



IRTE Skills Challenge 2021 Awards

21 October 2021

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ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

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



Arriva



Brighton & Hove/Metrobus



East Yorkshire Buses



First Bus



Go-Ahead London



Go South Coast Morebus



Metroline



National Express



Trentbarton



Welcome to the IRTE Skills Challenge 2021 Awards



There is no better place to see how the industry is progressing through its apprentices and technicians than at the IRTE Skills Challenge. As the sector is going through significant change, the competition will continue to adapt and give those technicians an environment to showcase their skills and demonstrate just what it takes to keep these vehicles on the road. Our sponsors, supporters and partners have stayed with us despite there being no competition last year, and we have continued to expand and grow as interest from industry remains strong. I would like to express our gratitude to them and our commitment to provide a platform to raise the profile of the sector in the years ahead.

Bruce McGill

Chief Executive Officer, Society of Operations Engineers



DVSA has supported the IRTE Skills Challenge for several years now; it's great to be part of the 10th anniversary and it's important for us to showcase best practice and advertise the sector as a place where you can come, learn and see plenty of opportunities. The competition has a huge impact on industry because it gives people opportunities across the sector, and they can recognise the different avenues and options available to them. It also attracts new people into the industry by showing them how rewarding a sector it is. It's an excellent coming together of people who can share ideas, thoughts, views and skills and pass that knowledge on.

Richard Hennessy

Director of Operations (South), DVSA



There have been some dark times for many of us during the pandemic, and we have all had to adapt the way we work. Out of this adversity has come strength, with businesses restructuring and rethinking strategies, to become leaner and more focused. At the core of every surviving and successful organisation are competent, capable, skilled people. This makes it more important than ever to recruit, retain, and develop this expertise. Reward and recognition are crucial elements, as is the showcasing of talent, to inspire others. It was a pleasure, therefore, to host the 10th anniversary Skills Challenge this year. Although we had to adhere to many guidelines and restrictions, the event went extremely well and the competition was as strong as ever. Thank you all for attending and congratulations to all the competitors, winners and their employers.

Phil Marsh

Chief Executive Officer, S&B Automotive Academy, Bristol

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Top Scoring **Bodywork** Apprentice

Winner



Oscar Jenkins
Trentbarton

Oscar started at Trentbarton in 2017 as part of the bodywork team in the ESU department for refurb work and crash repairs. He attends Coventry College, is working towards his EPA, and was nominated as Trentbarton Apprentice of the Year in 2018. Away from work, Oscar supports Derby County and has a passion for railway restoration.

Runner up



Connor Carter
First Bus

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Top Scoring Electrical Apprentice

Winner



Danielle Curtis First Bus

Danielle is currently midway through a four-year apprenticeship in mechanical and electrical engineering at a First Bus depot in Bramley.

Her entry into the IRTE Skills Challenge caught the eye of local media due to her success in the industry 20 years after first applying to join the profession. She now describes her role as a 'dream job'.

Runner up



Arnold Duan Cuadros Go-Ahead London

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Top Scoring Mechanical Apprentice

Winner



Jacob Murtagh
Metroline

An excellent engineer with a first-class work ethic, Jacob shows great commitment and always asks for the support he needs.

He is an apprentice who guides younger members and possesses excellent communication skills.

Runner up



Kasar Mahmood
First Bus

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Mechelec

Launched this year, the Mechelec category is open to apprentices at least on year three of their training. Those nominated to this category compete in technical tests based on the joint mechanical and electrical skills base, known as Mechelec. The new addition reflects the industry's growing need for multi-skilled technicians who are proficient in both disciplines, while offering contestants an opportunity to demonstrate a wide range of skills. Mechelec is a demanding role for vehicle apprentices, but these skills are much sought after in industry and can lead to faster career progression.

