FleetNews

FACILITATING AND SUPPORTING OUTSTA

Degrading situation

Separating the truth from the myths about EV battery degradation

Customer-first culture

'We must get the day-to-day right,' says Novuna's Lucy Line

Rise of the coupés

Group test pits Ford Capri v Cupra Tavascan v Polestar 2: which is best for fleets? EADERSHIP

Q2 • 2025

First-time fleet manager

Why going into fleet with no prior knowledge did not hinder Cadent's Lucy Stuart

Fleet spotlight

MATT NEALE PLATE OF RIVERSE OF THE PROPERTY OF

'The strategic role of a fleet manager should be taken more seriously'

HOUSING



*BIK effective from 6 April 2025. For BIK purposes, 39.77 miles is rounded up to 40 miles as per HMRC legislation and therefore qualifies for 9% BIK 2025/26. £70 BIK rate based on Mazda CX-60 2.5 Exclusive-Line e-Skyactiv PHEV 327PS AWD AUTO (on the road price - £46,940) for basic rate taxpayers. Model shown: Mazda CX-60 2.5 Takumi e-Skyactiv PHEV 327PS AWD AUTO (on the road price - £51,040) in Rhodium White (£750). ¹13% BIK based on 38 miles electric range. BIK effective from 6 April 2025. £108 BIK rate based on Mazda CX-80 2.5 Exclusive-Line e-Skyactiv PHEV 327PS AWD AUTO (on the road price - £50,080) for basic rate taxpayers, Model shown: Mazda CX-80 2.5 Takumi e-Skyactiv PHEV 327PS AWD AUTO (on the road price - £54,180) in Artisan Red (£900).





Welcome to the first edition of Fleet News iQ, our new quarterly print and digital insights magazine.

Inside this edition, you'll find interviews with the country's foremost fleet leaders, manufacturers and suppliers, insight and advice about running a more sustainable fleet, a safer fleet and a cost-efficient fleet, opinions from thought-leaders, and vehicle tests that will help you to shape your future choice lists.

We have launched Fleet News iQ for one reason alone: you told us you wanted it. Ever since we closed the monthly Fleet News magazine two years ago, we have been inundated with calls from fleet professionals to bring back print.

It is, you told us, the best way to read our brilliant and vital articles which help you to run efficient, effective and compliant fleets. We realised it is, therefore, essential to supporting our mission of facilitating outstanding fleet leadership.

The last time we asked, 96% of you said that Fleet News provides information that is of value to your role, while 87% said we were your preferred source of information. And 86% said we help you to make better business decisions.

Yet, while our website, newsletters and events portfolio remain important channels in delivering all this help, learning, knowledge and support, the magazine was a missing link.

Well, no more. We're back in print, with an audience of 1,000 of the biggest, most professional fleet leaders. However, other fleet decision-makers are not excluded: they can access this same information via the digital version of Fleet News iQ.

If you have not yet signed up to receive your quarterly copy of Fleet News iQ, don't delay - do it today via the QR code on this page. Remember, we only brought back Fleet News in print because you asked us to - use us,

As usual, all feedback about our new Fleet News iQ magazine is gratefully welcomed as we strive to make issue 2 even better. We've plenty of ideas to bring benchmarking, data insights and trends analysis to life every quarter - but tell us what we're missing.

don't lose us.

Tell me what you want to see in your next edition of Fleet News iQ.



Stephen Briers, group editor. Fleet News



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Leapmotor T03 and C10 are battery electric vehicles (BEV) requiring mains electricity for charging. The range and electric consumption figures mentioned comply with the WLTP test procedure, on the basis of which new vehicles are type approved from 1 September 2018. They may vary depending on actual conditions of use and on different factors such as: vehicle load, accessories fitted (post registration), speed, thermal comfort on board the vehicle, driving style and outside temperature. *BIK correct at time of publication.



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SUSTAINABLE FLEET

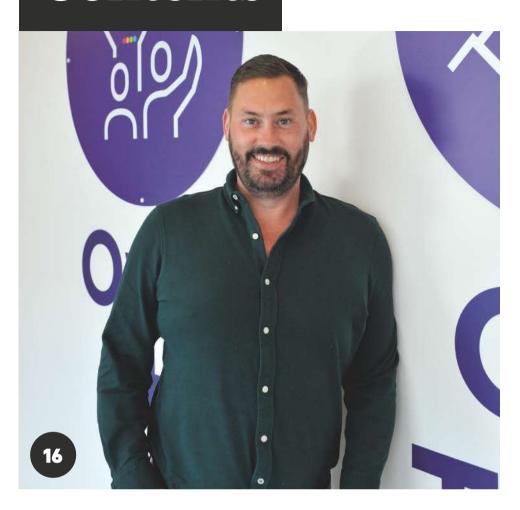
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Fleet ambition failing to match Government targets for van electrification. *Gareth Roberts* investigates

leets are reluctant to switch their vans from diesel to electric, citing cost, vehicle range and regulations as major barriers to uptake.

With the pace of van electrification not matching that seen in the car sector, which has been driven by the company car market, the Government has given operators more time to adapt.

The sale of new petrol and diesel cars is scheduled to cease from 2030. But, new vans with an internal combustion engine (ICE) will be allowed to be sold until 2035, alongside full-hybrid and plug-in hybrid vans.

