



**03** IRTE put on a Show at the Commercial Vehicle Show 2025



**04** SOE's Pathways to Progress launched to Support Career Drives



**05** Howard Seymour Reflects on Early Beginnings to SOE Presidency



**06** Record-Breaking Number of Entries for IRTE Skills Challenge

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THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR SOE MEMBERS SPRING 2025 ISSUE 28

## Improving Standards with the New Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme

**T**he Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE) continues to lead the way in improving standards across the commercial vehicle sector. In response to increasing regulatory expectations and industry challenges, IRTE launched the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS), a bold new benchmark for fleet-wide maintenance excellence, at this year's Commercial Vehicle Show.

**What is MPRS?**  
The Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS) is an industry-leading standard developed by IRTE to help transport operators and fleet managers improve how maintenance is managed across their entire vehicle fleet. Unlike IRTE's Workshop Accreditation, which assesses individual workshops, MPRS takes a broader organisational view. It evaluates governance, systems, technician competence, and the extent to which maintenance is embedded within the company's culture and operations.  
MPRS uses a tiered rating system with Levels Qualified, Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum



**MPRS**  
Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme  
and clearly defined criteria at each level. These tiers offer a transparent, credible measure of an operator's maintenance provision, giving assurance to regulators, customers, and industry stakeholders alike.

**Why MPRS Matters**  
Operators today face growing

pressure to demonstrate that vehicle maintenance is not only technically competent but also well-managed, proactively planned, and fully compliant. Developed in collaboration with industry leaders, regulators, and OEMs, the MPRS was Steered by the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE), the scheme is brought to the industry by:

- Logistics UK
- SMMT
- RHA

- CPT
- DVSA
- DfT
- Office of the Traffic Commissioner
- BVRLA
- NFDA

**CV Show Collaborating for Industry Excellence**  
The MPRS officially launched at the Commercial Vehicle Show. Attendees explore the scheme in detail, understand the support available, and hear directly from operators who have participated in early trials.

IRTE is working in partnership with leading manufacturers whose support helps bring dealership networks and workshops into the scheme from day one. This signals strong cross-industry commitment to raising standards in maintenance provision.

### How MPRS Complements IRTE Workshop Accreditation

One of the most prevalent question operators have asked is whether MPRS replaces the preexisting IRTE Workshop Accreditation. The answer to this is that the MPRS does not replace the existing IRTE Workshop Accreditation. It complements it. While the IRTE scheme focuses on the quality and capability of specific workshops, MPRS assesses organisational oversight and how maintenance is managed across the fleet.  
IRTE Workshop Accreditation remains critical for assessing specific workshop locations in-depth, particularly valuable for OEM dealerships, independent third-party service providers, and specialist maintenance facilities. MPRS complements this by offering a higher-level assessment, evaluating operators on their fleet-wide governance, oversight, and strategic management of maintenance provisions.  
For operators, this means the flexibility to select a single scheme best suited to their specific needs or choose to leverage both schemes, creating an even stronger and more credible demonstration of their commitment to safety, compliance, and quality standards.

### Industry Insights from Early Trials

In advance of the official launch, the IRTE conducted extensive trials at Levels 1 and 2 of the MPRS scheme, gathering feedback and refining

“IRTE Workshop Accreditation remains critical for assessing specific workshop locations in-depth, particularly valuable for OEM dealerships, independent third-party service providers, and specialist maintenance facilities”

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INDUSTRY  
UPDATES

SOE LAUNCHES  
REVIEW OF UK  
GOVERNMENT'S  
ENERGY WHITE PAPER:  
POWERING OUR NET  
ZERO FUTURE

The Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) released an in-depth review of the UK Government's Energy White Paper, Powering Our Net Zero Future. This paper assesses the strategies for reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from equipment operations, focusing on the ethical implications of renewable energy use. While the White Paper promotes offshore wind, nuclear power, and Carbon Capture, Usage & Storage (CCUS), SOE raises concerns about the weak ethical foundation in the current renewable energy approach. The paper argues that some renewable energy sources could unintentionally increase CO2 emissions and stresses the need for a more rigorous ethical framework.

SOE's review challenges the definitions within the White Paper and proposes changes for greater clarity and precision. This paper is essential reading for those interested in ensuring a sustainable, ethical, and effective transition to a net-zero future. For more information, visit the Technical Guides section of SOE's website.

UK INVESTS IN LC3  
CEMENT RESEARCH  
FOR SAFER NUCLEAR  
WASTE STORAGE

The UK has launched a £1 million research initiative to explore the use of limestone calcined clay cement (LC3) for nuclear waste encapsulation. Led by the University of Sheffield in partnership with Sellafield Ltd, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), and the UK National Nuclear Laboratory (UKNNL), the project aims to develop safer, more sustainable methods for conditioning and disposing of radioactive waste.

