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THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR SOE MEMBERS

WINTER 2025

ISSUE 27

The IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge Returns for its 13th Year

The IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge is back for its 13th anniversary and is poised to make waves as it invites the very best in bus and coach to compete against each other and put their skills to the test. This beloved annual event is a one-of-a-kind national competition that showcases the industry's brightest talents by testing them on several challenges that reflect the day-to-day realities of the sector.

Hosted at the state-of-the-art S&B Automotive Academy in Bristol, the 2025 edition of the Skills Challenge offers ambitious PSV technicians and apprentices the opportunity to work on some of the industry's most innovative technologies. Participants will compete against each other to win a number of prestigious awards, celebrating excellence across electrical, mechanical, and bodywork disciplines.

Since its inception, the Skills Challenge has provided a platform for over 700 aspiring technicians from large national companies like First Bus and Go-Ahead, as well as regional powerhouses such as Trentbarton and Lothian Buses, to test their skills and push their limits. This event is a testament to IRTE's commitment to driving innovation, workforce



“By embracing new technologies and challenging the status quo, we’re not just testing skills, we’re empowering the next generation to thrive in an environment where innovation and alternative fuels will become essential”

excellence, and empowering the next generation of bus and coach technicians.
“The IRTE Skills Challenge

isn't just celebrating excellence, it's redefining it. By embracing new technologies and challenging the status quo,

we're not just testing skills, we're empowering the next generation to thrive in an environment where innovation

and alternative fuels will become essential,” notes Emma Thompson, Executive Director of the SOE.

The 2025 edition of the Skills Challenge promises to be particularly engaging, with organisers promising new challenges and enhanced competition formats. The event will feature tasks designed to reflect the latest developments in bus and coach technology, including electric and hybrid vehicles, advanced diagnostics, and sustainable maintenance practices.

Registration for the 2025 challenge is now open, with bus and coach operators required to confirm their teams by April 30, 2025. The competition itself will take place from June 2 to 6, 2025, followed by an awards ceremony in July where the winners will be crowned.

IRTE's dedication to driving progress extends beyond the Skills Challenge. Their pioneering accreditation schemes, irtec and Workshop Accreditation, have become the gold standard in the bus and coach industry, shaping a landscape of unparalleled technical excellence. These initiatives equip the industry with a force of professionals who are not just adept but demonstrably proficient in their craft.

Through its focus on cutting-edge technology, championing skilled technicians, and nurturing future talent, IRTE is leading the charge in bus and coach advancements, paving the way for a secure, eco-friendly, and inclusive transportation landscape for generations to come.

FACTS & FIGURES

16

Award categories across apprentice, technician and team

700+

Competitors have taken part in the IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge

3

Test categories including electrical, mechanical and bodywork

4

Days of intense competition (teams only need to attend one)

INDUSTRY
UPDATES

UK DEFENCE BOOST: £9BN SUBMARINE DEAL TO CREATE OVER 1,000 JOBS

The UK government has announced a significant £9 billion submarine contract with Rolls-Royce Submarines, set to create over 1,000 new jobs and safeguard 4,000 existing positions. The eight-year 'Unity' contract aims to bolster national security and support the government's Plan for Change.

Defence Secretary John Healey MP hailed the investment as a long-term boost to British business, jobs, and national security. The deal with Rolls-Royce, a historic British success story, will support high-skilled UK jobs equipping thousands of submariners.

The Unity contract streamlines previous agreements, potentially saving over £400 million over its duration. It also reinforces the government's commitment to the 'triple-lock' on nuclear deterrent, including building four new nuclear submarines in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.

Sir Chris Gardner KBE, CEO of the Submarine Delivery Agency, described the contract as a key milestone in the SDA and Rolls-Royce partnership. Steve Carlier, president of Rolls-Royce Submarines, emphasised that the long-term contract enables investment in skills, equipment, and facilities crucial for protecting UK interests at home and abroad.

This landmark deal underscores the government's commitment to defence as an engine for growth and its dedication to maintaining the UK's nuclear deterrent in an increasingly uncertain world.

UK GOVERNMENT UNVEILS AMBITIOUS AI ACTION PLAN

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced a comprehensive action plan to bolster the UK's artificial intelligence sector. The plan, revealed on 13 January 2025, embraces all 50 recommendations from Matt Clifford's AI Opportunities Action Plan.

Key initiatives include establishing AI Growth Zones, with the first in Culham, Oxfordshire, to accelerate infrastructure development. The government also pledges to increase public compute capacity twentyfold, starting with a new supercomputer.

A National Data Library will be created to unlock public data's value securely, while a dedicated team will focus on building the UK's sovereign capabilities. Additionally, an AI Energy Council will address the technology's energy demands.

The announcement coincides with £14bn in private sector investment from tech firms, potentially creating over 13,000 jobs.

Welcome Back...

FROM THE EDITOR

As we reach the end of the first quarter of 2025, I welcome you all to another edition of SOE News. This edition reflects on the dynamic changes shaping our industry and highlights the achievements of our members who continue to set the standard for excellence in engineering. With new challenges and opportunities ahead, the collective expertise and commitment of you, our members, highlights just how critical professional growth remain the foundation of the success of not just the SOE but the industry as a whole.

In light of this drive for professional growth we are pleased to announce the return of the IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge for its 13th year. This annual competition has become a cornerstone of the sector, allowing the best and brightest to showcase their talents and compete in a setting that parallels real-world industry challenges. As the transport sector embraces new technologies, such as electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles, fostering these skills is more crucial than ever. IRTE's continued efforts to drive innovation and professional excellence through initiatives like the Skills Challenge and the irtec accreditation scheme highlight our commitment to upholding the highest industry standards.