The majority of van fleets spoken to by *Fleet News* say they are unlikely to delay their van fleet electrification plans as a result of the Government announcement.

However, the reality is that many fleets have no plans at all to electrify their vans, irrespective of the new deadline, according to new research.

It suggests fleet ambitions are falling short of Government targets, with a range of measures needed to promote greater interest.

Figures show that there were approximately 76,000 electric vans on UK roads at the start of the year, out of total 4.7 million light commercial vehicles (LCVs) – just 1.6% of the UK van fleet.

Manufacturers had been targeted with ensuring 10% of all new van registrations were zero emission last year, increasing to 16% this year, with an updated Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate increasing flexibility for manufacturers to balance the annual targets against each other and avoid fines by selling more battery electric vehicles (BEVs) in later years (fleetnews.co.uk, 7 April, 2025).

Latest new van sales data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) reveals adoption rates are falling short of the mandated figure, despite a healthy increase in uptake.

Demand for new battery electric vans in May was up by 50% to 1,731 units – the seventh successive month of rising demand.

However, they represented just 7.6% of the overall market in the month and 8.2% year-to-date – half the 16% share mandated for 2025.

TAX ADVANTAGES

Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), told *Fleet News:* "Company car electrification has been powered in large part by tax advantages such as reductions in benefit-in- kind (BIK) and road fund licence.

"In a matter of a few short years, these advantages have meant that today's default company car choice is electric.

"While we're unlikely to see moves as generous as these directed at the van sector, there does need to be inducements that create demand momentum around the electric van market."

He does not believe that supply side changes to the ZEV Mandate will generate the kind of impetus required and, instead, is urging the Government to revisit ideas outlined in the Zero Emission Van Plan, which the AFP produced in partnership with the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA) and others last year.

"These include grants, improved charging and reduced regulatory barriers – all of which could help to create much greater fleet enthusiasm," Hollick said.

NO PLANS TO ADOPT ELECTRIC VANS

In its "The future of fleets: informing the net zero transition for commercial vehicles" report the Road Haulage Association (RHA) suggests that more than a third (39%) of van operators are already running electric vans or plan to have them on their fleets within the next five years (see bar chart, facing page).

However, more than half (56%) told the RHA that they have no plans in place to introduce electric vans, with lack of range and high cost cited as the main barriers to their deployment.

Electric van plans differ according to fleet size, with fewer than a third (32%) of respondents operating 100-plus vehicles saying they had no plans in place to switch to the zero-emission alternative.

Two-in-five (41%) already had electric vans on their fleet, with two-thirds (66%) expected to be operating them within five years.

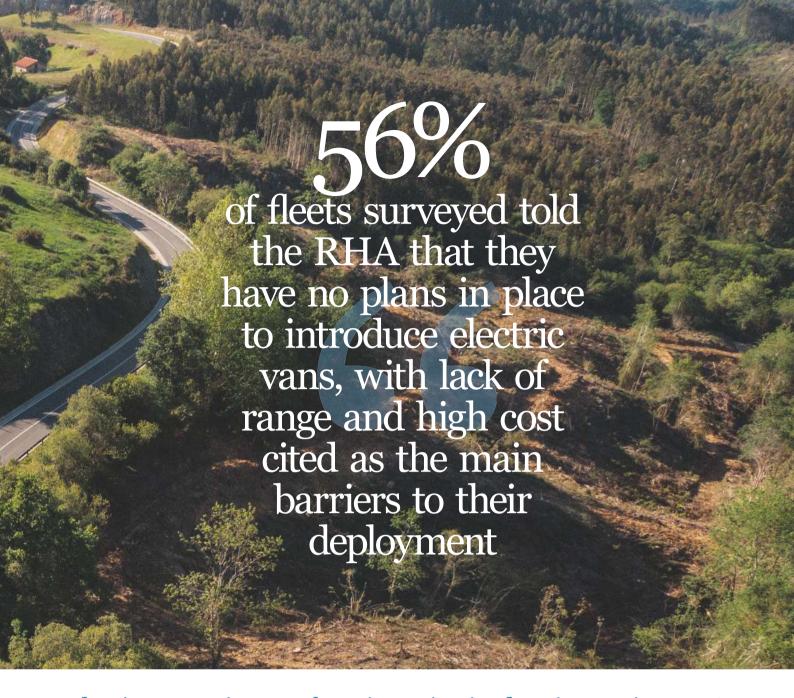
Almost a third (32%) of fleets operating 100-plus vehicles have no plans to adopt electric vans.

For fleets operating between 25-99 vehicles, just 7% – fewer than one-in-15 fleets – are currently operating electric vans, with that set to exceed a third (36%) within the next five years.

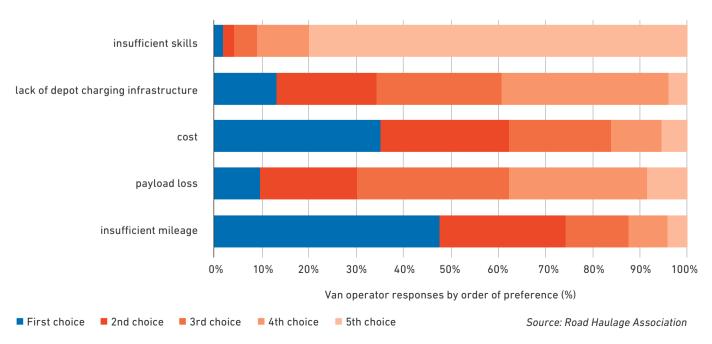
More than half (57%) of operators within this fleet size said they were not planning to replace their diesel vans with electric alternatives.