LC3 is a low-carbon alternative to traditional cement, produced using abundant limestone and calcined clays. It offers significant CO2 reductions during production while meeting the large-scale demands of nuclear waste management. Researchers will examine how different calcined clay compositions affect the cement's performance in encapsulating waste at Sellafield, the UK's largest nuclear site.

With nuclear energy providing around 20% of the UK's electricity, managing 450,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste remains a major challenge. This research could shape the future of nuclear waste management, ensuring both environmental and operational safety.

# Welcome Back...

FROM THE EDITOR

As spring blossoms, so too does a sense of energy and momentum across the SOE community. It's a pleasure to welcome you to the Spring 2025 edition of SOE News, where this issue captures not only the achievements of our members, but the bigger steps we're taking to elevate engineering standards and champion the people driving them forward.

Let's start with one of our proudest moments, this year's IRTE Bus and Coach Skills Challenge has attracted a record-breaking number of entries. More than double the number we saw last year, and a testament to the growing appetite among apprentices, technicians and qualified engineers to test themselves in real-world conditions and gain sector-wide recognition. The calibre of this year's entrants confirm something we've long believed that the next generation of engineering talent is ready, willing, and more capable than ever.

This edition of SOE News will focus on Skills Challenge, and how it offers an invaluable opportunity to sponsors and supporters alike an invaluable opportunity to invest in future talent while aligning with an initiative that truly delivers social and sector-wide impact.

We reflect on a major moment for SOE, IRTE and the wider sector at the 2025 Commercial Vehicle Show. This year's event saw the official launch of the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS), a new framework designed to assess maintenance

“From strategic oversight to technician development and leadership culture, MPRS offers a holistic measure of operational excellence”

standards across entire fleets. The reception was overwhelmingly positive, and for good reason. Operators are under increasing pressure to demonstrate competence, compliance, and consistency and MPRS provides the structure and credibility to meet those expectations.

From strategic oversight to technician development and leadership culture, MPRS offers a holistic measure of operational excellence. It complements our established IRTE Workshop Accreditation and offers new ways for providers to demonstrate their commitment to safety, governance and continuous improvement. If the Skills Challenge is about recognising individual capability, then MPRS is about recognising collective organisational quality. Together both represent the future of how excellence is defined and rewarded in commercial vehicle maintenance.

Elsewhere we spotlight Howard Seymour's remarkable journey to the SOE presidency. His reflections are not only a testament to a career built on technical achievement and professional dedication, but a reminder of how leadership in engineering comes in many forms. From hands-on

experience in aircraft servicing to strategic programme delivery, Howard's story underlines the value of long-term commitment to the profession and the power of giving back.

Our commitment to career support continues to evolve. The SOE mentoring platform, launched last year, is already helping members navigate career transitions, pursue professional registration, and strengthen leadership capabilities. The platform enables engineers at all levels to learn from one another, with built-in tools for setting goals and tracking progress. If you haven't yet explored this resource, I highly recommend doing so; it's a powerful way to connect, grow, and give back.

We've also expanded our offering with a new suite of career tools, including our updated Pathways to Progress guide. Created to help engineers chart their career journey, the guide offers practical insights, industry case studies, and advice on navigating everything from CPD to leadership roles. At a time when the skills gap continues to challenge the sector, our role in supporting member development has never been more important.

Additionally, this edition also

features a critical look at the UK Government's Energy White Paper, through SOE's own review and response. Our position is clear: sustainability must go hand-in-hand with ethical responsibility and engineering integrity.

Finally, we mark a historic milestone: the appointment of Caroline Harries as the next SOE President and the first woman to hold the role. Caroline's dedication to STEM outreach, skills development, and inclusive leadership will set the tone for the next chapter in SOE's story. Her appointment is not only symbolic; it's strategic. It underscores our commitment to reflecting the diversity of the profession and inspiring the next generation to lead with confidence and vision.

From record entries in new talent to a new rating system, this season sees a sector on the move. And as ever, SOE is here to support and celebrate the individuals and organisations shaping the future of operations engineering.

Chris Knight  
Senior PR & Communications  
Officer

Do you have a story to share?  
Get in touch with me at:  
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## Improving Standards with the New Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme

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the accreditation process. Trial participants praised the structured clarity of the scheme, highlighting the valuable insight it provided into their operational effectiveness and compliance practices. They also appreciated the tiered approach, allowing incremental improvements to be clearly tracked and demonstrated over time.

However, participants also flagged areas for further refinement, with feedback highlighting areas for improvements, such as improving the clarity of evidence requirements and streamlining administration. In future the scheme will evolve, updating materials to ensure that the process is practical,

rigorous, and achievable for all operators.

