

## Championing Excellence at the IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge Awards

**T**he IRTE Skills Challenge continues to prove why it's one of the most important initiatives in the UK transport engineering sector. On Wednesday, 16 July 2025, the IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge reached new heights with a spectacular awards ceremony held at The Grand Station in Wolverhampton. Hosted by former BBC presenter David Sheppard, and supported by some of the industry's leading organisations, the event marked the culmination of months of preparation, technical competition, and industry-wide collaboration.

Now in its 13th year, the IRTE Skills Challenge continues to grow in both scale and prestige, this year proving to be its most successful edition yet.

### Setting the Stage, A Fitting Host with a Personal Connection

The 2025 Awards Lunch was hosted by David Sheppard, a familiar voice to many from his years on BBC Radio. But for this event, it wasn't just his broadcasting experience that made him the ideal host; it was his connection to the IRTE. Sheppard's father has been a long-standing IRTE member



since 1981, beginning his journey in the engineering industry as an apprentice. David's personal ties to the profession added a layer of warmth and sincerity to the ceremony, which celebrated not only technical skill but also the value of mentorship, family legacy, and professional pride.

### What is the IRTE Skills Challenge?

The IRTE Skills Challenge is a national competition that puts the spotlight on bus and coach technicians and apprentices, the very people who keep the UK's public transport running safely and efficiently every day. Competitors from across the country are tested on their

knowledge and practical skills across multiple disciplines, including electrical systems, mechanical diagnostics, driveline technology, inspection standards, and bodywork. Each year, the Challenge helps organisations:

- Identify rising stars
- Celebrate team achievements
- Encourage apprenticeships
- Promote workshop excellence

### Record-Breaking Participation and Industry-Wide Support

The 2025 edition welcomed more competitors than ever before, with record interest from operators and workshop managers who recognise the benefits of entering their teams into the competition.

### Industry Collaboration: Powered by Our Sponsors

The continued success of the Skills Challenge would not be possible without the backing of its sponsors. This year's event was proudly sponsored by:

- Alexander Dennis
- VARTA by Clarios
- Imperial Engineering
- GTG Training
- GYS
- C9 Recruitment

These sponsors share a common goal: to equip engineering professionals with the tools, resources and recognition they deserve, while helping the sector evolve and thrive. Their support enables us to deliver a competition that not only challenges but also uplifts and inspires.

The Skills Challenge isn't just an annual event; it's a reflection of the sector's ongoing commitment to training, professionalism, and excellence.

### Looking Ahead

As we celebrate another successful edition, all eyes turn to the future. The 2026 IRTE Skills Challenge promises new tests, new talent, and new opportunities to raise the bar even higher. The IRTE Skills Challenge continues to prove why it's one of the most important initiatives in the UK transport engineering sector. As we applaud the 2025 winners, we also celebrate an industry that values learning, supports its people, and looks forward to the road ahead.

Congratulations once again to all who took part, and we'll see you at the next Challenge.

**"The IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge is the cornerstone of our calendar, and one we've proudly supported and developed over 13 editions of the competition. The competition brings together the brightest talent in bus and coach engineering, highlighting the importance of skills and personal development in the sector"**

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



Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) is a membership organisation encompassing the Professional Sectors IRTE, IPlantE, BES, Environmental and Operations. SOE represents over 16,000 individuals and companies in the engineering industry and is committed to the ongoing growth and personal development of its members.

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# Welcome Back...

“Engineering is not only about machines or systems, but about people their skills, values, and drive to shape the future”



#### FROM THE EDITOR

**A**s we close the summer edition of *SOE News*, it's clear that 2025 is shaping into a year of milestones, reflection, and momentum for the Society of Operations Engineers. With the remarkable 25 year anniversary of the Society on the horizon and an ambitious future ahead, this issue brings together stories that highlight the breadth of our community, the challenges we face, and the progress we continue to make.

