

Road transport has recently come under some criticism, due to a perceived lack of regulation and professionalism.

This is something the IRTE has been campaigning to change for more than 60 years. Since its formation in 1946, the Institute of Road Transport Engineers has laboured towards improving safety and efficiency, and helping members to navigate legislative changes – such as the introduction of Operator Licensing under the Road Transport Act in 1968.

Aside from discussing engineering issues and promoting the profession, IRTE has also always worked closely with the traffic commissioners, the Department for Transport, VOSA (the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency), manufacturing industry and operators themselves. IRTE works with these bodies to better understand the developments needed to maintain vehicles to a standard that is not just acceptable, but leads to improved safety and more efficient operations.

One of the highlights – arising out of discussion with the industry – was IRTE's creation of irtec, the technician licensing scheme that has, since its introduction, been endorsed by many transport organisations. And now, with a new year fast approaching, we welcome the next step in independent verification of competence.

The IRTE Workshop Accreditation scheme aims to recognise and promote best practice in workshop procedures. It will assess service providers on their ability to provide suitable facilities, and to manage a good standard of maintenance and repair for commercial vehicles.

Areas of audit include vehicle MOT pass rates, RIDDOR statistics, and health and safety. The scheme also covers in-house workshops, providing a benchmark standard to which all should aspire.

Most important, the scheme is intended to give operators confidence that validated workshops will inspect, service and maintain their vehicles to the highest standards – leading quickly to reduced vehicle downtime, improved first-time pass rates and better OCRS.

Both irtec and IRTE Workshop Accreditation underline the continued commitment of IRTE to promoting safety and regulation, focusing on continuing professional development and driving up quality standards in road transport.

We can only hope that this commitment to raising standards across the board will, once again, be embraced by the transport industry.

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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

