

With the irtec accreditation programme now well underway among DVSA vehicle inspectors, Brian Tinham talks to Rob Bellis, the agency's new director of operations

DVSA and irtec

Of 325 DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency) vehicle inspectors so far signed up for the irtec technician licensing scheme, 95 have been fully accredited and the remainder are well on their way, with completion due in a matter of weeks. So says Rob Bellis, DVSA's director of operations, who joined the newly combined agency in September 2014 from Acision, formerly part of the giant Logica IT systems consultancy, where he was executive vice president running global operations.

Bellis – who has a strong track record of industrial and commercial operations across the automotive and defence sectors, starting with Ford Motor Company in South Africa before rising to run contracts and engineering at the MoD (Ministry of Defence) – says irtec is now an integral part of improving commercial vehicle maintenance, inspection and safety standards at DVSA. It's also about enhancing the performance of the agency's staff at the 400-plus ATFs (authorised testing facilities) around the UK, both professionally, and in terms of productivity and safety.

Investing in the highest standards and quality of education and training, recognised throughout the industry, is the way to deliver on the promise, he says. "For us, irtec sets the right benchmark for compliance throughout the industry, not just in DVSA," states Bellis. "It's also a qualification that technicians and inspectors value as part of their immediate and longer-term career development. And the proof of that is we haven't had to market it internally, even though it hasn't been mandatory for existing staff. Take-up is very high: it's just selling itself."

More than a must-have, though, he believes irtec is also a tool that the industry can and should use to improve its image and competence. "It's certainly not just a pip on our inspectors' shoulders: irtec accreditation acknowledges that our people can do their jobs better. It brings a consistency to how they inspect

and test vehicles. And, at a broader level, it ensures up-to-date knowledge of vehicle systems."

That's why, apart from being deployed to the existing cohort of vehicle inspectors, irtec is additionally now an integral part of the qualifications required for all new NGT (Next Generation Testing) staff – and is currently being considered for rolling out to DVSA's roadside enforcement examiners, too. Says Bellis: "We also intend to extend irtec's reach by developing additional modules with the IRTE [Institute of Road Transport Engineers], based on irtec for specialist vehicle assessors. That will underpin our work, for example, in inspecting one-off vehicles at DVSA stations accredited for IVA [Individual Vehicle Approval] work.

"We want to work with the industry to keep our roads safer – so irtec is an integral part of our business plan. I see this as investing in the future... In fact, my vision is that our vehicle inspectors will set the industry benchmark for staff doing periodic inspections and preparation for the annual test, and that we will encourage the industry to follow our example.

"Irtec accreditation has an excellent standing in the industry and IRTE has a creditable history of developing strong programmes that keep it relevant. That's why we're partnering with the institute. It seems the obvious choice." **TE**

DVSA's irtec process

DVSA's vehicle inspector irtec programme is being delivered by senior agency staff who have already been accredited and quality assured by the IMI (Institute of the Motor Industry). Successful candidates are being presented with irtec inspection technician licences and IMI Awards QAA certification. They also gain membership of the IRTE.