

After a year to forget in 2009, trucks seem to be back, and in a big way.

All the talk some months ago in the transport industry, including in this very magazine, was about engineering developments and new technology making its way onto vans and LCVs. Battery power was the way forward, offering near silent operation and nil emissions. The stuff dreams are made of for fleet managers.

But while these technological breakthroughs show no sign of faltering (the Vauxhall Vivaro-e concept van – shown at the IAA Commercial Vehicle show – being an example of the continued efforts of van manufacturers), the big boys are fighting back. There is no doubt that the trucks are back to take their place at the top of the commercial vehicle technology tree.

The evidence from the aforementioned Hannover expo was clear: whether new whole vehicles – concept or production – or the components or subsystems that aid truck efficiency and operations, the earlier emphasis on cleaning up commercial vehicles seemed to have shifted.

Our industry is not about letting the recession or, for that matter, the issues surrounding carbon footprints or the ever-increasing amounts of legislation and regulation, force us away from our trucks – and Hannover was proof of that.

From Bosch's promises of a common rail injection system that offers pressures up to 2,500 bar, to Michelin's redesigned trailer tyre, to ArvinMeritor's new axles for European vehicles, new truck technology was everywhere at the German city's fair. And it was technology that would make a difference to operators and their drivers alike.

One senior player said that there is more potential now for the truck industry to be viewed as 'green' than ever before. Given the continuing investment – both privately and from the government's purse – this view may be true. The future seems to be a lot brighter for commercial vehicles; something that many would probably not have thought could be the case just 12 short months ago.

Could we be on the brink of a new commercial vehicle dawn?



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