Another exciting development is SOE's newly announced partnership with Beverley Bell Consulting, which you can read more about below, which offers our IRTE members exclusive access to discounted training courses. In a constantly

“As we step into this new year, I encourage all our members to take full advantage of the resources, events, and opportunities available through SOE”



evolving regulatory landscape, professional development is not just a necessity, it's a strategic advantage. From Transport Manager CPC qualifications to bespoke training solutions, this collaboration is designed to ensure that our members have the resources to stay ahead of the curve as well as operate in a safe and efficient environment.

Throughout this issue we also explore the broader engineering landscape, with insights into major developments such as the UK government's £9 billion submarine contract with Rolls-Royce Submarines. This investment promises to generate over 1,000 new jobs while reinforcing national security and supporting high-skilled engineering roles. As well as this, the unveiling of an ambitious AI Action Plan signals the UK's determination to position itself at the forefront of artificial intelligence and technological innovation. With significant private sector investments flowing into AI development. Love it or hate it this sector is predicted to transform industries and create new opportunities for engineering professionals.

However, not all news is positive. The UK manufacturing sector has faced a downturn, slipping to twelfth place in global rankings for the first

time. This decline underscores the urgent need for investment in skills, infrastructure, and innovation to remain competitive on the world stage. The SOE, recognise the importance of addressing these challenges head-on, advocating for policies that support engineering excellence and workforce development.

Looking ahead to the future of 2025, the SOE are actively participating in major industry events, including the Microlise Transport Conference and the Commercial Vehicle Show. These platforms offer invaluable opportunities to engage with industry leaders, explore emerging trends, and share best practices that will shape the future of transport engineering. The launch of the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS) at the CV Show further demonstrates the SOE's commitment to improving vehicle maintenance standards and operational efficiency across the sector.

In addition to all this, the SOE is dedicated to championing mentoring as a key driver of professional growth. Our recently launched mentoring programme has already connected experienced professionals with those seeking guidance in their careers. By fostering these relationships,

we are helping to build a more resilient, skilled, and well-supported workforce prepared for the challenges ahead.

This issue also features celebrating our members as we highlight the 40 and 50 anniversaries of our members alongside some regional updates, including insights from the IRTE Northern Centre's CPD sessions, the Cornwall Centre's engagement with DVSA on roadworthiness, and the Scottish Ayrshire Centre's discussion on achieving Net Zero by 2045. These events reflect the vibrant discussions taking place across the SOE network, demonstrating our members' commitment to staying informed and proactive in their respective fields.

As we step into this new year, I encourage all our members to take full advantage of the resources, events, and opportunities available through SOE. Whether through participation in skills challenges, professional training, or mentorship, now is the time to invest in your future and contribute to the ongoing advancement of our industry.

Chris Knight
PR & Communications Officer

Do you have a story to share?
Get in touch with me at:
editor@soe.org.uk

SOE PARTNERSHIP WITH BEVERLEY BELL CONSULTING

Enhanced Training for IRTE Members

We are delighted to announce a new partnership between the SOE and Beverley Bell Consulting, designed to enhance the professional development opportunities available to our IRTE members.

This collaboration will provide our members with exclusive benefits, including a 10% discount on a range of training and bespoke courses offered by Beverley Bell Consulting.

10 Day Transport Manager CPC Course

This comprehensive course is ideal for individuals seeking to become transport managers. It covers all necessary modules to gain the qualification required

for managing a fleet of large vehicles professionally and in a legally compliant manner.

2 Day Transport Manager Refresher Course

Tailored for existing transport managers, this refresher course ensures they stay updated on evolving industry legislation and

best practices. It emphasises continuous management and compliance, crucial for safeguarding operator licenses.

Bespoke Training Courses

These customised courses cater to specific business needs, focusing on compliance, safety, and operational efficiency. They are designed to enhance staff skills and reinforce company standards

Our IRTE members will benefit significantly from this partnership. The 10% discount on training courses makes professional development more accessible and cost-effective, allowing our members to enhance their skills without incurring excessive costs. Beverley Bell Consulting's

team of industry renowned experts delivers high-quality training that is both engaging and practical, ensuring participants can apply their knowledge effectively in the workplace. Additionally, their courses are regularly updated to reflect changes in transport regulations, ensuring our members remain compliant and competitive.

This partnership underscores our ongoing commitment to supporting the professional growth and success of our members. By offering these discounts, we aim to foster a community of well-equipped and informed transport professionals who can drive success and safety in their organisations.



Long Service Awards

This edition marks the anniversary of our members who have achieved long service in their professional sector. We congratulate those members, who have all shown great commitment and dedication to engineering, and we thank them for their loyal service.



40-year service

Mr Adrian John Marshall EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Alan Cooper AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Alan Field EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Alan George Howells MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Alan Latimer EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Alan Rayner EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Alexander McFarlane MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Andrew Flintoff IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Anthony John Banks MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Antony John Biggs AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Archibald Macdonald Cunningham IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Athelstan Stoute MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Bramwell Stuart Carter MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Brian Malcolm Todhunter MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Charles Stewart Galbraith IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Dr Chi Moon Li MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Christopher David Box IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Christopher Grime EngTech CEnv FSOE FIRTE
 Mr Christopher Janis Stepe AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Christopher Lateu Dalton IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Christopher Steward AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Christopher Watcham MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Colin Eveleigh IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr David John Batchelor AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr David John Edwards IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr David John Perry AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr David John Pope EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr David Michael Allen EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Dean Jonathan Langton AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Edwin Paul Cross FSOE FIRTE
 Mr Frank Simon Lockyer EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Gareth James MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Gary Crookes MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Geoffrey George Dibbs MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Gerald Patrick Jones IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Gordon Talbot MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Graham Burns-Salmond AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Henry Clive Richardson AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Hugh Dick AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Ian Frederick Miller MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Ian George Shaw IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Ian Thomas Stevens EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr James Anthony Williamson EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr James Ellis Paterson MSOE MIRTE
 Mr James George Standerwick EngTech MSOE MIRTE LCGI
 Mr James Murray AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr John Andrew Parkinson AMSOE AMIRTE

