



IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge 2025

16 July 2025

Grand Station, Wolverhampton



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#IRTESkills

Thank you to the following companies for taking part in this year's IRTE Skills Challenge



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Trentbarton



Barnes Coaches



National Express



Cardiff Bus



Reading Bus



Greys of Ely



**National Express
Lucketts Travel**



Metroline



Welcome to the IRTE Skills Challenge 2025



The IRTE Bus & Coach Skills Challenge is the cornerstone of our calendar, and one we've proudly supported and developed over 13 editions of the competition.

The competition brings together the brightest talent in bus and coach engineering, highlighting the importance of skills and personal development in the sector, while also sparking innovation, collaboration, and industry-defining conversations. We are honoured to facilitate such a vital platform.

Every year we are delighted by the continued industry support for the event, a validation of its continued relevance. The energy continues to grow as more managers nominate rising stars to showcase what they've learned in their workshops, benchmarking their skills against their peers. This year saw a record breaking interest, a fantastic achievement for a competition entering its teen years.

The continued success of this event would not be possible without the incredible support of our sponsors: Alexander Dennis, VARTA by Clarios, Imperial Engineering, GTG Engineering, GYS and C9 Recruitment. Together, you are helping us to equip technicians and apprentices with skills for the future.

Finally, I would like to offer my congratulations to all the winners and runners-up of the **2025 IRTE Skills Challenge**. We can't wait to welcome you back with new challenges and to push your talents even further!

Emma Thompson
Executive Director, Society of Operations Engineers

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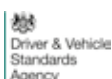
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Philip Margrave Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement

The Philip Margrave Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement is given to the individual who has greatly contributed to the promotion and development of apprenticeships, standards and training within the bus and coach industry. Philip Margrave MSOE MIRTE was a Group Engineering Director at Go-Ahead London and spent more than four decades in the bus industry. He was instrumental to the IRTE Skills Challenge in its early years with his knowledge and generosity.

Winner



Heath Halle First Bus

This year's Philip Margrave Memorial Award is presented to Heath Halle, whose legacy in automotive training and mentorship left a lasting mark on our industry. From running his own garage to leading training at Arriva London and First Bus, Heath raised standards, built teams, and empowered countless engineers always with compassion and determination.

Heath championed this competition, believing deeply in its power to showcase talent and grow confidence. He is remembered not just for his professional excellence, but for the way he supported people in big moments and small. It is with deep respect and gratitude that we honour Heath's memory today.

Sponsor:

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Bodywork Apprentice

Winner



Abdikafi Abdi First Bus

Abdikafi is an Apprentice at First Group working on single and double decker buses. He entered the competition to test his skills and gain valuable experience in the industry. Abdikafi takes home the 2025 title of Bodywork Apprentice, proudly marking his first-ever competition and while still working on his third diploma.

Runner up



Micheal McNicol Lothian Buses

Sponsor:



Electrical Apprentice

Winner



Stuart Dunlop
Lothian Buses

Stuart is an Apprentice at Lothian Buses who began his career in engineering at the age of 28. Motivated by a passion for hands-on work and personal growth, he entered the competition to challenge himself and test his technical knowledge. Stuart takes home the 2025 title of Electrical Apprentice, proving that dedication and drive make any career shift possible.

Runner up



Bradley Thomas
Metroline

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BY CLARIOS



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60
YEARS

Electric Driveline Apprentice

Winner



Hasan Khan
National Express

Hasan is an Apprentice at National Express who works on Volvos, Scania's, and ADL buses. He entered the competition to challenge himself and see how he compares with others in the industry. Hasan takes home the 2025 title of Electric Driveline Apprentice, combining his childhood passion for working on cars with a drive to grow professionally.

