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## It's CV Show time: the antidote to austerity

While most of us breathed a sigh of relief at the chancellor's decision to continue the fuel duty freeze in last month's Budget, others are disappointed. They argue that a 3p per litre cut would have saved operators £350 million and consumers £5 billion annually. An opportunity missed for a still fragile economy.

Either way, it's unfortunate that George Osborne failed to provide any stimulus to an industry struggling with skills shortages, while also dealing a blow on business rate reforms. The latter is bound to stifle investment but, just as important, will doubtless lead to pass-on costs.

Meanwhile, a lack of new incentives encouraging investment in advanced, but often expensive, emissions-busting truck technologies will leave operators questioning their value. That, too, is unfortunate - particularly for a government now facing another legal challenge from ClientEarth, asking the High Court to strike down its latest pollution abatement plans, which still breach European legal requirements.

But, if all that now makes the Budget look like a damp squib, the upcoming CV Show (26-28 April, NEC, Birmingham) will be anything but. Not only is it set to rival last year's, in terms of sheer scale and range, but visitors are being promised engineering innovations all the way from vehicles to workshop equipment and services (page 19). And the IRTE is launching its irtec light accreditation scheme, aimed at technicians working on 3.5-7.5 tonne vehicles (page 5).

For the vast majority of this industry's people, looking to improve business efficiency, profitability and compliance, this is the big one. Talk to telematics developers about opportunities for fuel, R&M and insurance savings. Challenge bodybuilders and converters to meet, or exceed, new requirements. Examine the latest workshop equipment. Learn how you could save money, improve operations and compete more effectively, in spite of austerity. See you there.

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