

Eagle Couriers give a guarded welcome to fuel duty freeze



A Scottish transport expert has welcomed the fuel duty freeze announced in the Autumn Statement, however had hoped to see a cut in the tax along with a more rounded approach to making electric vehicles a realistic solution for businesses.

Jerry Stewart, Fellow of the Institute of Couriers and Co-Director of Eagle Couriers, Scotland's largest independent courier firm, has responded to Philip Hammond's statement.

He said: "With a weak pound and prices creeping up at the pumps, it is a relief that the pain has not been compounded with a fuel duty increase.

"It would have been welcoming to see a cut in what is a regressive tax – hitting those struggling to get by the most, both directly at the pumps as well as the increases in food and commodity prices that result from high fuel prices.

"From our own business perspective, we currently have more than 120 vehicles and our fuel bill for this year is expected to exceed £204,000 – that's despite the drop in fuel prices earlier in the year."

Speaking about the need for further conversation about electric vehicles for business, Jerry added: "The biggest hurdle a business such as ours faces when looking at electric vehicles is the cost of rapid charging points, so it will be interesting to see how today's announcement of full first year allowances for companies investing in charging stations will play out.

"As a policy, Eagle Couriers carries out regular tests of

electric and hybrid vehicles and are understandably very keen to adopt them as soon as they become viable to us.

“Some commentators will argue that high prices at the pumps will force the necessary change, however we would much rather see a more positive and rounded approach being taken, as it is not a purely cost based issue.

“For instance ensuring a sufficient number of mechanics are equipped with the knowledge and qualifications to mend a growing number of electric and hybrid vehicles, is an essential and pressing issue for firms reliant on vehicles.

“It is clear, for businesses, individuals and for the government to reach its own emissions targets, the conversation on how we all switch to electric and hybrid vehicles needs to step up a gear.”

From its headquarters in West Lothian and bases in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen Eagle Couriers has achieved the coveted ‘Investors in People’ status, has a fleet in excess of 120 vehicles and has a 20-strong office based team.

Eagle Couriers has a 3500-strong client base including the BBC and the NHS public sector organisations and sole traders. As business-to-business experts, Eagle Couriers help other firms operate more efficiently and profitably by safely delivering on time everything from documents, medical samples and engine parts to sports footage, scripts and TV props.