For even smaller operators (five-to-24 vans), almost three-quarters (72%) said they have no plans to deploy electric vans, with only a little more than one-in-five (22%) expected to be operating electric vans within the next five years.





What is preventing you from investing in electric vans in 2025?



BIGGEST BARRIERS TO VAN FLEET ELECTRIFICATION

Lorna McAtear, vice chair at the AFP and head of fleet at National Grid, told *Fleet News* that battery range is the biggest blocker for operators.

"Many cannot or are unwilling to change their operations, which means a lot of fleet managers are still after an 'ideal solution'," she said.

"If manufacturers produced (electric) off-road 4x4s and 3.5-tonne panel vans with a real-world 250-to-300 miles of range and towing capability, the transition would be happening now.

"It is because the commercial vehicles being produced can't meet those requirements and mean too many compromises in operational practice that fleets can't transition yet.

"There are a limited number of compromises that can be made to operations."

Previous Fleet News research revealed that, for fleets with 100-plus vehicles, the biggest barrier to van electrification – cited by almost two-thirds (60%) of fleets – is the cost of vehicles.

A Vauxhall Vivaro 120PS L1 diesel, for example, has a P11D price of £28,640, while the E-Vivaro L1 with the larger 75kW battery is considerably more at £44,602.

Online marketplace data from Auto Trader shows the cost of a new electric van is as much as £20,000 more than for a diesel version, with the most expensive lyeco model costing £58,000 (see bar chart).

However, when comparing running costs, using the *Fleet News* 'Van Running Costs' online tool, the electric van works out marginally cheaper over five years/100,000 miles at 42.39 pence per mile (ppm) versus 43.88ppm for the diesel equivalent, based on fuel and service, maintenance and repair (SMR) costs, as well as vehicle depreciation.

NEGOTIATE DISCOUNTS

Furthermore, with manufacturers wanting to increase EV market share to meet Government targets, there is the opportunity to negotiate product discounts.

Auto Trader noted that van makers are applying discounts of as much as 26% to new vans.

Fleet News research found the insufficient distance electric vans could travel between charging as the next biggest barrier to adoption for more than half (53%) of fleets operating 100-plus vehicles.

That was echoed by the RHA research, which also found a lack of range (47%) and high cost (35%) the biggest barriers to advancing the deployment of electric vans.

Payload loss issues were ranked as the most significant barrier by just 9% of van operators, with a lack of depot charging infrastructure cited by 13%.

However, these issues were of a higher importance when van operator second choice rankings are also taken into consideration – increasing to 30% and 34%, respectively.

"If you have a battery that is 30% smaller and lighter, but has 50% more range, then you can immediately overcome many of the reasons that currently prevent fleets from transitioning to electric," said Simon Simmons, LCV consultant at Alphabet (GB).

"Most van fleets expect at least 200-250 miles, with a payload, on a full charge before they can

seriously consider it as a viable and cost-effective alternative.

"Therefore, the pressure is on manufacturers to find solutions and capitalise on the technology, which should unlock the potential by the end of the decade."

MEASURES REQUIRED TO UNLOCK ELECTRIC VAN ADOPTION

The Government announced earlier this year that fleets would continue to benefit from up to £5,000 off an electric van after the plug-in grant was extended until April 2026 (fleetnews.co.uk, 25 February, 2025).

The cash incentive was due to end in April of this year, but it is benefitting, in part, from £120 million in Government funding that will see the grant remain at the same level, offering up to £2,500 when buying a small van up to 2.5 tonnes rising to £5,000 for larger vans up to 4.25 tonnes.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has also introduced greater licence flexibility for electric vehicles, with new rules for heavier electric vans, bringing them in line with their lighter petrol and diesel counterparts.

The changes, which were announced in February, came into force on June 10. They enable standard category B licence holders to drive zero-emission vehicles up to 4.25 tonnes, broadening the flexibility to cover all vehicle types, beyond goods vans.

Accounting for the additional weight of the vehicle's batteries, the rule change applies to vans, minibuses, SUVs, trucks and any vehicle that can be driven up to 3.5 tonnes if they are petrol and diesel.

The additional five-hour training requirement for drivers was also removed along with changes to towing allowances for zero-emission vehicles weighing up to 4.25 tonnes.

Drivers are now able to tow a trailer provided the maximum authorised mass (MAM) of the vehicle and trailer combination does not exceed 7,000kg.

For example, if your vehicle has a MAM of 4,250kg, then the MAM of your trailer is limited to 2,750kg. The MAM of the trailer must never exceed 3,500kg.

If you passed your category B driving test before January 1, 1997, you can drive vehicle and trailer combinations up to 8,250kg.

Further regulations around the operation of 4.25-tonne electric vans, including those related to annual vehicle testing, drivers' hours and tachographs, and speed limiter devices, remained unresolved at the time of going to press.

The BVRLA, in coalition with Zero Emission Van Plan partners, including the AFP, continues to call for this red tape to be eliminated.