Mr John Dobson MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr John Henry Muers MSOE MIRTE
 Mr John M Braithwaite IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr John Michael Outhwaite AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr John Millett MSOE MIRTE
 Mr John Potts IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Joseph William Gaskell MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Julian Fedrick AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Julian Paul Randall IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Kevin Anthony Wheeler MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Kevin Joseph Putt MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Kevin Martyn Ditchburn EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Lalith Sendapperuma FSOE FIPlantE
 Mr Mark Anthony Rowe EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Michael Christopher Kennedy AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Michael Gerard Joyce CEng FSOE FIRTE
 Mr Michael James Evans EngTech AMSOE AMIPlantE
 Mr Michael Joseph Corrigan IEng MSOE MIRTE LCGI
 Mr Mike Tilling CEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Neil Andrew Crump AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Nicholas James Warner MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Nigel Christopher Arthur Barretto EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Patrick Michael Smyth AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Patrick William Mark Waterman MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Paul Raymond Stone AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Paul Rowbotham MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Paul Swannock FSOE FIPlantE
 Mr Philip Fowler EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Philip Mark Ullock EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Ravinder Singh Sandhu MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Roger Flavel AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Roy Brindley AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Stephen Brown IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Stephen Lynch AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Stephen Lyndon Pickering IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Steven John Mount AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Steven Vile IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr Tak Fat Li MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Terence Ford AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Terry Neal Orchard IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Terry Taylor Graham EngTech HonFSOE HonFIRTE
 Dr Thomas Shelley FSOE FIPlantE
 Mr Timothy Patrick Murphy EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Wesley David Burnside MSOE MIRTE
 Mr William Marshall Cassells CEng FSOE FIPlantE
 Mr William Paul Procter AMSOE AMIRTE



50-year service

Mr Anthony Victor Cole EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Arthur Henry Gregory MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Barry Alfred Warner EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Barry Joseph Jones IEng MSOE MIRTE MIPlantE
 Mr Brendan Martin Sloan IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Brian Holtam IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Brian Wildsmith IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Christopher John Hendy EngTech MSOE MIRTE LCGI
 Mr Colin Robert Harding EngTech MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr David John Sheppard MSOE MIRTE
 Mr David Redden AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr Derek Leonard Conroy AMSOE AMIRTE
 Mr James Douglas Thompson AMSOE AMIRTE

Mr John Colin Bacon MSOE MIRTE
 Mr John Edward Goodson IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr John Watkin IEng FSOE FIPlantE
 Mr Joseph Graham IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Keith Strachan IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Kevin Charles Atkins EngTech MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Melville Durrant MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Pierre Malcolm Middleton Rayne CEng CEnv FSOE FIRTE
 Mr Raymond Arthur Collington IEng MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Robert Craig MSOE MIRTE
 Mr Tom Charlton IEng MSOE MIPlantE
 Mr William Barras MSOE MIRTE

INDUSTRY UPDATES

NUCLEAR POWER SURGES DESPITE HIGH COSTS, IEA REPORT REVEALS

The global nuclear sector is experiencing a remarkable resurgence, according to a recent report from the International Energy Agency (IEA). Despite concerns over escalating costs, nuclear power is playing an increasingly vital role in the world's energy mix.

The report highlights a significant uptake in nuclear power plant construction, with several countries investing heavily in new reactors. This surge is driven by the pressing need for low-carbon energy sources to combat climate change and ensure energy security.

Interestingly, the boom comes despite the hefty price tag associated with nuclear projects. The IEA notes that while costs remain a challenge, many nations view nuclear as a crucial component of their long-term energy strategies.

Advanced reactor designs and small modular reactors (SMRs) are garnering particular attention, promising improved safety features and potentially lower costs. However, the report cautions that realising these benefits will require substantial investment and regulatory support.

As the world grapples with the dual challenges of energy security and decarbonisation, nuclear power's resurgence signals a shift in global energy priorities. The coming years will likely see continued growth in this sector.

UK MANUFACTURING SLUMPS TO TWELFTH IN GLOBAL RANKINGS

The UK manufacturing sector dropped to twelfth in global productivity rankings slipping to its lowest position in over a decade. Industry analysts cite persistent supply chain disruptions, and soaring energy costs as key factors behind the decline. Competitors in Germany, the US, and emerging Asian economies have outpaced British firms in digitisation and workforce upskilling, exacerbating the gap.

Output in critical sectors such as automotive and aerospace has stagnated, with firms struggling to rebound from post-Brexit trade complexities and reduced foreign investment. A recent survey revealed that over 60% of manufacturers view labour shortages as a "severe" constraint, compounding delays and inefficiencies.

Trade bodies have warned that the drop threatens the UK's ambition to become a "global manufacturing hub," urging immediate government intervention. Critics highlight inadequate funding for green technologies.

INDUSTRY
UPDATESGROWING PREFERENCE
FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

A new survey released for National Apprenticeship Week shows growing enthusiasm among young people for apprenticeships, with 60% preferring them over university. The appeal lies in job security, high starting salaries, and practical, hands-on experience. Additionally, 86% of respondents believe apprenticeships promote social mobility, offering alternative pathways to career success.

Despite the growing interest, barriers persist. Limited opportunities and insufficient information are significant obstacles, with 44% of young people feeling uninformed about relevant apprenticeships. Many also believe employers should expand apprenticeship schemes alongside graduate programmes to meet rising demand.

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers are particularly popular, as they are perceived to offer the most job security. Over half of those surveyed value earning while learning, while 36% want to avoid student debt.