**Supporting the Sector into the Future**  
To ensure the scheme's continued success, the IRTE has invested additional resources into supporting operators directly. Looking

ahead, the IRTE will continue to consult closely with industry stakeholders, including fleet operators, manufacturers, government bodies, and Traffic Commissioners and other key stakeholders including the DVSA, DfT, Traffic Commissioners. This collaboration will ensure MPRS

remains responsive to real-world operational realities and regulatory expectations ultimately helping organisations improve standards, reduce risk, and enhance overall industry reputation.

**Get Involved**  
IRTE invites all fleet operators, maintenance providers, and industry stakeholders to explore the benefits of joining MPRS. Whether you are a national operator or an independent provider, the scheme offers a clear pathway to stronger compliance, safer operations, and enhanced business credibility. Get in touch directly to learn more about how MPRS can support your organisation. Together, we are shaping a safer, more reliable future for the commercial vehicle industry.





## GOOD MONTH



## GOVERNMENT PUSH TO GET MORE GIRLS INTO MATHS AND AI

The Department for Education announced plans to improve access to high-quality maths education for girls, aiming to tackle long-standing gender gaps in advanced STEM subjects. The initiative also focuses on encouraging female participation in AI, a sector seen as critical to the UK's future economy.

For engineering and transport, this is a step in the right direction. The sector continues to struggle with skills shortages and a lack of female representation particularly in technical roles such as operations engineering, diagnostics, and data analysis.

More inclusive education pathways can help future-proof the workforce, bringing fresh talent into areas like vehicle diagnostics, predictive maintenance, and transport tech—all of which increasingly rely on data and AI.

Professional bodies and employers in the sector now have an opportunity to support this momentum by engaging with schools, promoting role models, and offering hands-on experiences to inspire the next generation.

If successful, the campaign could lead to a more diverse and digitally skilled workforce, exactly what transport engineering needs in an AI-driven future.

## BAD MONTH



## CLIMATE READINESS WARNING FOR UK INFRASTRUCTURE

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has warned that the UK is “strikingly unprepared” for worsening climate impacts. Despite increased flooding, extreme heat, and drought risks, there is still no coherent strategy to protect infrastructure, transport networks, and essential services.

The CCC's progress report highlights a gap between rising risks and the UK's current level of adaptation. Of 45 priority areas identified in 2023, not one shows “strong progress,” with 39 seeing none or very limited action.

For engineers in road transport and infrastructure, this signals a clear call to action. Ageing assets, poor drainage, and overheating risks all need immediate attention. Maintenance providers and operations engineers must push for adaptation planning especially for fleets, depots, and roadside assets vulnerable to extreme weather.

The report urges industry and government to treat climate resilience as a core performance issue, not an add-on. With long lead times for engineering interventions, delays today mean greater costs tomorrow.

# Engineering on the Brink?

## SOE Responds with Career Support Drive

**T**he UK's engineering sector could face a critical workforce shortage without urgent investment in skills development, according to a recent report. Industry leaders are calling for a stronger emphasis on training and education in the government's industrial strategy to prevent a crisis similar to that seen in the National Health Service (NHS).

With reports highlighting that the engineering industry is already grappling with a significant skills gap, with an ageing workforce and a shortfall in qualified new entrants. If left unaddressed, these issues could threaten the UK's infrastructure, transport networks, and energy sectors, which are heavily reliant on engineering expertise.

### Skills Deficit Threatens Future Growth

Engineering organisations and professional bodies from across all sectors have warned that without coordinated action, the sector's ability to support the country's economic growth and transition to net zero could be compromised. The increasing demand for engineers across multiple industries, coupled with a lack of new talent, has led to growing concerns among employers.

A key challenge identified in the report is the need to inspire young people to pursue careers in engineering. Despite the profession offering diverse and rewarding opportunities, it continues to suffer from outdated perceptions and a lack of awareness among students and career changers. Employers and industry groups have urged the government to prioritise STEM education and vocational training as part of its long-term industrial strategy.

### Industry Leaders Call for Government Action

Professional bodies, including the Society of Operations Engineers and the Society for the Environment, have been vocal in their calls for increased investment in apprenticeships, reskilling initiatives, and partnerships between education providers and industry.

Oliver Teasell, Member Relations Manager at SOE, emphasised the urgency of the situation: “We need a structured approach to skills development that includes both young people entering the industry and experienced professionals looking to upskill. Without this, we risk a decline in engineering expertise that could have far-

“This guide represents a collaborative effort to empower engineers with the tools and resources needed to chart their professional journey”

Emma Thompson,  
Executive Director, SOE

reaching consequences for the UK's infrastructure and economy.”

Recent government policies have included efforts to boost technical education, but industry experts argue that more needs to be done. They are calling for incentives for businesses to invest in training, a more integrated approach to STEM promotion in schools, and better support for mid-career professionals looking to transition into engineering roles.

### SOE's Bold Plan to Bridge the Skills Gap

Recognising the pressing need to address the skills shortage, the SOE has launched several initiatives aimed at supporting engineers throughout their careers.