One of the most inspiring themes running through this edition is skills. From the record-breaking IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge to the announcement of our first-ever HGV Skills Challenge, it is evident that practical expertise remains the beating heart of our profession. These competitions are not just events; they are platforms that recognise, test, and celebrate the technicians who keep Britain moving. In a time when the skills gap dominates headlines, these initiatives are crucial reminders that investment in people delivers long-term strength for the industry.

Equally encouraging is the progress being made in professional recognition. The Engineer 2025 Salary Survey demonstrates what many of us have long known; professional Registration pays. It pays financially, by giving registered engineers an average of £7,000 more in earnings. It pays professionally, by opening doors to new responsibilities, greater trust, and wider opportunities. And it pays personally, through the pride and assurance that comes with achieving a standard recognised across the engineering world. For SOE members, Registration is more

than a formality it's a pathway to recognition, credibility, and career growth.

This edition also carries significant institutional news. We prepare to welcome Caroline Harries as our first female President, a landmark moment that reflects SOE's ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusive leadership. Caroline's vision for supporting members, strengthening CPD opportunities, and modernising our reach will carry the Society into its next chapter. Alongside this, we mark our 25th anniversary a chance not only to celebrate past achievements but also to ask where we want to be in another quarter century.

Change is also reflected in how we communicate. From this issue onwards, *SOE News* is digital-only. This is more than a cost-saving measure it's a future proofing step to make the publication accessible anywhere, anytime, while freeing resources to reinvest directly into member services. The same trusted stories, sector updates, and professional insights remain, but now enriched by the flexibility of online delivery.

Collaboration continues to be another strong thread. This year we have welcomed BCAS and the CPA as new Corporate Partners, joining an ever-growing network of organisations committed to professional standards. Partnerships like these extend our reach, bring credibility to training, and ensure engineers across diverse sectors have access to pathways for Registration, CPD, and recognition. Together, we are building a stronger ecosystem for engineering competence.

At the same time, we've not forgotten the local and personal side of membership. Our regional restructure aims to deliver more streamlined and effective support, giving every member no matter where they are better access to CPD, networking, and events. By modernising this structure, we ensure that geography is no barrier to professional development.

Finally, this issue also pays tribute to individuals who embody professionalism and service, such as Sgt. Peter Snook of the Lancashire Police CVU. His work reminds us that behind every policy, standard, and regulation are people who dedicate their careers to safety, compliance, and public trust.

Looking across these pages, I see an organisation that is both proud of its past and ready for the future. Our members are tackling challenges from new propulsion systems and robotic construction to sustainability and nuclear innovation. They are adapting to digital, embracing diversity, and pushing boundaries in training and standards.

As Editor, it is a privilege to bring together these stories. They are proof that engineering is not only about machines, systems, or regulations, but about people their skills, their values, and their drive to improve the world around them. Thank you for being part of this journey and for continuing to shape the Society into a home for excellence, professionalism, and progress.

**Chris Knight, Senior PR & Communications Officer**

**Do you have a story to share? Get in touch with me at:**  
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# IRTE Launches First HGV Skills Challenge

## WHY IS THE IRTE LAUNCHING THIS AND WHY THE INDUSTRY NEEDS IT NOW...

**B**acked by DAF Trucks and powered by 13 years of experience running the highly successful IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge, this new initiative is set to become a defining moment for the HGV sector. The Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE) is launching its first-ever HGV Skills Challenge on 30 September - 1 October 2025 at the DAF Apprentice Academy in Nottingham.

With support from DAF Trucks and over a decade of success delivering the IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge, this new event marks a major step forward for the HGV industry and aims to become a landmark occasion in the sector's calendar.

### Why This Challenge Matters

At a time when the transport engineering industry faces a critical skills shortage, increasing regulatory demands, and pressure to innovate, the need to recognise and support technical talent has never been greater. This isn't just a competition. It's a statement that the engineers behind Britain's commercial vehicles deserve recognition,

investment, and national attention.

