

Greening transport

In his IRTE Conference address, transport minister Andrew Jones told delegates the government recognises the importance of the sector and is investing heavily in a sustainable future. Brian Tinham reports

"A successful road transport industry is the hallmark of a strong economy... So I want to see a profitable, sustainable and competitive sector." Those were among opening words from Andrew Jones, parliamentary under secretary of state at the Department for Transport with responsibility for freight and logistics, in his video message.

Getting there, he said, starts with the UK's road infrastructure, addressing decades of underinvestment that has left it at a shocking number 27 in the world, according to World Economic Forum data.

"That's why, at the end of last year, we announced a £15 billion road investment strategy, the most ambitious in this country for generations, comprising 127 schemes, 69 of which will begin construction over the next five years. We're upgrading motorways and trunk roads with 1,300 miles of new lanes, and new surfaces for 80% of our most important existing roads."

Just as important, said Jones, is that the funding tap will not be turned off. "From the end of this decade, every penny raised by vehicle excise duty will go into a new strategic roads fund, providing the long-term investment the network so badly needs," he announced. "And we're also raising money from foreign-registered HGVs – almost £50 million in the first year."

But the government also wants a greener road network. "So, for example, we're working with the Low Emission HGV Task Force to improve take-up of appropriate technologies," said Jones. And he pointed to Innovate UK's Low Carbon Truck trial, now approaching its final year, which has seen more than £11 million spent on 350 mostly dual-fuel trucks, aerodynamic trailers and LNG/CNG

[liquefied/compressed natural gas] truck refuelling stations.

"We're also building a charging infrastructure for electric vehicles and in March OLEV [Office for Low Emission Vehicles] announced £30 million to support schemes including the continuation of the plug-in van grant and a further £4 million to

Next, Jones turned to the DfT's guidance on technologies and equipment for quiet deliveries. The aim, he said, is to reduce congestion, increase safety and cut emissions. And he went on to highlight other government schemes that encourage low-emission buses, longer semi-trailers and the production and uptake of



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deploy accessible gas refuelling points for HGVs."

But Jones understands that, to effect an evolution, the legislative infrastructure also needs to change. "In 2020 we will see the first ULEZ [ultra-low emission zone] in London," he told delegates, explaining that compliant vehicles will be charged according to emissions. "And we're working with the European authorities to bring forward real-world vehicle emission testing to drive down pollutants like NOx," he added.

As for retrofits, Jones accepts that aerodynamic kits, low-rolling resistance tyres, etc, can improve HGV fuel efficiency and cut CO₂ emissions. However, he wants clarity for fleet operators. "So OLEV is match-funding industry to develop an accreditation scheme for low-carbon HGV technologies. [The aim] is to verify manufacturers' claims under a range of operating conditions."

sustainable biofuels.

"Only coordinated action right across the sector will deliver efficiencies – efficiencies that will not just help the environment, but will also help hauliers to compete and grow," he insisted.

Before finishing, however, Jones turned his attention to two more issues: the driver shortage and vulnerable road users. "First, to help tackle the [driver] problem we've improved the tax regime and we're also working with the DVLA and DVSA to speed up driving tests and medical renewals," he said – adding that he wants to explore further options. "Second, I'm pleased that hauliers are getting involved with CLOCS [Construction Logistics and Cyclist Safety] and FORS [Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme]. We fully support their aims and I want to applaud everyone who has taken part." ■