

If you've got an idea that you believe could help operators improve efficiency and cut costs, Cenex wants to hear from you.

The trio of the Technology Strategy Board, Cenex, and the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) have formally opened a joint call for collaborative R&D projects under the Niche Vehicle R&D Programme.

Applications are being invited – via www.nichevehiclenetwork.co.uk – from UK niche vehicle manufacturers and suppliers that can boast two or more collaborative partners wanting to conduct a project (with a maximum duration of six months) to develop a new product or process, based around the theme of carbon reduction and lightweight vehicle technologies.

Rob Anderson, programme manager for the Niche Vehicle Network at Cenex, makes the point that costs for R&D often prohibit small manufacturers from improving their products and processes. This programme, he says, is designed to overcome such obstacles, by assisting commercial vehicle and vehicle component manufacturers with R&D investment.

Such initiatives in the past have mainly been focused on solutions for the passenger car sector. But with the continuing challenging economic conditions, the need for adopting advanced technologies in the CV market surely carries as much importance.

“Cenex has been supporting niche automotive companies to bring innovative new products to the market for over five years,” states Anderson. “Our programme complements the funding available from OLEV and the Technology Strategy Board Low Carbon Vehicles Innovation Platform, and enables us to continue to support companies across the UK,” he adds.

While trucks and vans may not be considered niche vehicles, the emergence of biofuel-fed vehicles, those powered by a hybrid or electric powertrain (or, as seen on page 28 of this issue, a combination of both), along with the efforts of vehicle and component suppliers to cut weight from their products, proves that innovation is alive and well in the transport industry.

The call for bids for grant-funded collaborative R&D closes on 31 July 2012. So act now.



IRTE

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