### Career Mapping and Support at the CV Show

At the 2025 Commercial Vehicle Show, the SOE's professional sector for road transport engineers, the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE), showcased its commitment to career development. The event featured the official launch of the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS), designed to set new benchmarks for excellence in vehicle maintenance and operational standards.

Additionally, the IRTE provided attendees with expert advice on career progression, including guidance on professional registrations

such as EngTech, IEng, and CEng, as well as support in CV writing, interview skills, and transitioning into management roles. These efforts underscore SOE's dedication to equipping engineers with the tools and support they need to succeed.

### Pathways to Progress: A Comprehensive Career Guide

In its ongoing efforts to empower engineers, The SOEs “Pathways to Progress” guide has become a staple within the industry. This comprehensive resource designed to assist engineers in navigating and advancing their careers was crafted by industry experts, the guide offers insights into diverse career paths, educational opportunities, and professional development strategies.

Emma Thompson, Executive Director at SOE, remarked, “This guide represents a collaborative effort to empower engineers with the tools and resources needed to chart their professional journey.” By providing real-life case studies and testimonials, the guide serves as both a roadmap and a source of inspiration for engineers at all stages of their careers.

### Mentoring Platform: Connecting Experience with Aspiration

Understanding the value of mentorship in professional growth, SOE launched a dedicated mentoring platform last year with the goal to connect experienced engineers with those seeking guidance. This platform facilitates meaningful relationships, allowing knowledge to flow and goals to be achieved through collaboration.

The mentoring platform

offers features such as needs analysis tools, goal setting, profile matching, and built-in communication tools, ensuring that both mentors and mentees can effectively collaborate and achieve success in their professional journeys.

### Upcoming CPD Platform: Commitment to Continuous Learning

Looking ahead, SOE plans to launch a new Continuing Professional Development (CPD) platform later this year. This initiative aims to provide engineers with accessible and structured opportunities for ongoing learning, ensuring that professionals can stay abreast of industry developments and maintain high standards of competence.

### Employers Hold the Key to Engineering's Survival

Employers are being urged to take proactive steps in tackling the skills shortage. Investing in training programmes, offering clear career progression routes, and fostering collaboration with educational institutions are all seen as crucial strategies for attracting and retaining skilled workers.

The engineering sector remains a cornerstone of the UK economy, supporting industries from transport to renewable energy. However, without decisive action on skills development, the country risks a workforce crisis that could hinder economic progress and technological innovation.

By embracing initiatives like those spearheaded by SOE, the engineering community can work collaboratively to bridge the skills gap, ensuring a resilient and proficient workforce for the future.



## HOWARD SEYMOUR REFLECTS ON EARLY BEGINNINGS TO SOE PRESIDENCY

# A Journey Through Engineering

## Introduction: Personal Journey into Engineering

Engineering has always been more than just a profession to me; it's been a lifelong passion. My journey into engineering began in my early years, driven by a fascination with how things work and a desire to solve complex challenges. This curiosity led me to pursue a degree in Computer Aided Engineering, which laid the foundation for my future career. My career was initially as an Engineering Technician, this was a significant milestone, where I worked on military fast-jet aircraft including multiple lines of servicing and facilities, marking the start of an exciting professional journey. I then moved into aircraft support equipment engineering and progressed into a successful project delivery and transformation programme management career. This led me to study for a Master's Degree in project management in practice, and more recently studying for a post graduate certificate in leading complex Portfolio, Programmes, and Projects.

## Path to SOE Presidencies

My involvement with SOE started 28 years ago when I initially joined as a member of the Institution of Plant Engineers as an Engineering Technician and then moving to become a Fellow and Incorporated Engineer of the Institute of Road Transport Engineers. Over the years I progressed on to being a Chartered Engineer, as I also carried out various roles within the SOE. This included a leading the Governance as Honorary Secretary and more recently Interim Chair. I was a previous past President during years 2017 to 2019. Each role has provided valuable experiences and insights in leading a premier professional engineering institutes within

“Becoming the President of SOE for a second term has been an incredible honour and privilege to serve especially for what it stands for, together with reflecting my commitment to the engineering community and the values we uphold”

the Society. My motivation for taking on leadership roles stemmed from a deep-seated desire to contribute and give back to the organisation both in the profession with existing peers and new generations of Engineers. Becoming the President of SOE for a second term has been an incredible honour and privilege to serve especially for what it stands for, together with reflecting my commitment to the engineering

community and the values we uphold.

## Key Achievements During My Presidency

During my tenure as President, I have been proud of several key achievements that have shaped the direction of SOE. We launched new initiatives aimed at ensuring our members have the support and skills to assist in their career, which is set a strategic direction aligned with our long-term vision and has been advocating for the profession on various platforms. Membership growth has been a significant focus, and we have formed valuable partnerships that have strengthened our community. Additionally, we have made strides in improving professional standards, ensuring that our members are well-equipped to meet industry requirements and demands.