"Regulatory barriers remain a key blocker for van fleet decarbonisation, alongside the lack of fiscal support and concerns over charging," said BVRLA chief executive Toby Poston. "Government knows the levers that need to be pulled."

James Rooney, head of road fleet at Network Rail, told *Fleet News* that making the rules the same for 4.25-tonne electric vans as they are for 3.5-tonne diesel vans was "fundamental" to the powertrain's success.

Around 3,000 of Network Rail's vehicles – a third of the fleet – comprises large vans, which, he

says, are impossible to switch to electric without changes to the rules.

"If you take a 3.5-tonne electric van, you haven't got the payload... or they don't come with a big enough battery, and if you take 4.25-tonne (electric van) with current legislation, none of us is able to comply with those additional regulations," he explained.

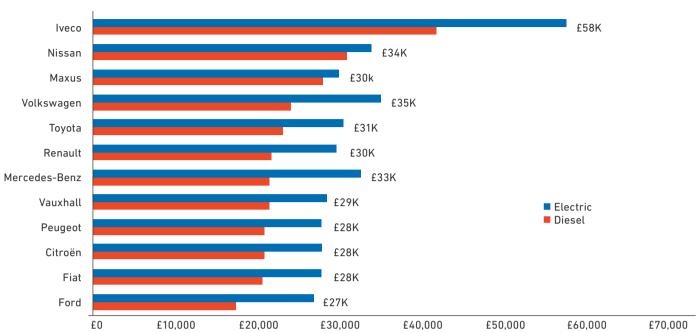
With vans fleets looking at one, potentially two, replacement cycles prior to the 2035 diesel deadline, the need for additional action from Government grows, while fleets are being urged not to be tempted to 'kick the can down the road'.

Hollick said: "Fleets will be able to potentially electrify more gradually and, in doing so, hopefully take advantage of better technology and lower costs as new models come to market over time. But they can't afford to pause the entire process."

Simmons added: "Even though the changes won't come into effect for vans for 10 years, fleet operators shouldn't be sitting back; they should continue to push ahead with their plans to transition their fleet in line with their renewal cycles or age of the vehicle."



Starting RRP by brand Source: Auto Trader





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Why administration remains at the heart of fleet

By Paul Hollick, chair at the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP)

Fleet Professionals (AFP) annual conference was, perhaps surprisingly, about administration.
In our sector, we're arguably guilty of spending too much time talking about ostensibly more glamorous topics, from electrification to new market entrants, when administration is central to what we do as fleet managers and certainly forms the bulk of the workload in any fleet department.

ne of the most interesting discussions at the Association of

If you look at the AFP channels – such as our busy WhatsApp group – where our members seek advice on how to handle difficult issues or bring about improvements in their fleet's performance, the majority of the

questions are about administration in its many forms. These might range from how to process a flood of fuel receipts through to the best way to challenge penalty charge notices. All of these are core to daily fleet lives.

What is impressive is the sheer scale of the task achieved by some fleets. One member of our conference discussion panel, Dale Eynon of Defra, explained that his Environment, Food and Rural Affairs department handled 220,000 financial transactions and 20,000 incoming e-mails every year, as well as dealing with compliance, taxation and more.

This is a massive amount of administration and, for him, and every other fleet manager, getting all of it right is difficult, but also crucial to keeping the fleet on the road.

It's almost certainly true to say that fleets are dealing with more administration than ever before.

In areas from compliance to accident management to rental recharges and more, documentation is proliferating over time, and this places more and more pressure on fleet managers.

In the worst cases, it's possible to feel that you

are 'drowning' under a flood of PDF files and paperwork, and certainly this is a cause of stress for fleet managers.

Many fleet administration processes require a high degree of manual intervention and, in some instances, the only plausible way to handle an increased workload is simply to make more people available to meet demand, whether through redeploying existing resources or, if funding is available, additional recruitment.

The possibilities of this will, of course, vary widely from organisation to organisation

However, there are other solutions – and technology can play a role.

For instance, adopting a fuel card and consolidating all your fuel receipts into one single monthly invoice can remove a large amount of manual administration.

We're also starting to see fleets make use of artificial intelligence. While still in its infancy, there are commercially available products that can recognise and allocate invoices, for example.

If you're dealing with a lot of this kind of documentation, investments in this area could be worthwhile.

Some larger fleets are even employing data scientists to look at patterns in the information being processed and identify where new, more efficient procedures are possible.

The expense means this option is viable for only the most complex vehicle operations, but we hope to see the technology and learnings cascade down over time.

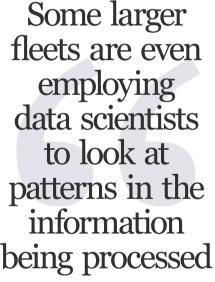
It's also important to realise that much can be gained just by talking to other fleet managers about their experiences.

A surprising amount can be achieved in some areas by taking a different

approach to administration, and we often hear of new ways of approaching documentation that can save time and effort through relatively simple steps.

It's another area where being part of the AFP can pay very real dividends.

If you are overwhelmed by the prospect of a mile-high stack of documents then you may, unavoidably, need more people. But our members can often reveal innovative approaches that reduce the administrative burden by a surprising amount.











Based on last week's data, which drivers/vehicles do I need to be concerned about, and why?

