of the twin lifting cylinders. The stabiliser arms keep the raised body rigidly in line with the truck chassis, adding protection to the whole vehicle from potentially hazardous sideways pressures, whether caused by uneven ground, sticky loads or high winds.

"Having a built-in stabiliser makes the Harsh underfloor unique," said company boss Chris Peacock. "It just gives us an extra margin of safety in any operating environment. Compared to any other gear, it's really in another league. The K110 has been our only tipping gear from even before the 1990s – that long!"

According to Harsh, the tipping gear on Peacock's trucks is mounted to the rear of the chassis to give the highest possible tipping angle which enables heavy, lumpy and sticky loads to drop out of the body quickly and cleanly.

Kinaxia deepens ties with Eurocell

Kinaxia Logistics has sealed a two-year extension to its contract with Eurocell, following the delivery of a fleet of 40 vehicles with a performance level of 99.96%.

Specifically, Kinaxia has deployed a fleet of more than 40 vehicles to provide a 24/7 service to Eurocell, a manufacturer, recycler and distributor of uPVC products for the construction industry.

Kinaxia is now trialling night fulfilment to ensure optimum stock levels are maintained at key Eurocell branches.

To further improve efficiency, Kinaxia and Eurocell will be implementing new artificial intelligence software to improve routing and reduce delivery miles and emissions by analysing real-time traffic information, congestion and distribution data.

Kinaxia shunts stock from Eurocell's manufacturing facilities in Derbyshire to the customer's national distribution centre in Alfreton. From there, Kinaxia undertakes daily deliveries to more than 200 Eurocell branches and fabricators.

As part of the contract, Kinaxia also provides on-demand flexible warehousing – which gives Eurocell the ability to scale storage up and down – and import and export services. Eurocell's product range includes doors, windows, guttering, decking, flooring, fencing, conservatories and garden rooms.

It supplies more than 10,000 home improvement products through its branches and website.

HaulTech helps haulier work smarter

Haulage specialist MA Ponsonby has claimed that HaulTech is helping it work smarter, improve compliance and enhance customer service.

MA Ponsonby has grown from one truck operated by founder Mike Ponsonby – a winner of the SOE's Volunteer of the Year award – into a business with more than 15 Scania trucks and a fleet of specialist trailers.

Mike is still managing director, and his son Jack is operations director. Two more sons are specialist heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers.

The Lichfield-based business has been a specialist in construction plant and other heavy haulage for more than 20 years. It operates a trailer fleet includes HIABs, step frames and low loaders.

MA Ponsonby recognised that its increased size and scale meant that it needed to move away from pen-and-paper administration to maintain its productivity. The company invested in HaulTech's transport management system (TMS).

"HaulTech has delivered efficiency all round for us," said Jack Ponsonby. "It is very easy to implement and to use. It enables us to plan and manage our work in a smarter way. It also saves us a lot of time compared to using an A4 paper diary.

"We are a small team and run a tight ship, so freeing us up to focus on other areas of the business has a huge impact. It helps significantly with compliance, too."

According to HaulTech, the TMS can reduce administrative processes by up to 80%. It also helps haulage companies to control and cut operational costs.

The TMS enables users to create, schedule, assign and manage jobs through a single point of data entry. It also streamlines invoicing and can integrate with accounting software such as Sage.

HaulTech offers a portfolio of haulage solutions, including TMS, WMS, tracking and vehicle cameras.

CTS Hire installs Fleetclear PSS

CTS Hire has chosen Fleetclear as its vehicle partner to ensure compliance with the updated Direct Vision Standard requirements in Greater London.

To achieve this, Fleetclear installed the Progressive Safe System (PSS) on vehicles in the fleet, which will be entering the UK capital.

CTS Hire is a supplier of municipal and specialist vehicles, with a fleet of more than 200 vehicles available for short to long-term hire. CTS works with local authorities and private companies in the waste management, recycling and highways sectors, and invests in the latest vehicles and equipment.

As the vehicle rental division of Specialist Fleet Services, CTS benefits from being part of a company with more than 20 years' experience in contract hire, fleet management and workshop management. This includes a network of depots and service agents across the UK, including three primary hubs in Gloucestershire, Northampton and the Midlands (Brackley). The CTS Hire fleet is supported by a 24/7 breakdown and recovery service, as well as a team of mobile engineers.