## Personal Highlights

There have been many personal highlights during my term. One of the most inspiring moments was hearing member stories about how SOE has positively impacted their own careers. Industry recognition for our efforts has been a rewarding experience, reinforcing the importance of our mission.

The organisation has also streamlined and focused on its core business of membership alongside driving new offerings and services for our corporate partners and members, so that they can benefit and further their respective businesses and careers.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Leading SOE has not been without its challenges. Navigating complex changes, especially during uncertain times, has required resilience and adaptability. We have faced industry shifts as we work to increase membership and prepare for future growth, but these experiences have taught me valuable lessons about leadership and the importance of having a strong

well positioned and supportive team and Board. It has been essential to operate and deliver as one unified team, which

gives us the edge for managing these challenges and has not only strengthened myself, but also our organisation. This in turn has prepared and positioned us for future opportunities and challenges.

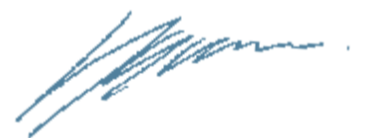
## Thoughts on the Future of SOE and the Profession

Looking ahead, I see several key priorities for SOE and the engineering profession. Skills development, mentoring, and promoting diversity and inclusion are crucial for our future. In addition, the future membership and on boarding those early in their careers in membership and professional registration. Sustainability, future ways of working and digital transformation will also play significant part and role in shaping our industry. Our focus will be on continuing to support for our loyal members and being a catalyst for innovation within the profession.

## Final Reflections and Thanks

In closing, I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the members, staff, board, regional centres, volunteers and stakeholders who have supported me during my time as President. Your dedication and hard work have been instrumental in our collective successes. I am confident that the next leadership team will continue to build on our achievements and drive the SOE further forward. I look forward to staying engaged with the profession and supporting SOE's future endeavours.

Thank you all for your solid dedicated commitment and loyal support.



Howard Seymour, President



## A Historic Presidency for a Historic Year: Caroline Harries to Become SOE President



**A**s the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) celebrates its 25th anniversary, we are proud to announce that Caroline Harries, elected as President Elect at the April Trustee Board meeting, will officially become SOE President at the upcoming AGM. This historic moment marks the appointment of our first female president, an important milestone for SOE and the wider engineering community.

Caroline has been a longstanding advocate for professional excellence and inclusivity within engineering. From her early involvement before the merger of the IRTE, BES and IPlantE, in the late 1990s, where she was one of the first three females elected to the IRTE Council, to then rejoining as a Trustee in 2022, she has continuously supported SOE's mission and helped drive the organisation forward. Her leadership in 2023 was

pivotal in strengthening SOE's industry position and laying the groundwork for continued growth.

With a passionate commitment to STEM outreach, apprenticeships, and creating clear pathways for young and diverse talent to thrive, Caroline embodies the values and vision that will guide SOE into the future. Her appointment sends a clear message: SOE is ready to reflect the diversity of the industry it serves, lead with

innovation, and champion the next generation of engineers.

As we look back on 25 years of progress, Caroline's presidency will represent not only a celebration of how far we've come but also a bold step into a more inclusive and dynamic future for SOE.

Learn more about the members of the Trustee Board by visiting: <https://www.soe.org.uk/about-us/governance/trustee-board.html>



## RECORD-BREAKING NUMBER OF ENTRIES FOR IRTE SKILLS CHALLENGE 2025

# Major Milestone for the IRTE

**The IRTE Skills Challenge 2025 is set to be the most competitive in its 13-year history. With 124 entries received from apprentices, technicians, and qualified engineers across the UK, this year's competition has more than double the number of applications received in 2024.**

Organised by the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE), the Skills Challenge is a national competition designed to test and develop the theoretical and practical skills of bus and coach engineers. Participants face challenges in electrical, mechanical, and bodywork disciplines, gaining hands-on experience with cutting-edge technology.

The 2025 Skills Challenge will take place from 2–6 June 2025 at S&B Automotive Academy in Bristol. Following the competition, an awards ceremony will be held in July 2025, where winners will be announced across various categories, including individual and team awards for both apprentices and qualified technicians.

With entries coming from both major fleet operators and independent depots, this year's Skills Challenge will showcase the incredible breadth of engineering talent working across the UK's passenger transport sector.

The range of applicants includes experienced engineers and up-and-coming apprentices and is a positive reflection of how deeply the culture of training, testing, and professional recognition is embedded in today's workforce.

### A Signal of Industry Confidence and Aspiration

What makes this year's entry numbers significant is not just the volume, but the clear message they send: the PSV sector is engaged, motivated, and proud of its people. In a time when the industry is actively working to address skills shortages and futureproof its workforce, the high demand to take part in the IRTE Skills Challenge demonstrates a widespread appetite for professional growth, recognition, and sector-wide benchmarking.