Richard Hamer, HR Director of Education and Skills at BAE Systems, highlighted the importance of vocational training in meeting the career aspirations of the next generation. In response to this demand, BAE Systems plans to recruit over 2,400 new apprentices, undergraduates, and graduates in 2025, contributing to a total of around 6,500 in training, which will make up approximately 15% of its UK workforce.

SELF-REPAIRING
ASPHALT OFFERS
SOLUTION TO UK'S
POTHOLE PLAGUE

Researchers at King's College London and Swansea University are pioneering self-healing asphalt to tackle the UK's pothole problem. This innovative material uses bio-based microcapsules that release recycled oils when cracks appear, enabling the asphalt to repair itself without human intervention. By preventing small cracks from expanding into potholes, this technology could significantly reduce the £143.5 million spent annually on road repairs in England and Wales.

The self-healing asphalt is also designed with sustainability in mind, incorporating recycled materials and biomass waste, making it an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional road surfaces. The researchers believe this approach could extend road lifespans, lower maintenance costs, and reduce traffic disruptions.

Trials are ongoing to assess the durability and effectiveness of this smart asphalt under various weather and traffic conditions. If successful, this breakthrough could revolutionise road maintenance and provide a long-term solution.

IRTE TO LEAD THE SKILLS WORKSHOP AT MICROLISE TRANSPORT CONFERENCE 2025

A Must-Attend Event for
Transport Industry Leaders

The IRTE is excited to announce its participation in the Microlise Transport Conference 2025, one of Europe's premier events for transport and logistics professionals.

This year's conference promises unparalleled opportunities to connect with C-suite executives, key decision-makers, and industry innovators, making it the ideal platform for networking, knowledge-sharing, and shaping the future of transport engineering.

As a leader in supporting excellence within the road transport industry, the IRTE will host three critical sessions leading conversations pertaining to people and skills in the sector. These sessions are designed to equip transport leaders, engineers, and technicians with actionable insights to drive compliance, safety, and workforce development. Here's what you can expect:

**SESSION 1
Future-Proofing Your
Workforce – Career Mapping
for Road Transport Engineers**
*Speaker: Emma Thompson
MSOE, Executive Director, SOE*

The transport sector is evolving rapidly, and retaining a skilled workforce is more critical than ever. In this session, Emma Thompson will unveil a comprehensive IRTE Skills Map, a crucial tool in every engineer's arsenal to help assess current competencies, identify gaps, and build tailored CPD programmes. Whether you're preparing for emerging technologies or

regulatory shifts, this workshop will empower you to unlock your team's potential. Bonus: All attendees will receive a free copy of the IRTE Skills Map.

**SESSION 2
Raising the Benchmark for
Competent Technicians Across
the Industry**
*Speaker: Richard Belton CAE
FIMI MSOE MIRTE, Quality
Director, S&B Automotive
Academy*

Safety and ethical standards are non-negotiable in transport engineering. Richard Belton, Chair of the irtec Steering Group, will explore how the irtec accreditation validates technician competence in HGV, PSV, LEV, and related sectors. Learn how irtec-qualified technicians reduce operational risks, cut long-term costs, and elevate your organisation's reputation.

This session is a must for leaders prioritising compliance, efficiency, and industry best practices.

**SESSION 3
A Deep Dive into the New
Maintenance Provision Rating
Scheme (MPRS)**
*Speaker: Nick Elliott MIRTE
MSOE MiCLT, Specialist
Transport Consultant & IRTE
Professional Sector Council
Chair*

Launching in late Spring 2025, the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS) will redefine compliance standards for commercial vehicle workshops. Backed by the Traffic Commissioners and government bodies, MPRS aligns

“Whether it's future-proofing your workforce, aligning with new compliance standards, or implementing best safety practices, this event offers invaluable insights.”

**Emma Thompson,
Executive Director, SOE**

maintenance practices with future industry demands.

Nick Elliott, steering this initiative through IRTE, will break down the scheme's requirements, benefits, and how achieving an MPRS rating can enhance your facility's credibility and operational excellence.

Why Attend?

Microlise isn't just another industry event, it's a dynamic hub where the future of transport engineering is moulded and shaped. Attendees

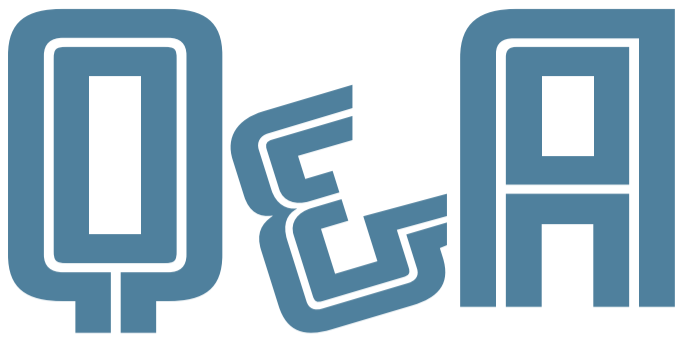
have the opportunity to immerse themselves in an environment designed to foster meaningful connections and actionable growth.

Networking with industry leaders is at the heart of this event. Engage directly with C-suite executives, policymakers, and innovators who are driving transformative change across the transport and logistics sector. These interactions offers the opportunity to forge partnerships, share challenges, and gain firsthand insights into emerging trends that could redefine your organisation's trajectory.

IRTE's Workshops, led by some of the industry's foremost experts, will equip attendees with cutting-edge strategies to tackle pressing industry challenges. In a sector where regulatory demands and technological advancements move swiftly, staying ahead is critical for a safe and efficient workforce. Learn how to future-proof your workforce through targeted skills development, align with evolving compliance standards, and implement safety practices.