### Building on 13 Years of Success

Since its launch in 2011, the IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge has earned its place as the UK's leading skills competition for the PSV sector. Each year, technicians from major operators across the country test their mechanical, electrical and diagnostic skills in a fast-paced, supportive environment.

The HGV edition brings this same format, rigorous, hands-on, and industry-led, to a sector that has long lacked a comparable platform.

With IRTE's proven expertise in running large-scale national events and an established reputation for independence, credibility and professionalism, this new challenge is built for long-term impact.

### Partnership with DAF Trucks

The inaugural event is being run in partnership with DAF Trucks, one of the UK's leading commercial vehicle manufacturers. The event will be hosted at the state-of-the-art DAF Apprentice Academy,

offering access to modern training environments and cutting-edge technology.

This partnership highlights the industry's commitment to supporting and elevating technician talent, ensuring participants are tested in a professional, high-quality setting.

### Making Professionalism Visible

By offering a national platform where skill, precision and safety standards take centre stage, the HGV Skills Challenge will raise the bar for workshop excellence across the UK. The Challenge will shine a light on those who don't always receive the recognition they deserve, highlighting and celebrating those who keep the HGV sector moving and demonstrating the importance of skills to the sector.

While this year's event is officially a pilot, it marks the beginning of what IRTE expects to become a long-term fixture in the commercial vehicle sector. The intention is clear: to give HGV technicians the same platform for recognition, development, and celebration that the bus and coach sector has benefited from for over a decade.

## INDUSTRY UPDATES

### TIMBER MEETS ROBOTICS TO BATTLE BRITAIN'S HOUSING CRISIS

Innovative UK firms are merging timber construction with AI-powered robotics to revolutionise housing production. Companies like Donaldson Timber Systems in Oxfordshire are deploying robots to assemble timber-frame components off-site—making building faster, roughly 2.8% cheaper than traditional masonry and more sustainable. Timber inherently stores more carbon than it releases, offering environmental benefits, though over 80% of UK timber is still imported. Regulatory shifts are easing concerns around fire safety, and the ageing construction workforce underscores the appeal of automation. With the UK government targeting 300,000 new homes a year, off-site robotic timber construction could realistically deliver one-third of this goal if adoption ramps up.

### UK'S HYPERSONIC "SABRE" AIRCRAFT COULD MAKE LONDON-NY TRAVEL 60 MINUTES

A groundbreaking initiative called the Invictus programme is advancing the UK's hypersonic aviation ambitions. Led by Frazer-Nash in collaboration with the European Space Agency and supported by a £6 million investment, the project centres on the "Sabre" engine — a hybrid jet-rocket engine that pre-cools incoming air to prevent overheating at Mach 5 speeds.

The result could be a reusable aircraft capable of flying from London to New York in just one hour, operating at the edge of space. If successful, it would mark one of the most significant breakthroughs in aerospace engineering since Concorde.

Backed by the UK Space Agency, the programme is set to roll out fully by 2031, delivering impact across a range of uses.

## GOOD MONTH

### RECYCLABLE PLASTIC STRONGER THAN STEEL

Scientists have developed a recyclable plastic that is tougher than steel, opening new possibilities for aerospace, defence, and automotive industries. The material, known as Aromatic Thermosetting Copolyester (ATSP), combines the flexibility of traditional plastics with the strength of carbon fibre. When reinforced, it becomes several times stronger than steel yet lighter than aluminium.

Led by Dr Mohammad Naraghi at Texas A&M University, researchers found ATSP can self-heal cracks, recover its shape, and withstand repeated stress cycles. This means damaged car parts or aircraft components could repair themselves, improving safety and reducing waste.

Crucially, ATSP is recyclable, making it a sustainable alternative to conventional plastics. Researchers believe it could transform how structures are built in the future.

