

Published by  
The Society of Operations Engineers

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Registered in England  
Company No 3667147

Registered Charity  
No 1081753  
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Publisher  
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Transport Engineer  
is the official journal of IRTE.  
Produced on behalf of IRTE by  
Findlay Media Ltd,  
Hawley Mill,  
Hawley Road, Dartford, Kent DA2 7TJ  
Tel: 01322 221144  
[www.transportengineer.org.uk](http://www.transportengineer.org.uk)

Transport Engineer  
is distributed free of charge to SOE  
members, dependent on membership sector.  
For non-members, the annual subscription  
rate (12 issues) is £77 UK and EU, or £79  
airmail outside EU. For other SOE members,  
the discounted rate is £31.

Printed by  
Pensord Press UK

ISSN  
0020-3122

Some of the articles and guidance included in  
Transport Engineer may make a contribution  
to your personal CPD requirements.

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## Time to debunk the diesel conundrum?

Christmas might not be such a merry affair if warnings from the Road Haulage Association over empty shelves - due to truck driver shortages and failure of government to act - turn out to be accurate. But even RHA's 'National Love a Lorry Week' campaign is unlikely to deliver for Santa, in light of politically more pressing issues.

As we go to press, the furore over VW's self-inflicted woes is further intensifying, with the firm reporting its first quarterly loss in 15 years - taking a charge that even new boss Matthias Müller concedes can't cover likely fines and litigation, forecast by some to top £45 billion. For the UK government and the EU, though, the debacle has focused urgent attention not only on VW and its brands, but diesel itself.

And not just the widely criticised emissions-testing regime for diesel cars and vans. Yes, to its credit the EU has hastily agreed far more robust tests for new vehicles from 1 September 2017 - although with four years' grace for full compliance. Gone will be the so-called Golden vehicle, and real road conditions will be mandatory.

But there's more. Voices are rising against what's increasingly seen as the undue popularity of diesel itself. Ironic? Yes, given historic tax incentives. But mounting anxiety over the impact of NOx and PM (particulate matter) emissions on human health is in the driving seat.

To date, the DfT has remained silent on diesel fuel tax rises, instead choosing to encourage uptake of Euro 6, hybrids and misguidedly also EVs, through grants and the creation of instruments such as low emission zones. That's fine, but there may soon come a time when the transport industry needs to put up or shut up.

As IRTE executive director Ian Chisholm puts it: "Unnecessarily scrapping diesel-powered vehicles ... has its own environmental repercussions." We need to champion the exposure of disinformation but also be open to engineering innovations that solve the problem.

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