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Vauxhall names former retail sales director as new MD

Vauxhall has appointed Steve Catlin (pictured below) as its new managing director, replacing James Taylor who left in February.

Catlin started his career at Vauxhall more than two decades ago as a performance analyst and worked his way up to retail sales director in 2012.

Following his departure in 2015, he has held several leadership roles at Saab, Seat, Audi and, most recently, Volvo Car Financial Services UK as MD. Catlin said it was "great" to be back working with Vauxhall, and he was looking forward to building on the progress the brand has made.

Taylor, meanwhile, has been appointed managing director at Nissan UK, replacing Diana Torres.

Taylor started his career with Vauxhall in 1997 on its undergraduate scheme and over the past 25 years has held senior commercial roles in sales and fleet, culminating in his appointment as MD at Vauxhall in 2022.



Caroline Gallagher retires after 38 years in automotive



Scot Group, which trades as Switch Car Rental (previously Thrifty Car & Van Rental), has announced that long-serving sales director Caroline Gallagher will retire following a 38-year career in the automotive industry.

With 21 years at Scot Group, Gallagher has played a pivotal role in the growth and evolution of Switch Car Rental.

In 2023, she was inducted into the prestigious Fleet News Hall of Fame, recognising her influence and achievements in the fleet and automotive sectors.

Chief executive officer Martin Wilson said: "During Caroline's time at Scot Group she has driven consistent year-on-year growth and secured some of the most sought-after accounts in the UK.

"Her leadership and dedication have left an indelible mark on the business, and she leaves behind a very settled and capable team, well placed to continue delivering exceptional customer service."

New chief executive announced at Stellantis

A Stellantis veteran with experience in America and Europe has been selected to lead the group's future strategy, following the resignation of Carlos Tavares last December.

This month, Antonio Filosa will take up his position of chief executive of Stellantis, which owns a portfolio of brands including Fiat, Peugeot, Citroën and Vauxhall.

Stellantis said Filosa gained the CEO role due to "his proven track record of hands-on success during his more than 25 years in the automotive industry, the depth and span of his experience around the world, his unrivalled knowledge of the company and his recognised leadership qualities".

Santander appointment to lead leasing and contract hire growth

Santander Consumer UK has appointed Russell Forbes as sales director with responsibility for growing the business' leasing and contract hire operations.

Forbes brings considerable corporate fleet experience to the role, joining with immediate effect from Audi UK where he was national contract hire and leasing manager.

He was previously used car remarketing manager at Nissan Motor GB, having started his automotive career in retailing at the Phoenix Car Company.

Jameel Motors UK strengthens its leadership team

Jameel Motors UK has expanded its leadership team with a series of key appointments.

Calum James joins as head of sales and Sujai Sugathan as head of aftersales. These follow the appointments of Kate McLaren as head of marketing and sales operations in January, and Jeremy Wood as head of finance in February.

The strategic appointments are being made to help accelerate Jameel's launch phase in the UK following the unveiling of its Farizon SV large van.

New interim director announced at Defra Group Fleet Services

Tony Stevens has been appointed interim director at Defra Group Fleet Services, the Government body which manages the fleet for several non-departmental public bodies, including Environment Agency, Natural England, Animal and Plant Health Agency and Rural Payments Agency.

Stevens took up the role on May 1, replacing long-standing fleet boss Dale Eynon, who departs after almost 20 years heading the 5,000-strong vehicle fleet at Defra, where he most recently steered its electrification and optimisation strategy.

Eynon, who was inducted into the Fleet News Hall of Fame this year, will officially leave at the end of this month.

Events coming soon Our pick of must-attend fleet events over the next three months