## BAD MONTH

### UK NUCLEAR PROJECTS DELAYED BY REGULATIONS, REPORT FINDS

British nuclear projects are being slowed by outdated and costly regulations, according to an interim report from the government's Nuclear Taskforce. Published on August 11, 2025, the report warns that current systems are "unnecessarily slow, inefficient and costly," hampering energy delivery and inflating the cost of the UK's nuclear deterrent. Led by John Fingleton, the taskforce calls for a "radical reset" of nuclear regulation, highlighting overly complex approval processes, risk-averse cultures, and planning rules unsuited to new technologies like small modular reactors. Fingleton said nuclear is vital to both net zero and national security but needs proportionate regulation. Final recommendations will be published in the autumn, with government pledging reform to enable quicker, safer nuclear delivery.

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION IS KEY IF YOU WANT TO EARN MORE AS AN ENGINEER

# Boost Your Pay with Professional Registration

**E**ngineers across the UK are seeing the financial and professional benefits of gaining official recognition, according to a new survey. The latest Engineer 2025 Salary Survey has revealed that professionally registered engineers and technicians are earning on average £7,000 more than their non-registered peers, sparking renewed calls for engineers at all stages of their careers to consider professional Registration.

The findings, based on responses from more than 600 engineers working across 12 major sectors, underline what many in the industry have long suspected: Registration is not just a formality, it is a gateway to better pay, wider opportunities, and greater recognition.

### A Clear Pay Advantage

Almost half of those surveyed (49 per cent) held professional titles such as Engineering Technician (EngTech), Incorporated Engineer (IEng), Chartered Engineer (CEng), or ICT Technician (ICTTech). Among this group, average salaries were significantly higher. In some compliance-heavy industries, more than 70 per cent of respondents held Registration, showing the increasing importance of credentials in highly regulated fields.

For early-career engineers or those seeking to progress, the message is clear: professional Registration is more than an optional extra. It is fast becoming an essential benchmark of competence.

### Why Employers Value Registration

Beyond the numbers, employers see Registration as a mark of trust. Engineering is a profession that deals in safety, accountability, and technical excellence. A professional title provides independent



confirmation that an engineer has the knowledge, skills, and commitment required to deliver under pressure.

Paul Bailey, Chief Executive of the Engineering Council, the body that regulates the profession in the UK, said: "Gaining a professional title reflects your dedication to the profession and enhances your career prospects. It opens up promotion opportunities and gives employers confidence in your skills, professionalism and judgement."

That confidence is especially valued in sectors such as road transport, infrastructure, civil engineering, and maintenance, where engineers are often tasked with making decisions that directly affect safety and compliance.

### SOE's Role in Professional Development

One of the key routes to professional Registration is through the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE). A licensed Professional Engineering Institution, SOE is authorised by the Engineering Council to assess applications for EngTech, IEng, and CEng Registration.

But SOE's role goes far beyond the paperwork. The organisation provides mentoring, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resources, technical webinars, and networking opportunities, all designed to help engineers grow their careers.

From technicians in vehicle

workshops to operations managers in logistics, SOE represents professionals working in road transport, plant, and environmental sectors where safety and competence are paramount.

### Benefits for Early-Career Engineers

While Registration is often seen as something for experienced engineers, SOE is keen to highlight its value for those just starting out. Apprentices and graduates can benefit from structured development, clear milestones, and the confidence that comes with being part of a regulated profession. Early registration also provides access to senior mentors and helps young engineers stand out when applying for jobs or promotions. By beginning the journey sooner, technicians and engineers can set a strong foundation for long-term success.

### Recognition That Pays Off

For many engineers, registration is about more than salary. It is about professional pride, credibility, and belonging to a community committed to maintaining high standards. In a competitive job market, that recognition can make the difference between standing still and moving forward. With evidence now showing a clear financial benefit, the case for registration is stronger than ever.

### Take the Next Step

The SOE is encouraging engineers and technicians across the UK to explore Registration and make use of the support on offer. Whether through mentoring, CPD events, or case studies that showcase success stories, SOE is committed to helping professionals reach their goals.

For those considering the next step in their career, the message is simple: Registration brings recognition, opportunity, and reward.