Due to the scale of interest, only the best of the best could be selected to compete this June. But even for those who weren't chosen, the enthusiasm to get involved tells a story of an industry rallying around its technicians, not just as essential workers, but as champions of quality, safety, and continuous improvement.

The IRTE Skills Challenge has grown year on year, evolving into more than just a competition. It is now seen as a national platform for engineering pride, a space where apprentices and seasoned professionals alike can test their knowledge in real-world conditions, gain invaluable hands-on experience, and represent their employers on a respected stage.

### What the Challenge Involves and Why It Matters

Held over four days at S&B Automotive Academy, the Skills Challenge immerses participants in a mix of demanding practical assessments that reflect the challenges engineers face every day and theory-based challenges to test their thinking. From mechanical fault-finding and diagnostics to complex electrical tasks and bodywork repairs, the competition evaluates core workshop competencies using vehicles and equipment.

The format mirrors live fleet environments, pushing entrants to demonstrate both technical precision and time-sensitive decision-making; the exact skillsets required to keep public transport safe and operational. Teams also compete for best overall performance, team collaboration, and problem-solving under pressure.

While the tests are challenging, the goal is ultimately developmental. Participants leave with increased confidence, new skills, and a clearer sense of how their abilities align with industry standards. For employers, entering the Skills Challenge is a motivational tool fostering team spirit, benchmarking progress, and identifying rising stars within their organisation.

### Industry Support and Sponsorship: A Chance to Shape the Future

Behind every successful Skills Challenge is a network of supporters who understand the long-term value of technical excellence. In addition to engineering organisations and fleet operators, the event relies on sponsors and stakeholders who believe in workforce development and raising standards across the industry.

For sponsors, the IRTE Skills Challenge provides more than brand exposure. It offers direct alignment with industry progression, a front-row seat to emerging talent, and high visibility through the IRTE's communications channels.

As the competition grows, so too does its audience. From senior decision-makers and workshop managers to technical educators and regulators, the Skills Challenge attracts a unique cross-section of the transport sector. For organisations looking to build meaningful partnerships, support vocational excellence, and demonstrate social impact, getting involved in the Skills Challenge offers significant reputational value.

### A Strategic Response to Skills Gaps and Future Challenges

Events like the IRTE Skills Challenge are not only a celebration of engineering talent; but are an essential mechanism for developing that talent; ensuring UK transport remains safe, sustainable, and resilient.

This year's record-breaking response is an indicator of progress. It shows that engineers, technicians, and apprentices are eager to engage and that the industry is responding by creating opportunities for recognition and development.

Whether it's sponsoring a category, supporting an apprentice, or simply being present during competition week, sponsors can expect to be part of something that's shaping the future of the transport engineering profession.

### Be Part of the Future, Be Part of the IRTE Skills Challenge

Whether you're a workshop leader, an engineer in training, or a potential sponsor, there's never been a better time to get involved.

Together, let's continue to champion technical excellence, inspire the next generation, and raise the bar for engineering standards across the transport sector.

*“This year's record-breaking response is an indicator of progress. It shows that engineers, technicians, and apprentices are eager to engage and that the industry is responding by creating opportunities for recognition and development”*

# Scottish Engineering Highlights Industry-Wide Net Zero Challenges and Opportunities

## IRTE SCOTTISH AYRSHIRE CENTRE

**A**t a recent event, John Campbell, former President of Scottish Engineering, opened by introducing the long-standing industry association. Established over a century ago to support Scotland's heavy industry and shipbuilding sector, the organisation now represents more than 550 members across manufacturing, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

Campbell handed over to Eric Boinard, Scottish Engineering's Net Zero Lead, who delivered a detailed presentation on the UK and Scotland's Net Zero targets, set for 2050 and 2045 respectively and their impact on business. These targets, enshrined in law, require the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to net zero. Actions

are already being implemented to drive this transition.

A key development is the UK Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/21, which mandates that major government contractors demonstrate commitment to Net Zero and follow recognised emissions reporting standards. However, the policy's influence extends further to any company in the supply chain of a government contractor will be expected to uphold environmental standards, creating broad-reaching implications.

This pressure is expected to come not only from government buyers but from large commercial customers aiming to enhance their green credentials. Companies with strong sustainability records may benefit from increased competitiveness and appeal.

Other regulatory tools are emerging. The EU's Cross Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) will apply tariffs to high-emission goods entering the EU road transport is currently exempt, but this could change. The EU is also proposing emission-based toll charges similar to low emission zones.

For road transport, key deadlines are approaching. By 2035, all new HGVs under 26 tonnes must be zero-emission, with the same requirement extending to heavier HGVs by 2040. The van sector is also expected to be fully electrified by 2035, supported by £49.2 million in government funding and £500 million in anticipated private investment.