Be part of the conversation shaping the next chapter of transport engineering.

The Microlise Transport Conference 2025 will take place on the 18th March at the Coventry Building Society Arena. Don't miss the chance to be part of the future of transport engineering. This is your chance to connect with industry leaders, discover the latest innovations, and ensure your organisation stays ahead of the curve.



Aneeb Chaudhry

Engineering Excellence: Aneeb's Journey from Chemical Engineering to Leading Innovation at Brenntag

Can you tell us about your educational background and how you got into engineering? What inspired you to pursue a career in engineering?

My educational background includes a First-Class Honors MEng in Chemical Engineering from the University of Surrey, complemented by a year of industrial experience at Bouygues Energies & Services UK. My father, a civil engineer, served as a constant source of inspiration, sparking my early interest in the field. The combination of my passion for mathematics, my desire for practical application, and my father's guidance led me to pursue a career in engineering. Additionally, my college chemistry teacher played a crucial role in encouraging me to explore the specific field of chemical engineering.

Can you outline your career journey?

I gained valuable experience at Bouygues during my university years, working summers and completing an industrial placement. After graduating, I joined Brenntag as an Engineering Coordinator in 2017. My primary responsibilities include overseeing capital projects and managing assets across the Brenntag network.

What are some key milestones or achievements in your career?

I successfully implemented the Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) across the Brenntag UK&I network, a significant achievement that streamlined maintenance operations and improved efficiency. In recognition of my contributions, I was awarded the Chemical Business Association Young Person of the Year in 2020. My dedication and performance led to my promotion to Process Engineering Manager UK&I in 2021.

What is your current role, and what are your primary responsibilities? Can you describe a typical day at work for you?

As Process Engineering



Manager UK & Ireland, I ensure the successful and safe delivery of the annual capital projects budget. I also actively support the Process Safety Management program within UK & Ireland and serve as an EMEA auditor. My regular interactions with competent authorities such as the EA and HSE are essential to maintaining compliance. A typical day varies depending on business needs. It can involve project meetings, safety risk assessments like HAZOPs, and problem-solving related to assets across the UK & Ireland network.

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

One of my biggest challenges is managing the volume of budgeted and unbudgeted projects, especially those related to breakdowns that impact production. Effective communication with stakeholders is crucial in such situations. Additionally, working with aging plants, particularly those acquired as

part of network expansions, presents unique challenges.

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

I'm particularly proud of my role in implementing a Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) across Brenntag UK & Ireland's network of sites. I led the evaluation of potential systems, trialed them, and selected the most suitable solution based on feedback from site teams. After presenting the proposed system to Brenntag's senior management and securing £100k in funding, I developed a phased implementation plan for all 18 UK&I locations. The success of this project led to its adoption in Brenntag Nordic and the integration of all new acquisitions into the system.

This accomplishment was recognized with the Chemical Business Association's Young Person of the Year award in 2020. The CMMS has significantly improved efficiency and enhanced safety across our operations. My

CHARTERED WEEK

This year, we proudly celebrated Chartered Week under the theme "Celebrating Trusted Professionals", spotlighting the indispensable role of chartered engineers and specialists in upholding integrity, expertise, and innovation across industries.

By championing this year's theme, we not only honoured the achievements of chartered individuals but also inspired emerging professionals to pursue accreditation as a hallmark of quality and trust in an ever-evolving global landscape.

contributions to this project demonstrate my ability to drive complex initiatives, collaborate effectively with cross-functional teams, and deliver tangible results.

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

I believe technical expertise, leadership skills, problem-solving abilities, effective communication, and strong planning and organizational skills are essential for success in my field.

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

I joined the Society of Engineers (SOE) because I was seeking a professional membership that aligned with my career path in the chemical distribution sector. My colleague, Andrew Fletcher, introduced me to SOE, and I quickly realised it was the perfect fit.

SOE played a pivotal role in helping me achieve Chartered Engineer status with the Engineering Council. Their support throughout the chartership process, including encouraging me to apply for chartership, clearly defined process and providing regular updates. Thanks to SOE's efficient and streamlined process, I was able to obtain my chartership quickly, which has significantly enhanced my career. I'm grateful for the support and opportunities that SOE has provided.

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

As an aspiring engineer or someone early in their career, I would offer the following advice:

- Try as many different things

as possible to get invaluable hands-on experience. This could involve internships, co-op programs, or part-time work in various engineering roles.

- A mentor can provide guidance, support, and valuable insights as you navigate your career. Look for mentors within your organisation or through professional networks.
- Participate in events, workshops, and networking opportunities offered by professional engineering organisations such as SOE. This will help you stay updated on industry trends, connect with like-minded individuals, and expand your professional network.
- The field of engineering is constantly evolving, so it's important to stay curious and keep learning. Pursue additional certifications, attend conferences, and take advantage of online courses to enhance your skills.

What are your professional goals for the future?

I'm currently developing my skills in project management and process safety management. My goal is to become a respected Subject Matter Expert in these fields.

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

Engineering is undergoing a rapid transformation, driven by technological advancements, sustainability initiatives, and the need for innovative solutions. Engineers will be at the forefront of shaping the future, developing sustainable technologies, harnessing the power of AI, advancing healthcare, and driving digital transformation.

We are always looking for members to share their career stories and achievements. If you've made a significant impact in your field, we'd love to feature you in a case study to celebrate your success. To get involved, contact Chris Knight at christopher.knight@soe.org.uk and let us highlight your contributions to the industry. Share your journey today!

"SOE played a pivotal role in helping me achieve Chartered Engineer status with the Engineering Council. Their support throughout the chartership process, including encouraging me to apply for chartership, clearly defined process and providing regular updates"

IRTE Returns to Commercial Vehicle Show 2025 with Major Industry Initiatives

The SOE has confirmed its return to the Commercial Vehicle Show (CV Show) in April 2025, where the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE), will take centre stage at stand 5C24. Held at Birmingham's NEC, the event – Britain's largest commercial vehicle expo – will serve as a platform to launch transformative industry schemes and amplify support for engineers' professional growth.

