

“For decades now, engineers in the UK have not been granted anything like the recognition they deserve.

And that's despite this country's wealth, influence and standing in the world having been founded largely on the sheer scale of engineering ingenuity and enterprise, not just in recent years, but over the centuries and across the engineering disciplines.

Engineers and technicians have long railed against this anomaly. They cite countries, in particular Germany, where engineering professionals enjoy a standing similar to that of doctors and lawyers. It is this kudos, they assert, that attracts bright minds, ambition and ideas.

These, in turn, foster the innovation and excellence that are essential to building and maintaining greatness in industry, and hence sustainable wealth generation, for the nation.

Clearly, if Britain is ever to be great again, the UK's unforgivably pejorative view of engineers and engineering has to change. So the good news is that the SOE (Society of Operations Engineers, the umbrella organisation for the IRTE professional sector) is in the vanguard of those tirelessly working to make that happen.

Let's be clear: mechanics, technicians, maintenance operatives, fleet managers et al are all part of the engineering fraternity. Indeed, IRTE membership boasts many time-served engineers whose role in ensuring that tractor units, trailers, buses, coaches, vans etc are maintained to a high standard is central to keeping the wheels of industry and commerce turning safely and efficiently.

Their ethos matches that of one of the greatest engineers in recent history, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. So, in recognition of this fact, the IRTE has reinvented Brunel's top hat – always synonymous with engineers and engineering excellence – as a lapel badge, symbolising engineers' ingenuity, competence and endeavour.

To qualify for an engineer's top hat badge, you need to register with the Engineering Council as an engineering technician (EngTech) through the IRTE. All newly appointed EngTech registrants will receive a lapel badge to display on their jacket, coat or overall.

Now is the time to apply, be recognised and wear your engineer's badge with pride.”

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