Shamek Kowslczyk, head of hire division, said: "When we needed to install PSS, I didn't think twice about contacting Fleetclear. The service has always been good and there was no need to look elsewhere. They have everything I need."

CTS Hire has worked with Fleetclear for a number of years, and the fleet is equipped with Fleetclear camera systems as well as the Fleetclear Connect software platform to create a unified solution. CTS Hire customers can use Fleetclear technology internally, providing a solution to integrate the hire vehicles into their own internal setup.

TIP Group upgrades Hull workshop with Stertil lifts

TIP Group has bolstered the workshop operations at its Hull facility with a new set of Stertil-Koni wireless mobile column lifts. This addition enables technicians to adapt the workshop setup, enhancing efficiency and enabling them to reconfigure the space to suit various tasks.

Already a user of 2 x ST4175 17.5-tonne 4-Post lifts from Stertil-Koni, TIP Group has now invested in a set of ST1075FWA mobile column lifts. With each of the four columns capable of lifting 7.5 tonnes, the system offers a combined capacity of 30 tonnes.

According to Stertil, the wireless design of these mobile truck column lifts offers a reduction in setup time, eliminating the need for cumbersome cables. This not only streamlines workflow but also enhances safety by minimising tripping hazards, creating a more secure working environment.

To further support the workshop, TIP Group also acquired a set of tall axle stands and a set of medium-height axle stands. This allows the option to use the stands for free wheel support when the mobile columns are removed, or as additional support while the columns remain in place.

A feature of the mobile columns is the ebright Smart Control System, allowing engineers to operate the lifts either individually or in unison. The system is controlled through touchscreen consoles. The ability to manage the lifts from any column enhances their adaptability.

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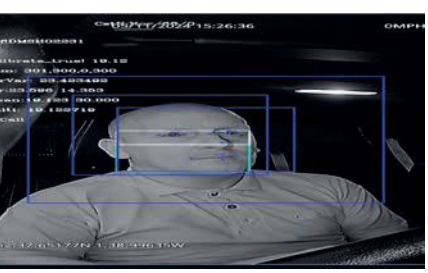
SAFE AND SOUND

A range of innovations designed to improve safety for drivers and vulnerable road users

1 CENTRAD

Centrad's driver welfare camera is an AI-powered camera solution that is capable of detecting signs of fatigue, such as eyes drooping or yawning, before they lead to critical incidents. The technology also provides immediate alerts to both the driver and fleet managers to encourage real-time proactive interventions. Managing director Geoff Cross believes that AI-powered camera solutions will reduce the number of avoidable, often tragic incidents on UK roads each year caused by fatigue. "AI gives hauliers the opportunity to prevent issues before they arise, rather than merely reacting to them after the fact when it's too late. The potential of AI is staggering."

www.tinyurl.com/3rz347wy



2 SPILLARD

Spillard's rear-view/reversing cameras, side-view and wide eye cameras are tough, have adjustable mounting, are weatherproof and some have infrared vision. The technology offers a complete field of vision, allowing drivers to operate their vehicle night and day, in all weather conditions. The rear-view camera captures the loading and unloading of the vehicle in the bay, as well as traffic and pedestrians while stationary or manoeuvring in reverse. It can also record theft or tampering from the rear of the vehicle. Meanwhile, the side-view camera can capture incidents of a passing cyclist and traffic, as well as offering close parking assistance.

www.tinyurl.com/39rs77dp

3 SAMSARA

The Samsara platform now offers low bridge strike alerting to help fleets minimise the chance of tall vehicles impacting the underside of bridges. Through Samsara Dash Cam in-cab audio alerts, drivers are warned whenever they approach a bridge that is too low to pass. Other new features include connected training, electronic brake performance monitoring and private mode. Kiren Sekar, Samsara's chief product officer, said: "Our customers are using our platform to turn this data into real human impact by making roads safer and reconnecting their people to the work they love doing."