Scottish Engineering provides further support and resources via its website.



## Advancing Engineering Excellence

### SOE'S RECENT INITIATIVES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

**T**he Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) continues to lead the way in promoting engineering excellence and professional development within the industry. SOE has recently achieved significant milestones and is gearing up for impactful events.

#### COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SHOW 2025 Launch of the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS)

At the Commercial Vehicle Show 2025, held at Birmingham's NEC, the Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE), a sector of SOE, unveiled the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS). This initiative aims to bring clarity, consistency, and confidence to vehicle maintenance standards across the sector. The launch was met with enthusiasm, highlighting the industry's commitment to elevating maintenance practices and supporting career development.

#### IRTE BUS & COACH SKILLS CHALLENGE 2025 Celebrating Technical Excellence

Looking ahead, SOE is excited about the upcoming IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge, scheduled for 2–6 June 2025 at the S&B Automotive Academy in Bristol. Now in its 13th year, this prestigious competition provides a platform for bus and coach engineers and technicians to showcase their skills in electrical, mechanical, and bodywork disciplines. The event not only recognises individual excellence but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and innovation within the industry.

#### BES EVENT Addressing Battery Failures in Lift Emergency Systems

In line with its commitment to safety and professional development, SOE hosted an event titled "Blackout: Exposing the Hidden Risks of Battery Failure in Lift Passenger Emergency Systems" on Tuesday, 13 May 2025, at its headquarters in London. The session featured Paul Burns from D2E Lift Consultants, who discussed the consequences of poorly maintained backup batteries in lift systems. This event was open to both members and non-members, offering valuable insights for professionals responsible for lift safety and compliance.

Emma Thompson, Executive Director

## Celebrating Future Talent at the IRTE Northern Centre Awards

### IRTE NORTHERN CENTRE

**T**he IRTE Northern Centre Young Engineer and Apprentice Awards took place in February following the Centre's AGM, attracting over 80 members and guests. Now in their seventh year, the awards were launched by Hon. Secretary Neil Mitchell in 2018 to recognise rising talent in the road transport engineering sector.

The awards give managers, mentors, and workshop supervisors the chance to nominate outstanding young staff from franchised dealerships, fleet operators, and independent workshops. Nominations involve a detailed profile of the nominee, covering

their role, experience, skills, training, and qualifications, alongside insights into their attitude and teamwork.

Each submission is carefully reviewed by the Northern Centre Committee, with further details requested where needed to ensure a fair assessment. This year's awards featured four categories: Young Coach-Bus Engineer of the Year, Young Truck Engineer of the Year, and Apprentice of the Year for both HGV and PCV sectors.

With a record number of high-quality entries, judges had the difficult task of selecting the winners. Each winner received a Certificate, Halfords Gift Vouchers, and a

Commemorative Glass Plaque. Highly commended nominees were also recognised with Certificates and Vouchers, presented by Hon. Chairman Danny Fisher.

For those unable to attend the ceremony, awards were delivered to their workplaces the following day, ensuring every winner received the recognition they deserved.

The IRTE Northern Centre Committee extends its thanks to the managers and mentors who took the time to nominate their young engineers. Their continued support plays a vital role in encouraging the next generation of transport engineering professionals.

## REME Engineering Awards 2025

### MOD LYNEHAM

**O**n the 1st of May 2025, the REME Engineering Awards took place at the Prince Philip Barracks, MOD Lyneham, honouring the skill and commitment of engineers across the Corps.

One of the highlights was the presentation of the SOE Award for Best REME Craftsman or JNCO, awarded to Corporal Adam Cowen. The award was presented by Ian Macdonald IEng Hon FSOE, Director/Trustee

and Chair of Membership & Professional Standards at SOE, who praised the professionalism on display across all categories.

Cpl Cowen, a Vehicle Mechanic, was recognised for his outstanding service during deployment to Abuja, Nigeria. Tasked with managing 29 military platforms as the only VM in-country, he stepped up into a higher role under significant pressure. Despite limited support, Cowen maintained operational readiness by sourcing parts,

