

In or out, fleet operators need help and stability

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As we go to press, the UK's population is poised to cast its vote in what's widely seen as the most momentous referendum for generations. When you read this, of course, we'll all be enduring the post-mortem and finger pointing. But, whether in or out of Europe, the future for transport looks as tough as ever.

Ahead of the poll, business outlook – as measured by the UK Logistics Confidence Index – was pegged back. Admittedly, that was due in part to uncertainty over the referendum. But the truth is operators are struggling with price pressures, competition and costs. Add to these dampening demand from the eurozone and China, and, despite strengthening UK growth, it's not a pretty prospect.

Meanwhile, London is understandably dancing to the tune of the Commons on air quality and emissions – pushing for a rapid and extended ULEZ (ultra-low emission zone) and ULEVs (ultra-low emission vehicles) to boot. Under the LoCity scheme, it is also pushing for CLOCS-style environmental operating standards and contract terms, while promising 'trusted source' information and guidance – not just on ULEVs but also alternative fuels and infrastructures – to help fleet operators make considered choices (page 5).

LoCity is not alone. LowCVP (Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership) is also pledging to kick start a market for low-carbon commercial vehicles. Managing director Andy Eastlake (who will deliver the keynote at September's IRTE Conference) says critical to that will be "filling the data gap" as well as effectively accrediting greener trucks and vans – building on its experience with hybrid buses.

In the end, fleet operators depend in large part on insight, confidence and a sustainable geo-political environment for success. The IRTE Conference (page 6) can't address the latter. But it absolutely can and will inform the former. Book places now.

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