A Key Announcement at the 2025 show will be the official launch of the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS). Following a successful pilot, this initiative aims to revolutionise vehicle maintenance practices by providing workshops and facilities with a structured framework to assess and elevate operational standards.

Developed by IRTE, the MPRS is designed to tackle critical challenges in the maintenance sector, ensuring higher standards and greater reliability across the industry. One of its key objectives is to promote consistency by establishing clear and uniform benchmarks for maintenance quality, allowing organisations to adhere to best practices and achieve a standardised level of service.

Ultimately, the MPRS fosters greater trust among customers and industry stakeholders.

In addition to the technical innovations, IRTE's presence at the CV Show will emphasise its commitment to nurturing talent across the road transport sector. A dedicated team will offer tailored guidance on career advancement, including:

Mentoring Programmes

Our newly expanded mentoring platform provides engineers with direct access to experienced professionals, offering invaluable



support and guidance at every stage of their careers. Whether individuals are seeking professional registration, transitioning into management roles, or looking to refine their skill sets, this platform is designed to help them achieve their goals.

One of the key benefits of the programme is its support for engineers pursuing professional registration, including EngTech, IEng, CEng, and environmental certifications. By connecting with seasoned mentors, participants receive expert advice on meeting the required standards, compiling evidence, and navigating the application process with confidence.

For those moving into management positions, the platform provides guidance on the challenges associated with leadership, helping engineers develop the skills necessary to manage teams, oversee projects, and take on greater responsibilities within their organisations.

Additionally, the programme addresses the need to balance technical expertise with essential project management and communication skills. Engineers can refine their ability to lead projects effectively, collaborate with diverse teams, and communicate complex technical information clearly and persuasively.

By fostering meaningful mentor-mentee relationships, the expanded platform aims to support engineers in their

professional growth, enhance industry standards, and strengthen the engineering community as a whole.

Career Mapping Resources

Attendees will have the opportunity to collect the Institute of Road Transport Engineers' (IRTE) comprehensive career guide, a vital resource designed to map out clear pathways for professional growth in operations engineering. This guide offers

actionable insights and structured advice to help individuals advance their careers, with a focus on key areas such as:

Leveraging Continuing Professional Development (CPD):

Guidance on selecting relevant CPD opportunities, tracking progress, and aligning learning goals with industry demands to maintain a competitive edge.

Navigating Emerging Fields:

Expert advice on breaking into high-growth sectors like sustainability and decarbonisation, including skill-building tips and how to align existing expertise with innovative technologies and regulations.

In addition to the career guide, Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) staff will host interactive sessions to demonstrate the value of SOE membership. They will provide a detailed overview of how membership fosters career advancement through access to industry networks (connecting professionals to peers and mentors), specialised training events (including workshops on cutting-edge engineering trends), and exclusive resources (such as technical journals and online tools). The team will also emphasize SOE's role in supporting lifelong learning, from early-career certifications to senior-level leadership programs, and how this commitment enhances employability in a rapidly evolving job market.

By combining IRTE's actionable career roadmap with SOE's membership benefits, attendees will leave equipped to strategically navigate their professional journeys and capitalize on opportunities in both established and emerging engineering fields.



ROBIN BATES, MEMBERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS LEAD

The Power of Mentoring in Engineering

In today's fast-paced operations engineering landscape, mentoring has emerged as a vital tool for professional growth and development. At the SOE we recognise the impact mentoring has on careers, and we are committed to providing structured mentoring that connects aspiring engineers with seasoned professionals.

Mentoring offers a unique opportunity for individuals to gain insights from experienced practitioners who have

navigated similar challenges and achieved success in their fields. This guidance is invaluable for those seeking to enhance their technical skills, transition into leadership roles, or

explore new areas such as sustainability and decarbonisation.

The SOE mentoring programme is designed to be flexible and supportive, allowing mentees to set goals and work towards them with the guidance of their mentors.

This partnership not only fosters personal growth but also contributes to a stronger, more resilient industry by ensuring that knowledge and best practices are shared across generations.

In an era where technological advancements and environmental pressures are reshaping the operations engineering sector, mentorship plays a crucial role in equipping professionals with the skills and confidence needed to drive innovation and lead

change. By embracing mentorship, we can build a more collaborative and dynamic community that supports lifelong learning and career progression.

Whether you are an experienced engineer looking to give back or an early-career professional seeking guidance, the SOE invites you to explore the benefits of mentoring. Together, we can unlock potential, enhance industry standards, and empower the next generation of leaders in operations engineering.



Wrightbus Shares Vision for UK Bus and Coach Market

IRTE NORTHERN CENTRE

The IRTE Northern Centre kicked off its 2025 CPD presentations with a compelling session by David Porter, Head of Coach Sales at Wrightbus UK. Held at the Barton Manor Hotel in Preston, the event drew members and guests alike who were treated to an insightful look into Wrightbus's history, current operations, and ambitious future plans.

David Porter began by sharing his extensive background in the coach industry, having worked with industry giants like Volvo and Van Hool before joining Wrightbus in 2024. He then took the audience through Wrightbus's journey, from its

humble beginnings in Northern Ireland in the late 1940s to its current status as a leading UK bus manufacturer.

Porter highlighted Wrightbus's remarkable turnaround after being acquired by Jo Bamford in 2019. Following significant investment and restructuring, the company has not only recovered but is now thriving, with a focus on zero-emission technologies. Wrightbus offers a diverse range of products, including electric, diesel, and hydrogen-powered buses for both single and double-decker operations.