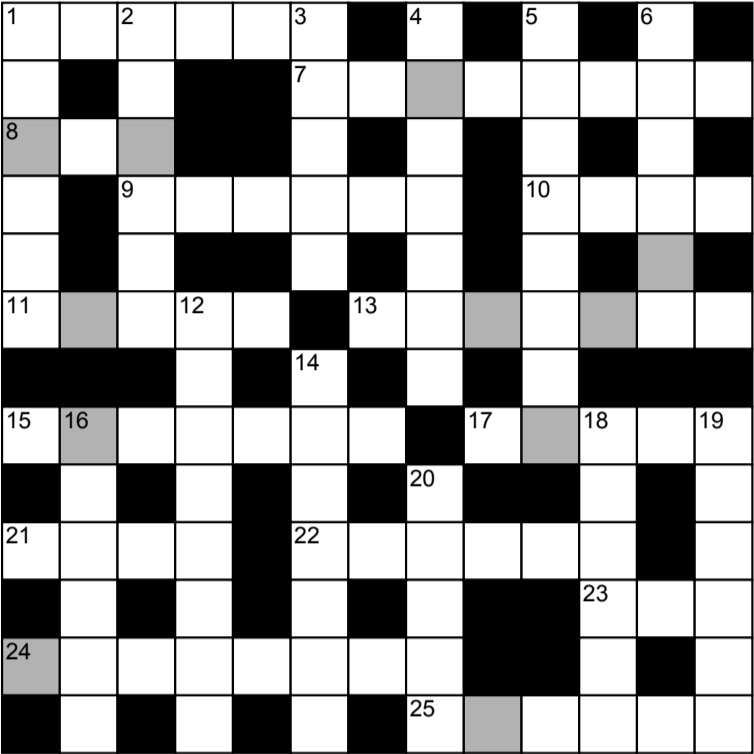
upgrading facilities, and liaising with UK teams.

Known for his technical judgement and leadership, Cowen mentored local staff and strengthened maintenance practices across the unit.

His dedication, positive attitude, and professionalism made him a trusted figure among peers and commanders alike. Cpl Cowen's actions exemplify the excellence celebrated at the REME Engineering Awards.

COFFEE BREAK

Crossword



- Across**
- 1 Sample (anag) (6)
  - 7 Busy (8)
  - 8 Eg pecan or cashew (3)
  - 9 Turned over and over (6)
  - 10 Lie in ambush (4)
  - 11 Mountain range in South America (5)
  - 12 Steadfast (7)
  - 15 Grow more mature (7)
  - 17 Broom made of twigs (5)
  - 21 Flightless bird (4)
  - 22 Storage compartment (6)
  - 23 Eccentric; strange (3)
  - 24 Confused mixture (8)
  - 25 Jaundiced (6)
- Down**
- 1 Vedic hymn (6)
  - 2 Rotten (6)
  - 3 Makes dirty (5)
  - 4 Sourness (7)
  - 5 Hand clapping (8)
  - 6 A system of measurement (6)
  - 12 Vision (8)
  - 14 Warm and friendly (7)
  - 16 Cure-all (6)
  - 18 Walk casually (6)
  - 19 Piece of grassland (6)
  - 20 Solemn promises (5)

Unscramble

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

SuDoku

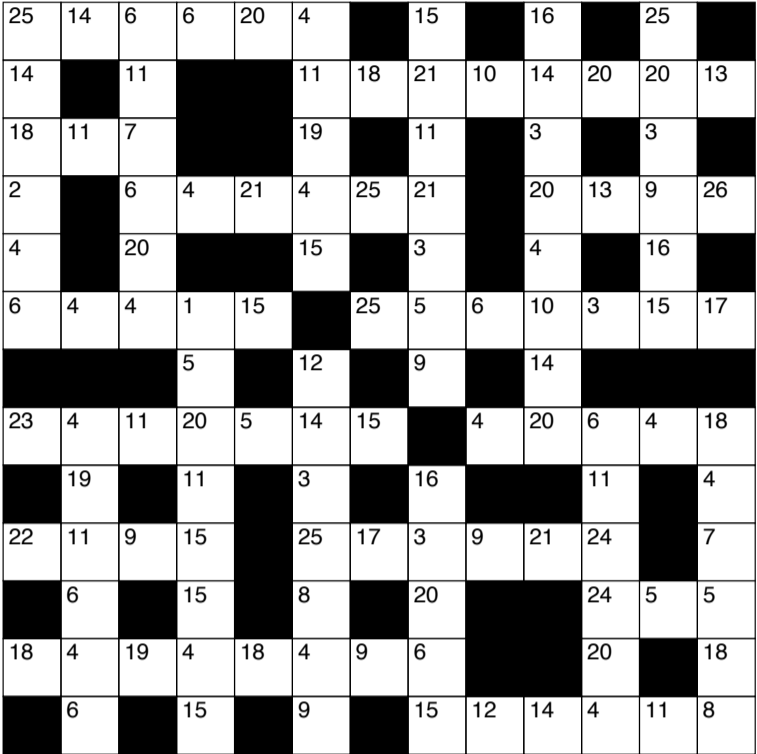
The rules of the game are simple: each of the nine blocks has to contain all the numbers 1-9 within its squares. Each number can only appear once in a row, column or box. Each vertical nine-square column, or horizontal nine-square line across, within the larger square, must also contain the numbers 1-9,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

Every puzzle has just one correct solution.

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

Find this month’s puzzle solutions on our website: [soe.org.uk](http://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	8	9	10	11	12	13													
							K				Q														
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26													
									J																

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: .....  
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