Winner



David John First Bus

David enjoys the diversity of the role, where one day he is hands-on restoring older vehicles to meet local air quality targets, and the next equipping brand-new vehicles for service. He is an integral part of delivering FirstGroup's zero emission strategy and is in the final year of a four-year apprenticeship at Hilsea.

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Challenge



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Outstanding Apprentice Team

Winners



Kyle Sandford

Trentbarton (Mechanical Apprentice)

Kyle began with Trentbarton in 2018 as a first-year apprentice studying at GTG training centre in Wolverhampton. He has gained plenty of experience by taking the initiative and tackling difficult tasks. Kyle enjoys spending time with his family outside of work and is a keen chess player.



Edward Bachelor

Trentbarton (Electrical Apprentice)

Ed started at Trentbarton in 2017 as a first-year apprentice at the Derby depot. He has progressed well through the scheme and is now in year four, targeting his EPA. Ed has gained lots of knowledge using diagnostic equipment and assisting skilled engineers using the latest technology. Outside of work, Ed follows Derby County and spends time socialising with friends.



Oscar Jenkins

Trentbarton (Body Apprentice)

Employed since 2017 at Trentbarton, Oscar works in the bodywork team where he completes refurb jobs and crash repairs for the ESU department. Oscar attends Coventry College and is working towards his EPA. Oscar was nominated as Apprentice of the Year in 2018 and, outside of work, supports Derby County and has a passion for railway restoration.

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Top Scoring DVSA Inspection Apprentice and DVSA Inspection Technician

Winner



DVSA Inspection Apprentice

Jacob Murtagh

Metroline

Jacob is an excellent engineer with a first-class work ethic, and often passes on advice to younger members of the team. A good communicator, Jacob seeks out guidance when needed and has a bright future.

Winner



DVSA Inspection Technician

Steve Evans

Go South Coast Morebus

Steve served in the military for 22 years, working in heavy vehicle transportation and vehicle maintenance.

Starting as a semi-skilled engineer in 2011, Steve attended college for three years, qualifying in 2014. Since joining Morebus in 2019, he is part of a team responsible for the servicing and maintenance of the Bournemouth fleet.



Runner up

DVSA Inspection Apprentice

Kyle Sandford

Trentbarton



Runner up

DVSA Inspection Technician

Craig Perkins

National Express

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Top Scoring **Electric Driveline** **Apprentice and Technician**

Winner



Electric Driveline Apprentice

Danielle Curtis

First Bus

Midway through a four-year apprenticeship in mechanical and electrical engineering at the bus operator's depot in Bramley, Danielle has been interested in vehicle repair from a young age. Employed at First Bus in its Bramley depot where she carried out 1,000 separate items of additional work on buses at the height of the first lockdown, Danielle is a fast learner and is perfectly suited to the role.

Winner



Electric Driveline Technician

Christopher Bissett

Go-Ahead London

Chris is employed with Go-Ahead London at the Northumberland Park depot as a mechanical and electrical senior vehicle engineer. An ex-apprentice who studied at S&B Automotive Academy, he is responsible for maintenance and diagnostics on a wide range of vehicle types, including Euro 6 diesels, hybrid, and full-electric buses. Chris is a keen motorcyclist and can be found stripping and reassembling various motorbikes.

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10th ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

Top Scoring **Bodywork Technician**

Winner



Daniel Owen

Arriva

Dan is a valuable member of the workforce who takes great pride in ensuring vehicles leave the depot in the best condition possible. At Arriva since 2012, he is adept in several disciplines repairing vehicle bodies, chassis and glazing.

Dan enjoys motorsport and until recently competed in short track oval racing. He enjoys going to the gym and has completed the Three Peaks Challenge.

Runner up



Christopher Little

National Express

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Top Scoring Electrical Technician

Winner



George Wilkins
Brighton and Hove
Bus and Coach
Company/Metrobus

George is a highly capable technician with an excellent work ethic. He excelled during his apprenticeship and stood out for his diagnostic abilities with Go-Ahead London, before moving depot in 2016.