# SOE News goes digital to stay future-proof for our members

**F**rom this edition, SOE News will move to a fully digital format. This step ensures that the publication continues to deliver the same trusted content our members rely on, while keeping us future-proof, accessible and sustainable.

The decision follows changes in how members prefer to access information. With more of our audience now engaging online, across phones, tablets and laptops, digital delivery is the most effective way to keep SOE News timely and relevant. Importantly, the content itself will not change, you will still find the same



news, updates and insight from across all of SOEs sectors.

Emma Thompson, Executive Director of SOE says "SOE News has always been about connecting members with the information they need. By moving online, we

can ensure it remains accessible wherever you are, while also freeing up resources to invest more in member services such as CPD, mentoring and events."

Going digital also helps us to reduce costs linked to print and postage, meaning more funds can be directed into projects that directly benefit our members.

This move is about more than modernising the format. It is about protecting what matters most: making sure SOE News continues to be a reliable, relevant and valued part of your membership for many years to come.

*"By moving online, we can ensure it remains accessible wherever you are, while freeing up resources to invest in member services..."*

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

## UPCOMING AGM AND PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO MARK A HISTORIC MILESTONE

# History Making Upcoming AGM

**T**he Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) will host its Annual General Meeting (AGM) later this year, followed by the Presidential Address, an event set to be a landmark in the organisation's history.

Members will gather to reflect on another year of progress while looking ahead to the future direction of the SOE. A highlight of the meeting will be the handover of the presidency from Howard Seymour to Caroline Harries MSOE MIRTE, who will become the first female President of SOE.

Caroline's appointment marks an important step forward for the institution, reinforcing SOE's commitment to diversity and inclusive leadership. In her upcoming address, she

will outline her vision for the year ahead, focusing on supporting members in their professional journeys, expanding opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and strengthening the role of SOE across the engineering and operations industries.

The AGM and Presidential Address will also coincide with a significant milestone: the 25th anniversary of SOE. Since its establishment in 1999, the organisation has brought together engineers and operations professionals from across multiple sectors, championing professional

standards, safety, and sustainability. This year's gathering will therefore not only welcome a historic new President but also celebrate a quarter-century of achievement.

Howard Seymour will conclude his presidency with reflections on his term in office, during which he has been dedicated to raising the profile of SOE and advancing professional recognition for members.

Members are warmly encouraged to attend the AGM and Presidential Address, to be part of this milestone moment and to hear first-hand the exciting plans for the future of the Society.

Further details on how to register will be shared soon.



## GOOD MONTH

### ROYAL NAVY ENGINEERS HARNESS AI FOR THE FUTURE

It's been a good month for innovation in UK engineering as Royal Navy sailors explored how artificial intelligence (AI) could support the fleet of tomorrow. At HMS Sultan in Gosport, engineers trialled new AI tools to help with equipment maintenance, training, and rapid problem-solving. The event brought together naval personnel, academics, and industry specialists to share ideas and test emerging technology. Commander James Hall described it as an exciting step in "future-proofing engineering skills" and ensuring the Navy remains ready for modern challenges. With AI proving its value in cutting costs, speeding up repairs, and enhancing safety, the Innovation Day showed how the next generation of engineers will be at the heart of keeping the Royal Navy at the cutting edge.

## BAD MONTH

### UK FACTORIES FACE FRESH DOWNTURN

It has been a difficult month for British manufacturing, with new figures from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) revealing a fresh downturn across the sector. Factory output fell in August, driven by weak overseas demand and rising costs, with order books shrinking at the fastest pace in six months. The CBI warned that confidence among manufacturers remains low, with firms scaling back investment plans and bracing for further challenges in the months ahead. Energy-intensive industries were hit particularly hard, highlighting ongoing pressures from high input costs and global competition. While policymakers have pledged support for advanced manufacturing and green technologies, businesses remain cautious. For many in the sector, this latest data signals a tough road ahead for one of the UK's industrial cornerstones.

