

# Feature

by Neil Kennett



## YOU KNOW YOU'RE OK WITH ATA

**A**MID ALL the glitz and glamour of the British International Motor Show at London's ExCel centre, the big news for the repair sector was the long-awaited launch of the Automotive Technician Accreditation consumer campaign: 'You know you're OK with ATA'.

On the morning of the public opening, on Wednesday 23 July, The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) held a special event to announce that it is finally going to start shouting about its successful ATA scheme.

Stuart Brooks, head of PR and public affairs at the IMI, commented: "The objective is to raise awareness of ATA as the benchmark qualification within the motor industry. There is a huge appetite for hard-working professionals to be recognised for their skills, and our new ATA consumer campaign will help show motorists how far the automotive industry has progressed."

The campaign has been endorsed by the National Consumer Council (NCC) and will consist of point-of-sale materials, adverts on the radio and in the regional press, as well as coverage in publications such as Top Gear.

### Neil Kennett reports on the Motor Show launch for ATA Consumer Campaign

In addition, the website [www.OKwithATA.com](http://www.OKwithATA.com) includes information about the scheme, plus a postcode search facility where consumers can quickly locate their nearest garage with ATA accredited technicians.

To support the announcement, Steve Scofield, head of skills development at the IMI, outlined the findings of independent research showing that ATA gives technicians a feel good factor, while also delivering tangible benefits for employers.

For example, 74 per cent of technicians questioned said they felt their skills were of greater value to their employer now they had ATA accreditation, and 95 per cent said the code of conduct was either important or very important.

Meanwhile, 65 per cent of employers said that having ATA technicians had improved the



> Darren Wilson the 10,000th ATA technician.

image of their business, half believed they had seen an increase in efficiency, and 44 per cent said ATA had made their business more profitable.

As to why it has taken so long to launch the consumer campaign, Scofield explained: "ATA is still young in terms of a qualification and we needed to get a critical mass before we went to the public. We needed time to prepare and to deliver a core of accredited technicians."

He continued: "I think we have a world-leading approach to training, and as an industry we should be proud of what we have achieved in a relatively short period of time."

The critical mass he refers to was the IMI's self-imposed target of having 10,000 ATA technicians before launching the campaign.

That magic figure was reached earlier this summer and at the

Show the 10,000th ATA technician, 27 year-old Darren Wilson, of Renault Enfield, was presented with a bottle of champagne by the chief executive of the IMI, Sarah Sillars OBE.

Darren's boss, Ian Jupp, regional service manager for the Renault Retail Group, commented: "Darren has worked hard and gained his ATA accreditation by becoming a seniortechnician through Renault's approved training scheme.

"We are very proud to support the ATA scheme, not only in reassuring the public of the quality of our technicians, but also in enabling our technicians to gain an invaluable industry qualification."

Too true. Considering that it comes on the back of 11 failed schemes in 30 years, it is most encouraging that ATA was praised by every one of the dignitaries in attendance.