A key focus of the presentation was Wrightbus's pioneering work on a hydrogen fuel cell coach for the UK

market. Porter delved into the project's complexities, covering aspects such as fuel storage, operational distance, driveline design, and compliance with accessibility standards. This initiative underscores Wrightbus's commitment to decarbonising public transport and meeting the evolving needs of coach operators.

The evening concluded with a lively Q&A session, followed by a heartfelt thank you from Sam Archer, a Northern Centre committee member and Past Hon. Chairman, for David Porter's engaging and informative presentation. The event provided valuable insights into Wrightbus's vision for the future of sustainable transport in the UK.



Celebrating Achievements

As we step into a new quarter, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on some of our recent successes and the tremendous progress we've made together. This is a time to celebrate the collective achievements and continue building on the strong foundation we've set in the past months.

One of the key highlights of our journey so far was the first successful joint Professional Sector Meeting with BES (British Engineering Society) and IPlantE (Institute of Plant Engineers) held on 4 February. This collaboration marked an important milestone and proved to be an excellent platform for sharing insights, building connections, and strengthening our approach to supporting our members. The meeting demonstrated the power of collaboration, as professionals from both sectors came together to discuss industry challenges, best practices, and opportunities for innovation. It's a testament to the value of working together in new and creative ways, something that will continue to enhance our sector's overall success moving forward.

In addition to this, we've made significant contributions towards the UK's Net Zero ambitions through several key initiatives. One notable effort was our comprehensive review of the UK Government's Energy White Paper, Powering Our Net Zero Future. We took a deep dive into the document, emphasising the importance of safe, sustainable, and ethical practices in the journey to eliminate CO₂ emissions from equipment operations. This is a crucial area for us, as it aligns with our core values of fostering environmental responsibility in engineering. Moreover, SOE representatives actively participated in major events like Net Zero Week, where we shared valuable insights that highlighted our commitment to advancing engineering standards while driving the transition to a low-carbon future. Through these efforts, SOE has continually demonstrated its unwavering dedication to supporting the UK's environmental goals.

On the member development front, we remain focused on enhancing our offerings to better support professional growth. The mentoring platform, which launched in December, has already been a great success, providing valuable guidance and fostering meaningful relationships among members. Looking ahead, we are excited to introduce a new CPD (Continuing Professional Development) platform later this quarter. This platform will be a game-changer, offering a wealth of content, giving our members easy access to continuous learning opportunities and professional development, all at their fingertips.

These initiatives reflect our ongoing efforts to empower our members and ensure they are equipped with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to thrive in their careers. With these programs in place, we are well on our way to achieving even greater success. I look forward to continuing this journey together, building on the momentum we've gained and driving positive change for the future.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication and support. Together, we are making a difference.

Emma Thompson

Executive Director

Lecture on Net Zero by 2045

IRTE SCOTTISH AYRSHIRE CENTRE

Scottish Engineering hosted a lecture on the move towards Net Zero by 2045, with former President John Campbell setting the stage by explaining the organisation's century-long history in supporting various industries. Originally focused on heavy industry and shipbuilding, Scottish Engineering now boasts 550 members spanning manufacturing, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

The presentation was led by Eric Boinard, Net Zero Lead, who provided a detailed insight into how the transition to Net Zero by 2050 (or 2045 in Scotland) will impact businesses across all sectors. This target, backed

by government legislation, aims to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions to Net Zero by the set dates. The shift will affect businesses directly and indirectly, with significant changes already underway.

A key regulatory move is UK PPN 06/21, which requires suppliers for major government contracts to commit to achieving Net Zero by 2050. This policy encourages adherence to Greenhouse Gas Protocol and Reporting Standards. Even companies not directly involved in government contracts will be impacted as their suppliers' green credentials will also affect their standing. Companies with strong environmental credentials could gain a

competitive advantage in securing business, as both suppliers and customers seek to enhance their own green image.

Another important regulation is the Cross Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which will impose tariffs on goods entering the EU that don't meet their emission standards. While road transport is not yet included, this could change in the future.

For road transport, the UK has set ambitious goals: by 2035, new HGVs under 26 tonnes must be zero-emission, and by 2040, this will apply to all HGVs. The government aims to electrify the van sector by 2035, with £49.2 million in support and an expected £500 million in private investment.

DVSA Presentation on Roadworthiness and Safety

IRTE CORNWALL CENTRE

The IRTE Cornwall Centre hosted a presentation by Andrew Ball and Lee Balsdon, Senior Enforcement Officers from the Southwest Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

The talk, attended by around thirty people, including transport managers, operators, fleet mechanics, and consultants, provided valuable insights into local and national trends in roadside prohibitions and the latest guidance from the Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness.

Andrew Ball discussed several key issues, including the ongoing challenge of drivers not completing their required

CPC training on time. He also highlighted concerns around drivers failing to take adequate rest breaks, citing an example of a driver who took only 25 and 20-minute breaks within a 4.5-hour driving period. Additionally, he confirmed that the old Redruth GVTs building, which had served the local transport sector since 1968, was nearing its demolition.