Event	Date	From	Where	More details
Fleet News at 10	27 Jun	Fleet News	Online	A guest panel of knowledgeable fleet decision-makers joins <i>Fleet News</i> to dissect the biggest news and industry topics. Viewers can get involved in the chat in this much valued and highly popular webinar series. Learn more and register for this webinar at www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-news-at-10-webinars-june-2025
Fleet vehicle management advanced course – Cohort 3	2 Jul	AFP	Coventry	The ultimate standard in professional fleet management, this course (accredited by the Institute of the Motor Industry – IMI) develops the advanced knowledge and skills required to run complex fleet operations, and is a valuable asset in developing senior fleet management teams. Learn more at www.theafp.co.uk/afp-events
Making the switch to EV – online half day course	8 Jul	AFP	Online	This interactive and engaging trainer-led half-day course focuses on the key areas required to enable you to effectively electrify your fleet, wherever you are in the process. Learn more at www.theafp.co.uk/afp-events
Women's voices in fleet – course	8-9 Jul	AFP	TBC	This programme will enable you to speak up with confidence and clarity, so you can share your knowledge, ideas and experience. Discover a toolkit that makes public speaking a skill that can be learnt, honed and repeated. This course is exclusively for women, with more information available at www.theafp.co.uk/afp-events
Fleet leadership/ operational excellence – special report	24 Jul	Fleet News	n/a	Managing a fleet effectively requires an excellent grasp of many issues: this report looks at the key ones, sharing best practice advice on how to improve operations, as well as how to implement effective strategies. Find this report upon release at www.fleetnews.co.uk/digital-issue/special-reports
Fleet News at 10	25 Jul	Fleet News	Online	A guest panel of knowledgeable fleet decision-makers joins <i>Fleet News</i> to dissect the biggest news and industry topics. Viewers can get involved in the chat in this much valued and highly popular webinar series. Learn more and register for this webinar at www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-news-at-10-webinars-june-2025
Advisory fuel and electricity rates	1 Sep	HMRC	n/a	HMRC revises advisory fuel rates (AFRs) and advisory electricity rates (AERs) quarterly. These rates are used to reimburse employees for business travel in company vehicles.
Sustainable mobility week	15-19 Sep	Fleet News	Online	Fleet News Sustainable Mobility Week prepares fleet/mobility managers and industry stakeholders for the future, with a focus on sustainable mobility and decarbonisation.
Fleet200 strategy network meeting	23 Sep	Fleet News		Join the UK's most professional fleet decision-makers to debate the issues of greatest importance to your business, share ideas on new initiatives and industry developments, and hear from outstanding, thought-provoking speakers. Learn more at www.fleetnews.co.uk/about/fleet-200-strategy-network
UK Fleet Champions Awards	25 Sep	Brake	Royal Armoury, Leeds	The UK Fleet Champions Awards celebrate the hard work and dedication of fleet organisations striving to prevent road deaths and injuries and reduce pollution caused by their vehicles. www.brake.org.uk/get-involved/for-professionals/fleet-safety/uk-fleet-champions-awards
Fleet News at 10	26 Sep	Fleet News		A guest panel of knowledgeable fleet decision-makers joins <i>Fleet News</i> to dissect the biggest news and industry topics. Viewers can get involved in the chat in this much valued and highly popular webinar series. Learn more and register for this webinar at www.fleetnews.co.uk/fleet-news-at-10-webinars-june-2025
Fleet and Mobility Live	7-8 Oct	Fleet News	NEC	This must-attend event assembles fleet and mobility professionals to share and discuss the most pressing subjects and challenges facing the industry. With relevant insights and practical expertise to be discussed across topical seminars, this two-day event offers networking, information and community. Learn more at www.fleetandmobilitylive.com





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THIS STRATEGIC ROLE SHOULD BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY

Modern fleet managers define the business needs and use that to define their own role, award-winner tells **Stephen Briers**

t's not easy to win a Fleet News Award. But the hardest, and arguably most coveted, trophy from a fleet leader perspective, is the prestigious fleet manager of the year.

Matt Neale has entered this category four times. He narrowly missed the shortlist in 2022, in just his first year as group fleet manager at Platform Housing Group (PHG), but attained finalist status in 2023 and 2024.

This year, thanks to an abundance of clear evidence of continual

improvement, a host of innovative, well-defined initiatives and passionate support for nurturing the next generation of fleet leaders, Neale was the judges' overwhelming choice for the headline accolade.

Promoted to PHG's head of fleet in April 2023, Neale's fleet career stretches back 21 years to when he left the hospitality industry and transferred his people and communication skills to Lombard Vehicle Management as senior regional support manager.

His first fleet manager role came in 2010 when he was appointed national fleet manager at NCP. Among his notable achievements were building relationships with key suppliers, launching a driver risk programme and reducing costs. All within a little less than two years.

He left NCP to return to fleet account management, expanding his skills base at Fraikin by adding HGVs to his CV before joining BT Fleet.

Then everything changed. In an effort to seek sanctuary from the stresses of the sometimes cut-throat world of fleet account management, Neale emigrated to Spain for five years, buying a bar and an estate agent.

He only returned when Covid devastated the

tourist landscape, forcing him to sell up. Landing in July 2021, by September he was fully embedded back in fleet at PHG, becoming its first fleet manager.

Formed by a merger of two housing associations to create an organisation managing more than 50,000 homes, part of the fleet was

overseen by a fleet administrator. "The business realised it needed a dedicated fleet manager," Neale tells *Fleet News* at the company's Birmingham head office.

He started from scratch: what vehicles were on the fleet, where were they and were they being utilised. Some had been immobile for so long they were "long overdue disposal".

Spreadsheets were scrapped in favour of fleet management software and a team was recruited which gave Neale the foundation to begin

reinventing the fleet policy and implementing a robust strategic plan.

At the same time, this was not an idle organisation: when Neale joined, it had fewer than 400 vehicles; now it has 700. Natural growth of 80-100 vehicles per year shows no signs of abating as PHG expands its operations beyond its Midlands heartland.

Crucially, Neale participates in the Boardlevel discussions about the group's growth aspirations and what it means for the employee base and, consequently, the van fleet.

"We are able to factor in the vehicles and conversions to match the fleet requirements to the business requirements early in the planning stages," he says.

His fleet consists entirely of light commercial vehicles, plus 18 ride-on mowers and a few trailers. PHG does not run a company car fleet but manages in exactly the same way the approx. 1,200 cash takers who use their own cars for business purposes.

Neale also introduced a salary sacrifice scheme three years ago as a benefit to help staff switch to a new electric car and to reduce the size of the grey fleet.

 $\mbox{He now has a team of seven, filling risk \& compliance, fleet operations, EV and infrastructure, and admin roles.}$

"Our team is responsible for managing everything fleet-related; we are a central support function to our Platform Property Care drivers," Neale says. The main exceptions are repairs billing and fines management, which are outsourced to carefully selected partners.