An associate member of IRTE, George is sought after in the industry due to his great ability and attitude to work.

Runner up



Christopher Bissett
Go-Ahead London

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Top Scoring Mechanical Technician

Winner



Craig Perkins
National Express

Craig started his apprenticeship 13 years ago with National Express and has not looked back since. After becoming a fully qualified HGV and PSV mechanic, Craig worked for DVSA as an MOT inspector for two years, before returning to National Express and into a managerial position.

Craig now uses his passion for knowledge sharing in his role as part of the training team.

Runner up



Harry Burns
Trentbarton

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⁴ For further information on Shell's investments in natural ecosystems visit: www.shell.com/naturebasedsolutions

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Outstanding Qualified Team

Winners



Steve Evans

Go South Coast Morebus

(Mechanical Technician)

Part of a team responsible for servicing and maintaining the Bournemouth fleet, ex-forces Steve started in the industry in 2011 as a semi-skilled technician, trained for three years before qualifying in 2014 for Bournemouth Transport. He moved to Morebus Bournemouth in 2019.

A Basketball England-qualified referee, Steve takes charge of junior league and cup final games.



Dan Large

Go South Coast Morebus

(Electrical Technician)

Dan has been working in the bus industry for more than ten years as an auto electrician and has spent time working in the railway sector for DB Schenker maintaining diesel locomotives.

In 2017 Dan was part of the overall winning team and runner-up in the individual category. He enjoys spending time with his wife and two children and has an interest in MG cars.



Mark Hewish

Go South Coast Morebus

(Body Technician)

Mark has been working in the heavy vehicle and car industry since 1975. In 2015, Mark started working for HD Trim as a vehicle bodywork repairer, before moving to Morebus in 2016. He is responsible for maintaining the exterior bodywork and interiors of the Morebus and National Express fleet.

Mark has a keen interest in restoring and repairing classic vehicles and enjoys maintaining and holidaying in his VW camper van.

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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 greatly contributed to the promotion and development of apprenticeships 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 greatly contributed to the Challenge in its early years with his knowledge and generosity.

Winner



Adrian Jones Metroline

Adrian has worked immensely hard to improve standards and expand the Metroline apprenticeship scheme.

He has developed several female trainees and worked with the technical team to provide a comprehensive five-year development plan. The apprentice training centre is being extended and the training provider has been encouraged to expand its courses to include hybrid and electric modules to prepare the apprentices for the new requirements of fleet maintenance.

His aim is to retain many of the traditional apprenticeship structures while introducing new technologies and preparing staff for either master tech roles or supervisory/management development. His work in this area will ensure the skills required for new vehicles are instilled in the engineers of tomorrow.

Skills Challenge Masters

Launched in 2019, the IRTE Skills Challenge Masters category welcomes back previous winners to compete in a best-of-the-best showdown. Engineers nominated to this prestige category compete in both mechanical and electrical tasks – part practical, part theoretical – with increased complexity. Multi-skilled technicians have become highly coveted in the bus and coach sector, as operators seek recruits with a diverse range of engineering skills. This new category will award technicians who show versatility and excellence in every aspect of their job and are often considered as example professionals or role models for other technicians to aspire to.

Winner



Christopher Coultas First Bus

A winner at the IRTE Skills Challenge in 2019, Chris enjoys the crossover between electrical and mechanical, utilising all his problem-solving skills. Bramley-based Chris, employed at First Bus since 2016, possesses a wide range of skills for various applications and successfully completed a series of B9 engine rebuilds. He is always willing to help when required, doing night shifts and helping other garages.

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Congratulations to all our winners and runners up of 2021!

For more information on the **IRTE Skills Challenge**, and to take part or sponsor the 2022 edition, please contact Patrycja Plawna on +44 (0)20 7630 2174 or Patrycja.Plawna@soe.org.uk

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