# SOE Welcomes British Compressed Air Society as Newest Corporate Partner

**O**n 1 July 2025, the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) proudly announced that The British Compressed Air Society (BCAS) has joined as its latest Corporate Partner a move set to strengthen professional development, technical training, and best practices across the compressed air and vacuum sectors.

Founded in 1930, BCAS stands as the UK's only technical trade association that unites manufacturers, distributors, and end users of compressors, vacuum pumps, pneumatic tools, and allied products. For nearly a century, the society has championed industry excellence by providing independent guidance on legislation, safety,



compliance, and technical standards.

BCAS delivers specialist training courses tailored to both suppliers and operators of compressed air and vacuum systems. Under this new partnership, SOE will formally accredit many of these established BCAS training programs significantly enhancing their credibility and offering engineers recognised

routes for career advancement

Notably, professionals completing accredited BCAS training will now be eligible to hold SOE-recognised postnominal titles such as EngTech, IEng, or CEng—acknowledging their technical competence and dedication to continued professional development

Executive Director of BCAS, Ashley Quartermann,

articulated the collaboration's value: "We are proud to partner with the SOE to help further enhance our technical support and training offer for our members and their customers. The SOE will be providing accreditation for many of our proven compressed air and vacuum training courses, as well as awarding postnominal status to recognise the technical qualifications of engineers in our industry

This partnership represents a significant stride in aligning rigorous training with formal professional recognition. Through it, both SOE and BCAS demonstrate their shared mission to equip engineers with the skills, support, and credentials necessary to excel in their careers.

# SOE Welcomes CPA as a Corporate Partner

**O**n 5 August 2025, the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) proudly announced the Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA) as a Corporate Partner, reinforcing a joint mission to elevate industry standards across the UK's construction plant and hire sector.

With over 2,000 member businesses, including independent operators and national hire firms, the CPA is the largest trade body representing the UK's plant-hire industry. Established more than 85 years ago, it plays a leading role in advising on legislation, policy guidance, skills development, technical standards, safety initiatives, and low-emission strategies.

This strategic alliance seeks to expand access to SOE's professional development offerings, including supporting progression toward Engineering Technician (EngTech), Incorporated Engineer (IEng), and



Chartered Engineer (CEng) status through the Engineering Council.

Peter Brown, Technical and Development Director at CPA, praised the existing collaboration: "We've always had a good collaboration with the SOE, who've provided welcomed support for our engineering apprenticeships development and look forward to further collaboration to support and enhance our apprenticeship development and on other engineering roles within the construction plant sector."

SOE's corporate partnerships offer participating organisations the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in engineering

excellence, invest in workforce development, and align with a respected professional institution. Benefits include exclusive access to CPD support, industry events, tailored membership packages, and technical resources.

This collaboration marks a significant step forward in strengthening technical competence, professional registration, and industry-wide best practice. By joining forces, SOE and CPA aim to ensure that engineering professionals in the plant-hire sector are well-supported, highly qualified, and committed to safety and sustainability.

## Unlock New Opportunities with SOE Corporate Partnership

Becoming a Corporate Partner of the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) places your organisation at the heart of engineering excellence. Corporate Partnership connects your business with a respected

professional body representing thousands of engineers across transport, plant and environmental sectors.

As a partner, your company demonstrates a clear commitment to professionalism, safety and high standards. You'll gain access to bespoke CPD opportunities, technical resources, and our Corporate Partner Approved CPD Directory, giving your workforce a pathway to professional registration and recognition.

Partnership also raises your profile through collaboration with SOE events, publications and campaigns, showcasing your organisation to a national audience of industry leaders and decision-makers.

Whether you want to support staff development, attract top talent, or enhance your reputation, SOE Corporate Partnership delivers lasting value.

**Find out more and apply today:**  
[soe.org.uk/corporate-partnership](https://soe.org.uk/corporate-partnership)

# Seargent Peter Snook Tribute

## IRTE NORTHERN CENTRE

**T**he IRTE Northern Centre has formally recognised the outstanding contribution of Sgt. Peter Snook of the Lancashire Police Commercial Vehicle Unit (CVU), following news of his retirement at the end of July 2025.