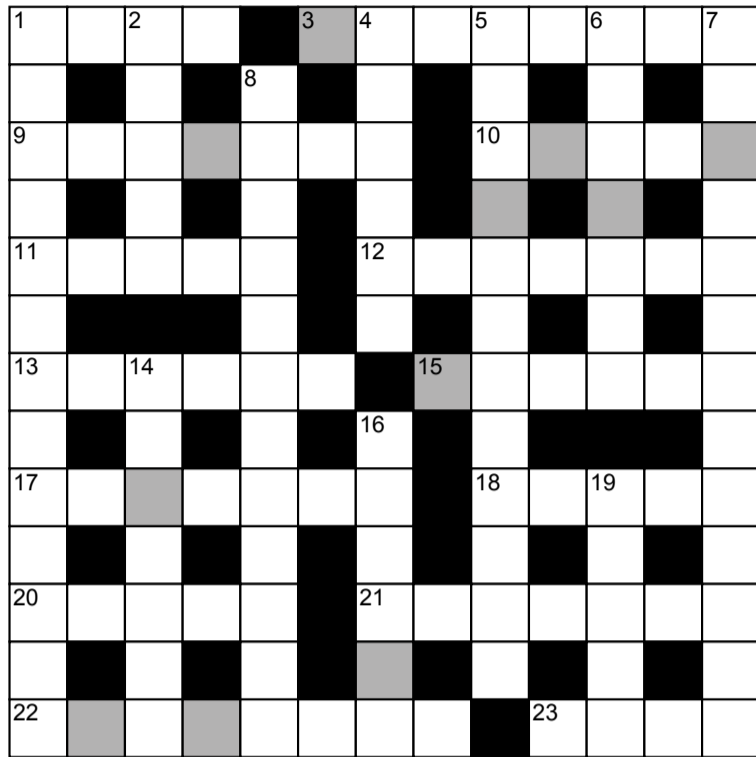
A key topic of the presentation was the importance of driver daily checks for road safety and operator compliance. Both Andrew and Lee emphasized that these checks must be carried out to standard to ensure the safety of commercial vehicles.

Lee Balsdon also shared insights on the use of Electronic Brake Performance Monitoring Systems (EBPMS), which help monitor in-service braking performance and generate safety inspection reports. He stressed the importance of properly interpreting and acting on data from these systems to maintain vehicle safety and prevent accidents.

During the Q&A session, attendees raised questions about the correct timing for Road Brake Tests (RBT) in relation to safety inspections, as well as the use of private premises for roadside checks.

COFFEE BREAK

Crossword



- Across**
- 1 Lazy (4)
 - 3 Representative example (8)
 - 9 Have a positive impact (7)
 - 10 Studies and comprehends text (5)
 - 11 Find the solution (5)
 - 12 Offensively discourteous (7)
 - 13 Write a music score (6)
 - 15 Cold symptom (6)
 - 17 Plunderers (7)
 - 18 Virile (5)
 - 20 Subject of a talk (5)
 - 21 Gets away (7)
 - 22 Wood preserver (8)
 - 23 Repudiate (4)
- Down**
- 1 Peculiar or individual (13)
 - 2 Folded-back part of a coat (5)
 - 4 Region of France (6)
 - 5 Physics of movement through air (12)
 - 6 Form a mental picture (7)
 - 7 Naughtily (13)
 - 8 Notwithstanding (12)
 - 14 Ancient war galley (7)
 - 16 Upward slope (6)
 - 19 Small woodland (5)

Unscramble

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

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

SuDoku

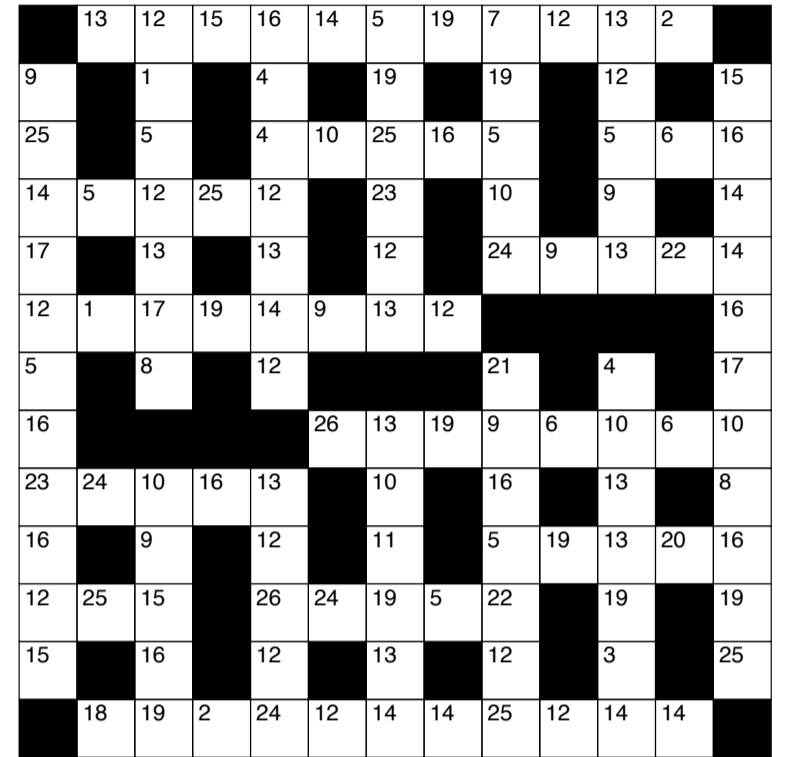
The rules of the game are simple: each of the nine blocks has to contain all the numbers 1-9 within its squares. Each number can only appear once in a row, column or box. Each vertical nine-square column, or horizontal nine-square line across, within the larger square, must also contain the numbers 1-9,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

Every puzzle has just one correct solution.

	2							8	5
		4				6	1		
	1		8				4		
						8			3
	5			1				4	
3			4						
		6			2		1		
		8	1			9			
4	3							2	

Find this month's puzzle solutions on our website: soe.org.uk

Codeword



A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	V	8	9	10	11	Z	12	13											
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	L	25	26												

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

WIN!
A £25
Amazon gift card



For your chance to win, simply complete all the puzzles and return to:
✉ SOE News, 22 Greencoat Place, Westminster, London, SW1P 1PR.

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Email:



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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ISSN 2632-3214

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PRINT

Pensord Press Ltd, CF48 3TD

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Company No. 3667147
Registered Charity No.1081753

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