"We don't make a decision without using the data to support it"

MATT NEALE



☐ In 2022, he started moving the fleet funding model to outright purchase, replacing the contract hire method previously deployed. His experience working for fleet management providers gave him precious insight when evaluating the level of service provided by the incumbent leasing partner versus the possibilities of controlling and managing the operation in-house.

The deciding factor in getting Board sign off, though, was the whole-life cost comparison, based on a five-year/75,000-mile operating cycle.

"We can borrow money more efficiently than they can provide us because of Government grants and lower interest rates," Neale says. "We modelled in detail and outright purchase was the best approach.

"There were both financial and operational reasons for doing this. It gives us greater control – for example, we can send vehicles to our preferred repairers for SMR work."

All but 250 vans have washed through, with the remainder due to switch as they are de-fleeted over the next year or so.

Concurrent to the funding changes, Neale went to market for a new van partner. His priority was reliability and manufacturer support, with Ford eventually winning the contract and replacing Citroën.

He also used the tender as an opportunity to upgrade the van specifications with driver wellbeing in mind, adding Apple CarPlay and full seat movements to key safety features such as reversing cameras and parking sensors.

Ford offered additional advantages; its range includes plug-in hybrid vans as well as full electric, which provides Platform Housing with more options to speed up its carbon reduction plan.

"Our strategy is to track the ZEV Mandate targets, and that means fully transitioning by 2035," Neale says.

So far, this has seen 44 full electric vans added to the fleet, with 14 on order, and one plug-in hybrid (PHEV) with 50 due to join shortly.

"PHEV is a compromise, but drivers can utilise the electric aspect and we see it as doing something positive without the anxiety of the restricted electric range. It's a stepping stone to full electric," Neale says.

He adds: "We started the transition to full electric with drivers who had a driveway and travelled less than 100 miles per day. But now we've opened it up to everyone. We just have to consider that they may need more time to charge – it's an education."

PAYMENTS FOR CHARGERS

PHG pays for the installation of a home charger, where it can be fitted, for both BEV and PHEV drivers and also covers any maintenance costs.

"The only downtime we have seen with our EVs is for a service of around 45 minutes once a year, versus a diesel that is off the road more often and for longer periods," Neale says.

Downtime/utilisation is a core objective for the fleet team as it directly impacts productivity which is one of PHG's KPIs.

With vehicle-off-road (VOR) running at around the industry standard 5%, Neale expects to see this lowered with the introduction of the more reliable Fords as well as replacing older vans which will bring down the average age of the fleet.

Further improvements will come from establishing strong relationships with a network of independent repairers who will prioritise Platform's business, alongside partner Fleet Services GB's (FSGB) approved network.

"We will pay for a better service from our repairers because it far outweighs the cost of not having the van on the road," Neale says. "However, we do need to ensure we are also protecting the 'Platform Pound'."

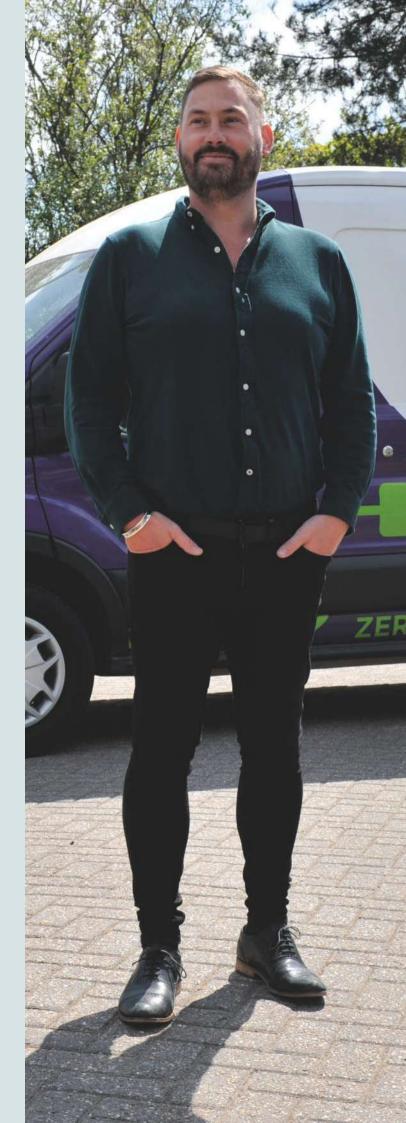
Two other initiatives will support this goal: twilight servicing and running a surplus fleet.

"We are exploring moving to twilight servicing where the driver can drop the van at the garage and take a car home, while also utilising Ford's mobile servicing offer to reduce downtime," Neale says.

Running a surplus fleet from assets which have been fully depreciated over five years – meaning the only cost would be maintenance – will further boost productivity as it will ensure the vans meet PHG's specification in terms of racking and livery.

"We are looking at the number we would need to provide immediate support for any vehicle off the road," Neale says. "We will trial before rolling out with the aim being to increase productivity. We want SMR partners that can store the spare vans as well as do the maintenance."

Within four years of appointment, Neale has recruited a fleet team,





introduced fleet software, tendered for a new manufacturer partner, changed funding methods and started the electric transition. And he has become a central figure at the Association of Fleet Professionals (see panel below) as a committee member and a trainer for its Fleet Academy.

