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Challenging times for transport and the IRTE

As last month's busy CV Show (NEC, Birmingham) drew to a close, the many thousands of visitors must have come away with at least two abiding impressions. On the one hand, the commercial vehicle industry is thriving like never before. And, on the other, technologies associated with trucks today are more advanced – and more diverse and sophisticated – than they've ever been.

In a curious way, the absence of all but one of the major global truck manufacturers (Iveco being the exception, with its biggest ever CV showing) focused attention on the rest of our burgeoning industry. And what rapidly became apparent was that, with the low hanging fruit already plucked, engineers have been turning to increasingly arcane technologies to further improve operational efficiencies.

Dearman's 'clean, cold' engine, which runs on liquid nitrogen to deliver ultra-efficient, emission-free refrigeration; Adgero's trailer KERS, capitalising on ultracapacitors to boost combination power on demand; Don-Bur's 'plasma actuators', blasting ionised air at 43kph to enable the re-imagining of aerodynamics; and Sigmavision's 3D laser tyre scanner, transforming tyre husbandry.

See page 17 for the detail, but the point is CVs are going high-tech, involving increasingly unexpected disciplines, and we should expect even more diversity, well beyond conventional engineering. It's not just about driverless trucks, platooning, CLOCS safety systems or multi-fuel engines, important though all of these certainly are.

That matters, because sustaining such progress is not without its challenges – specifically including verifying developers' claims and underpinning further technician training. So the industry will be looking to the IRTE to build on its reputation for independence and standards. With the guiding hand of its new patron, senior traffic commissioner Beverley Bell, we can look forward to interesting times.

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