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## Better together, but best to play your part

Shaun Stephenson, fleet director at food service supply chain  
giant Bidvest Logistics, assumes the presidency of the SOE - the  
umbrella organisation for IRTE, Institute of Road Transport  
Engineers - at a challenging time. Intense global competition, tight  
margins, rapidly developing technologies, increasing regulation and  
now the migrant crisis and skills shortages. It doesn't get a lot tougher.

That's why the IRTE has tied the knot with three of the industry's UK  
trade bodies - FTA (Freight Transport Association), RHA (Road  
Haulage Association) and CILT (Chartered Institute of Logistics and  
Transport). Their stated objectives: to improve freight's image and to  
attract more talent - aspirations that have hitherto eluded all four.

Notable by its absence from the foursome is the SMMT (Society of  
Motor Manufacturers and Traders). Which is odd. Not only does  
SMMT exercise one of the strongest voices in our sector, including  
influencing government thinking, but it also already works with IRTE  
and RHA on the annual CV Show - by far our largest national event.

That said, the goals are good and, with Stephenson's knowledge  
and influence, we might expect the partnership to deliver more than  
the sum of its parts. It sure needs to, and not just in terms of bringing  
more technicians and drivers into logistics, critical though both are.

Recent FTA research, sponsored by Volvo, says 34% of O licence-  
holding transport managers plan to leave the industry within five  
years - up a staggering third on last year's outlook. Meanwhile, fleet  
engineers are being asked to spread themselves ever thinner, as skills  
shortages bite here, too. And they face the technology revolution.

These are mammoth and critical dilemmas. As IRTE executive  
director Ian Chisholm puts it: "Road transport is the backbone of the  
UK's economic infrastructure." This is no time for indifference. Yes  
we're better together, but we all need to play our part.

Brian Tingham BSc CEng MInstMC FSOE FIPlantE FIRTE  
**Editor**