Runner up



Viren Harsiani
Metroline

Sponsor:



Mechanical Apprentice

Winner



Jamie McCallum
Lothian Buses

Jamie is an Apprentice Mechanic at Lothian Buses with a passion for motorcycles and all things mechanical. He entered the 2025 Skills Challenge to push himself, improve his weaker areas, and gain valuable experience. Jamie takes home the title of Mechanical Apprentice, showing that a willingness to learn and self-improve can take you to the top.

Runner up



James Dobson
First Bus

Sponsor:



Mechelec

Winner



Alex Hirst
First Bus

Alex is a Mech/Elec Apprentice at First Bus who made the bold decision to leave a steady job as a postman to pursue a new career in engineering. After 8 years of working on cars in his spare time, he entered the Skills Challenge to see how far he's come. Alex takes home the 2025 title of Mechelec, proving that passion and perseverance truly pay off.

Runner up



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Cardiff Bus

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Outstanding **Apprentice Team**

Winners



Michael McNicol

Lothian Buses

Michael is an Apprentice at Lothian Buses and a dedicated runner, hitting the pavement twice a week. He entered the 2025 Skills Challenge to test himself and measure his progress alongside his peers. Michael takes home the title of Outstanding Apprentice Team as part of Lothian's award-winning squad, demonstrating the strength of teamwork and personal commitment.



Jamie McCallum

Lothian Buses

Jamie is an Apprentice Mechanic at Lothian Buses with a passion for motorcycles and a drive to improve. Having already taken home the 2025 title of Mechanical Apprentice, he also earns recognition as part of the Outstanding Apprentice Team.



Stuart Dunlop

Lothian Buses

Stuart is an Apprentice at Lothian Buses who began his engineering career at 28, eager to challenge himself. Already crowned Electrical Apprentice, he also shares in the Outstanding Apprentice Team award.

Sponsor:



DVSA Inspection Apprentice

Winner



Kaden Dacosta
First Bus

Kaden is a second-year Mechanical and Electrical Apprentice at First Bus. He entered the 2025 Skills Challenge to put his skills to the test and expand his experience in the industry. Kaden takes home the title of DVSA Inspection Apprentice Award winner, showcasing his talent and curiosity especially his love of taking things apart and putting them back together.

Runner up



Billy Brady
Trent Barton

Sponsor:



Driver & Vehicle
Standards
Agency

DVSA Inspection Technician

Winner



David Farnworth
First Bus

David is an Engineer at First Bus Bramley Depot in Leeds, where he works on a range of buses as part of a team. He entered the 2025 Skills Challenge with a simple goal: to challenge himself and push his skills further. David takes home the title of DVSA Inspection Technician Award winner, proving that stepping up to compete is the first step toward growth.

Runner up



Craig Brown
Grays of Ely

Sponsor:



Driver & Vehicle
Standards
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Bodywork Technician

Winner



Paul Bevan
National Express/
Lucketts Travel

Paul is a Bodyshop Supervisor at Lucketts Travel, part of National Express, who brings years of hands-on experience to the workshop. Motivated to enter the 2025 Skills Challenge by his apprentice, Paul embraced the opportunity to put his own skills to the test. He takes home the title of Bodywork Technician, showing that great mentors lead by example.

Runner up



James Ward
Metroline

Sponsor:



Electrical Technician

Winner



Jack Davidson
Reading Buses

Jack is an Electrical and Mechanical Engineer at Reading Buses who works across a variety of systems including diesel, hybrid, and CNG. He entered the Skills Challenge to test his knowledge and take on something outside of his comfort zone. Jack takes home the 2025 title of Electrical Technician, after already being recognised internally as Reading Buses' Engineer of the Year.

Runner up



Peter Blake
First Bus

Sponsor:



Electric Driveline Technician

Winner



Peter Blake
First Bus

Peter is an Electrician at FirstBus London, where he works on a range of vehicles including ADL Enviro200/400s, Volvo B5LHs, and Citaros. A hospital radio presenter in his spare time, Peter returned to the Skills Challenge after winning previously, driven by the personal satisfaction of testing himself and his love for the awards event, which he always enjoys. He takes home the 2025 title of Electric Driveline Technician, proving once again that experience and persistence pay off.