www.tinyurl.com/4rnsm9yv

4 ZAFETY LUG LOCK

The Zafety Lug Lock device fits over two adjacent nuts on the truck or bus wheel to secure them together. It is fitted after the nuts have been properly torqued and the nuts can be torque-checked without removing the device. The Zafety Lug Lock is available in four sizes to fit 27-33mm wheel nuts, on 104mm spacing, while the high visibility colour gives instant confirmation that the safety product is in place. Loss of torque on commercial wheel nuts resulting in detached wheels, or even just lost wheel nuts, has long been a challenge to fleet operators worldwide. This solution can help combat the problem of wheel loss on commercial vehicles.

www.tinyurl.com/53pa44pf

OFFICIAL IRTE JOURNAL
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LEGAL UPDATE

This page is brought to you by Backhouse Jones Solicitors, which runs a frequent series of podcasts – see *www.tinyurl.com/2xbv3jzv*

Vehicles are major causes of injuries at work

SAFETY

The Health and Safety Executive recently published information regarding fatal and major injuries. Vehicles at work continue to be one of the major causes of fatal and major injuries.

According to HSE figures for 2023 to 2024, 25 workers were killed when struck by a moving vehicle.

These included a £1.28m fine that was issued to food manufacturing company Ginsters in respect of an incident involving a moving vehicle after an employee was killed by a lorry that was delivering supplies to the bakery where it makes its pasties.

Paul Clarke was fatally crushed and killed on 2 December 2021 after being struck by the vehicle as it reversed into a loading bay at The Cornwall Bakery, Callington, operated by Samworth Brothers.

The 40-year-old, who worked as an intake operator at the bakery, had been moving strip curtains in the loading bay before being struck by the lorry.

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An HSE investigation found Samworth Brothers had not assessed the risks associated with the temporarily installed strip curtains and that there was no safe system of work to move them out of the way when the lorries reversed into the loading bay. The strip curtains had been installed in place of a faulty roller door.

Operators can help prevent accidents by assessing and managing vehicle and driver safety. The HSE has published helpful guidance – go to *www.tinyurl.com/3n67yz9e* to read more on risk assessments.

The HSE also has a range of guidance available to operators on their website *www.tinyurl.com/kuwjuhse*. These cover vehicle safety; site safety; and lift trucks.

To read the report, visit *www.tinyurl.com/43pajrcy*. Backhouse Jones has a specialist team which can help with accidents at work: visit *www.tinyurl.com/3x4h33kb* for more.

Fact File

HGV DRIVERS AND LOADS TARGETED

Drivers and freight operators have long been blighted by freight crime. However, a growing trend is being reported whereby organised crime groups are targeting lorries for their valuable loads.

These gangs exploit vulnerabilities at rest stops, focusing on high-value goods such as electronics, pharmaceuticals and alcohol.

A recent report by the APPG on Freight and Logistics, which was co-written by the National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service (NaVCIS) and the Road Haulage Association (RHA), outlines the scale of the problem and makes recommendations to combat freight crime.

The report found that last year there were 5,370 reported incidents of HGV and cargo crime in the UK (with actual figures likely much higher) – a 5% increase on the previous year.

Freight crime offences in 2023 were responsible for the direct loss of £68.3m in stolen goods. This figure only represents the wholesale value of these goods, with NaVCIS estimating the true value being between £680m-£700m.

To view the report, visit *www.tinyurl.com/2s3su3b9* and listen to what the issues are and what the report details in the Backhouse Jones 'Back Your People' podcast at *www.tinyurl.com/59rjnc5e*.

SAFETY

Keeping vehicles roadworthy

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness is a non-exhaustive document that helps explain how to keep vehicles roadworthy.

The guide is intended for use by operators, drivers, and others responsible for maintaining commercial and passenger vehicles.

As Backhouse Jones mentioned in its 'Back on Air' webinar on 1 November 2024, it has been expecting the Guide to be updated and this was released on 5 November 2024.

The key areas of change include safety inspections and repair facilities, and braking performance assessment.

To take the hassle out of operators working out what has changed, and to encourage thought provoking debate around the important issue of maintenance, Backhouse Jones recorded a short podcast: go to *www.tinyurl.com/st72jms6* or wherever you get your podcasts.

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