

Best of the BEST



Last year's inaugural prize winners Allan Eyre (above) and Eddie Cross (right) reflected on their careers in transport. Steve Banner reports

Winner of last year's IRTE fleet engineer of the year (HGV) award, Allan Eyre, reckoned that one of the best things that ever happened to him professionally was a calling-in letter from the traffic commissioner very shortly after he joined Flogas, where he was national transport and fleet manager, in 2014. "We were going to be taken to a public inquiry over maintenance and working time directive offences," he recalled.

"It made me think very hard about what I knew about compliance," he said. That involved taking a much closer look at the activities of outsourced maintenance providers.

"If you use them – or if you have internal workshops for that matter – then you must ensure that the work they are doing is to a standard

that is in line with your O licence undertakings," Eyre continued. "What I did at Flogas was set up quality control checks to ensure that the necessary standards were being achieved."

Now fleet manager at Calor Gas, he also ensured that everybody in the business was engaged with what he was doing, from the managing director to the front-line staff. "It was all a great learning curve," he observed.

His efforts resulted in a 92% MOT pass rate, up from 84% the previous year.

Eddie Cross, head of transport engineering services at the London Borough of Redbridge up until recently (now a consultant), won last year's IRTE fleet engineer of the year (bus and coach) award. He, too, was aware of his responsibilities to the fleet – he managed 100 vehicles – and to staff. "One of the things I did was make sure that everybody in

transport understood their responsibilities and the direction we were going in," he said.

As part of that exercise, all supervisors were expected to hold a management Certificate of Professional Competence and all technicians with vocational licences had to hold a Driver CPC. Redbridge also embraced irtec technician and IRTE Workshop Accreditation. And he helped to organise a special trade show every year that follows themes such as compliance, with over 300 attendees.

In addition, tippers with plastic bodies were introduced for use by the borough's street cleaning team that deliver a better payload, lower fuel consumption figures and are easier to clean. In addition, trialling Michelin X MultiWay 3D regional tyres led to a 3% fuel saving for Redbridge's 48-strong fleet of refuse collection vehicles.

Eyre joined the industry as a YTS – Youth Training Scheme – teenager and is concerned that too few youngsters are coming into the industry. "So I've taken it upon myself to contact schools, go in and talk to the pupils about my life from when I was a 14-year-old with some learning difficulties to winning the award last year; one of the proudest days of my life," he said. It's a story that will hopefully encourage today's teenagers to take a closer look at the transport industry, and the opportunities it can offer. ■

2017 WINNER

At the conference dinner, Satnam Cheema, engineering director of Tower Transit, was named 2017 IRTE fleet engineer of the year. He is congratulated by SOE president Howard Seymour (right)