Runner up



Martin Bizama
Trent Barton

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Director, OMC Global



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Ed Cameron CMILT FCIHT
Director - Whippet



C9 Recruitment support us in sourcing drivers of the right calibre for our business. Always professional, offering continued support, and an **integral business partner who adds value to our operations.**

Derek White
Managing Director
Bath Bus Company



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Mechanical Technician

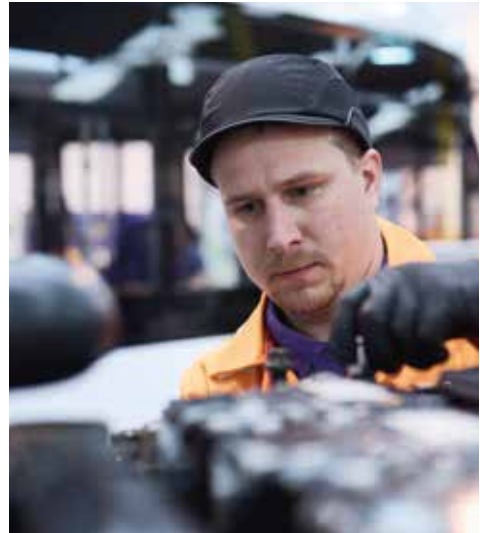
Winner



Calum Beltrami
Metroline

Calum is a Qualified Mechanic at Metroline with a creative side he produces music in his spare time. He entered the 2025 Skills Challenge to challenge himself and see how his technical abilities measure up. Calum takes home the title of Mechanical Technician, proving that precision and creativity can go hand in hand.

Runner up



Nikolajus Kovalenkovas
First Bus

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Coach Technician

Winner



Craig Brown
Greys of Ely

Craig is a PCV Mechanic at Greys of Ely who specializes in coach maintenance, though he occasionally works on ex-service deckers. A returning competitor from 2024, Craig entered the 2025 Skills Challenge to sharpen his skills and raise his profile in the industry. An avid fisherman outside of work, Craig takes home the title of Coach Technician, proving that true specialists can rise to any challenge even when it's mostly bus.

Runner up



Shaun Pomfrey
Coach Travel Group/
Barnes Coaches

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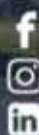
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Master Technician

Winner



Stephen Price First Bus

Stephen is an Engineer at First Bus Halifax with a passion for building model vehicles in his spare time. After winning Mechanical Technician in 2022, he returned to the Skills Challenge determined to go even further and win. That drive paid off as Stephen takes home the 2025 title of Master Technician, proving that persistence and passion for the craft truly set masters apart.

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IRTE Workshop accreditation

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Outstanding Qualified Team

Winners



Nikolajus Kovalenkovas

First Bus

Nikolajus is a Mechanic at First Bus Bath who entered the 2025 Skills Challenge to try something new and push himself beyond the day-to-day. A proud representative of Lithuanian culture, he takes home the title of Outstanding Qualified Team.



Peter Blake

First Bus

Already crowned Electric Driveline Technician for 2025, Peter also celebrates a team victory as part of the Outstanding Qualified Team from First Bus. Known for his depth of experience and enthusiasm for the Skills Challenge.



Daniel Sobolewski

First Bus

In addition to his individual strengths as a Coach Builder, Daniel played a key role in First Bus's Outstanding Qualified Team success at the 2025 Skills Challenge. Focused, meticulous, and proud of his work, Daniel's contribution helped elevate the entire team's performance.

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Congratulations to all our winners and runners up

For more information on the **IRTE Skills Challenge**, and to take part in or sponsor the 2026 edition, please call us on **+44 (0)20 7630 2174** or email us on **IRTESkills@SOE.org.uk**

See you next year!

irteskills.org.uk