Over recent years, Sgt. Snook has been instrumental in re-establishing the CVU, building a dedicated team of officers committed to improving road safety and ensuring compliant HGV operations across Lancashire's road network. His leadership and expertise have been central to the unit's success, helping create safer conditions for both operators and the public.

Under his guidance, the team has become a visible and respected presence on the county's roads. Equipped with a mobile office, CVU officers carry out high-profile compliance checks at motorway service areas, ports, and at the Bamber Bridge vehicle check site near Preston, where they frequently



work in partnership with DVSA examiners.

The unit's remit has grown to cover a wide range of responsibilities, including vehicle inspections, tachograph compliance, vehicle weighing, load security, Hazchem regulations, and STGO movement operations. Sgt. Snook's extensive knowledge of regulatory requirements and compliance issues has provided a strong foundation for this work, ensuring high standards are consistently met.

Committee member Neil Mitchell highlighted Sgt. Snook's "commitment, professionalism,

and determination to uphold road safety" when informing the Northern Centre of his retirement. The committee unanimously agreed that his efforts deserved formal recognition, marking the occasion with appreciation for his long-standing service.

As Sgt. Snook steps back from his role, the IRTE Northern Centre reflected on the significant legacy he leaves behind: a strengthened CVU, safer roads, and a team of officers well-prepared to continue his mission. His impact on transport safety in Lancashire will be felt for many years to come.



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year marks 25 years since SOE was formed, and it's an exciting time to reflect on where we are and where we're going. As we celebrate this milestone, we're focused on the future of our industry. One of the most urgent issues we face is the engineering skills gap, which is affecting employers across every sector we serve. From a shortage of qualified technicians to the need for upskilling in new technologies, the pressure on the profession is growing.

That's why we're proud to be leading new initiatives to address this challenge head-on. A major step in this effort is our first-ever HGV Skills Challenge, launching next month. This event will showcase the expertise of technicians across the UK and celebrate the vital role they play in keeping our transport systems safe and efficient. It's a brilliant opportunity to raise the profile of our profession and attract new talent into the industry.

We're also preparing to welcome Caroline Harries as SOE's new President on 23 September. Caroline brings extensive experience, strong industry insight, and a clear passion for developing people. She will be the first female President in SOE's history, a milestone that reflects the positive change we're seeing in engineering leadership. I look forward to working alongside her as we continue to grow and modernise the organisation.

As we look to the next 25 years, SOE remains committed to supporting members, raising standards, and helping employers develop and retain the skills they need. Thank you for being part of this community and this mission.

**EMMA THOMPSON**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOE

## IRTE RESTRUCTURES SOE REGIONS

# Improving Members Access

**T**he Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) has restructured its regional network to ensure every member can access meaningful professional development opportunities, no matter where they are based.

Following a full review in 2024, the SOE found that while many Centres, BES Regions and regional groups had been supported with great dedication by volunteers, a number were unable to operate as intended. Challenges beyond the control of members meant that local engagement was not always as effective as it could be.

To address this, the SOE Trustee Board has taken the proactive step of merging several regions to create a more

streamlined structure. The new arrangement will strengthen access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD), events and networking opportunities, while concentrating resources to deliver consistent value for members across the UK and beyond.

Members can find their updated regional allocation by logging into the MySOE portal, selecting the 'Update Details' tab, and checking the information listed alongside their personal details.

The revised structure also reflects the changing needs of members. Recognising that time and travel can limit attendance at in-person events, SOE will expand its programme of online events, offering members the

flexibility to engage in CPD activities and hear from industry experts wherever they are.

This change is about building a stronger, smarter system that increases participation and delivers greater benefits for all. Members are encouraged to get involved by suggesting topics or volunteering to support events in their region.

The regional restructure is part of SOE's wider commitment to modernise the organisation and provide a more accessible, inclusive and professionally rewarding experience. Updates on events, contacts and opportunities will be shared in the months ahead.

**For any queries, please contact**  
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