

There seems to be renewed debate about the issue of global warming, and not for the first time.

Scepticism about the effect – even the existence of the phenomenon – is on the increase, particularly following reports of academics massaging contradictory data and others having to backtrack on glacier melting projections.

Add this news to the fact that we have just endured the coldest winter in the UK for 25 years and we have to ask ourselves: is it global warming or global cooling?

Our industry has put huge effort and money into reducing emissions of harmful gases to atmosphere. The rate of engineering development in commercial vehicle emissions has been nothing short of outstanding for nearly 20 years, since 1993's Euro 1 93/59/EEC directive for passenger cars and light trucks was introduced.

But have manufacturers and the European Commission been blindly following scientists and incurring ever-increasing development costs? Have engineers taken a step back and considered why there is such a need to meet ever-reducing targets of ever-increasing stringency, and what the net effect will be to the global environment?

There is a risk that, in the future, the job of driving a truck or running a fleet of vehicles will cease to be viable. The price of trucks has gone up thousands in the past 12 months and, over a purchasing agreement covering hundreds of trucks, the total cost is now huge.

Some people on the outside may not see this extra investment as a 'cost' to the vehicle operator, because it is doing its bit to help save the environment. But this justification of additional expenditure is obviously not the best example of a cohesive business model.

However, there may be a sure-fire winner for Euro X targets: three discs welded onto a vehicle, one covering the tailpipe, one the filler and another the induction manifold. You wouldn't be able to use the truck, but at least it would meet zero emissions standards!

Either way, the news that the Antarctic ice cap has never been bigger, and that the long-term prediction for next year is currently colder than the beginning of 2010, provide food for thought.

For our industry to continue to exist, should engine technologies be retreating, instead of advancing?



Transport Engineer's regular 'IRTE to IRTE' members' column: focusing on the issues, challenges and concerns that matter to transport engineers and fleet managers