There is, of course, another vital pillar to fleet success: safety and risk management. Here, Neale has been working closely with FSGB's driver behaviour solution and has introduced its fleet management software, replacing PHG's original provider.

He says: "It is important that we operate a safe working environment for our drivers which is why we have invested specifically in a companywide driver behaviour programme."

CHECKING ON THE CHECKS

The FSGB software provides a holistic view of the driver, which can be accessed by their line manager, incorporating data on incidents, parking fines, eyesight checks and walk-round checks. It highlights any driver not doing their daily checks.

"All the information goes into a driver profile so we can address causation and take action. When an incident happens, we use the report to determine next steps, such as a full investigation, in-vehicle or office-based training and eLearning," Neale says.

"Our driver policy and handbook make their responsibility clear — whether they are a van driver or a grey fleet driver. And if they have more than two incidents, we may seek reimbursement from them.

"But we don't make a decision without using the data to support it."

The new driver behaviour programme was rolled out over a six-month period, concluding in March 2025. It has already started to have a positive impact on awareness and Neale is confident it will also reduce incident ratios, most of which are caused by low-speed manoeuvres.

Since January 2023, the PHG fleet has also deployed Lightfoot telematics which provides live coaching feedback to drivers about their performance. It has had an immediate effect on fuel consumption, resulting in annual savings of £100,000, and more than 400 tonnes reduction in carbon emissions.

Cameras are next on the wish list after Neale secured a bursary from his insurance partner. He is currently looking at the most appropriate solution for the business, that will deliver the best outcome.

"We don't have big issues with third-party claims, so we are prioritising front and rear cameras – they will have the biggest impact," he says.

Having transformed the Platform Housing Group fleet, achieving savings in excess of £2 million and ensuring it operationally fulfils the needs of the business, Neale is continuing his quest for new areas of improvement. It is, he says, part of the role of a modern fleet manager.

"This is a strategic role which, across the industry, should be taken more seriously," he says.

"It's about being adaptable, having an open mind and getting involved in so many areas, such as sustainability, finance, operations and assets – it's a constant learning curve.

"All modern fleet managers need to understand and define the business needs and use that to define their own role."

Training the next generation of fleet leaders

Matt Neale is a vocal advocate of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) having joined the trade body in February 2022.

Since returning to fleet at Platform Housing Group, he has completed both the Strategic Fleet Management and Advanced Fleet Management courses through the AFP Fleet Academy. In 2023, he joined the team as a trainer.

"Fleet management is more than just a job for me; it is a vocation.

I am deeply passionate about the fleet industry," Neale says.

One of his legacies is likely to be a new fleet apprenticeship

"People don't leave school wanting to join this industry, but our fleet manager and fleet co-ordinator apprenticeship courses will help to bring through the next generation of fleet managers," he says.

Both standards have attained approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. The next step is to create the occupational standards by establishing the knowledge, skills and behaviour standards. It will take around 12 months to complete.

"By fostering a culture of learning and support, I ensure our team consistently delivers a best-in-class service to customers while advancing their own careers to achieve their full potential," Neale says.



programme that he devised for the AFP.

Bridgestone doubles down on sustainability and total cost of ownership strategy with major investment in Bandag

Pridgestone's Bandag retread business has flown under the radar in Europe for the past decade.

That is about to change.

Bridgestone recently announced its largest investment in Bandag in more than 20 years, aiming to revitalise its presence and prominence in the European market.

Improving sustainability by improving business outcomes

The environmental benefits of retreading are well established. Every retreaded tyre reduces end-of-life waste, conserves valuable raw materials and significantly lowers carbon emissions, making it a pillar of Bridgestone's circular economy strategy.

But delivering environmental value is only part of the equation.

True sustainability means maximising resources and generating measurable business value for customers.

However, despite a growing focus on sustainability, many fleets have shifted to lower-cost, less durable products, creating a tsunami of cheap, disposable tyres in Europe and eroding demand for tyre retreading. With this change, Bridgestone realised that "good enough" was no longer good enough, and that Bandag – and the retreading market as a whole – needed a major upgrade.

Upgraded manufacturing to deliver "like-new" performance

In September 2024, Bridgestone announced it would transition Bandag production from its retread factory in Lanklaar, Belgium, to its truck and bus





radial (TBR) tyre facility in Stargard, Poland. While consolidation decisions are never easy, this move was essential to Bridgestone's strategy to modernise and address growing customer demands for improved product performance.

According to Ben Rosenblum, the leader behind Bandag's revitalisation, the new home for production marks a significant change in the performance potential of retread products.

"Shifting Bandag production to our Stargard facility is transformative," says Rosenblum. "It allows us to use the same rubber compounds, mixing processes, and extrusion technologies as Bridgestone's premium new tyres."

Bandag's products are now capable of matching the performance of Bridgestone's new tyres, including exceptional wear life and improved rolling resistance.

"Many fleets want a retread that performs like a new tyre," Rosenblum adds. "With this move, we can deliver exactly that."

Adopting proven technologies to add more value

"Our plan for Bandag's resurgence is more than just tyres," says Rosenblum. "To maximise TCO (total cost of ownership) for fleet customers and ROI (return on investment) for our dealer network, we're leveraging multiple technologies that will benefit both fleets and dealer partners."

New technologies utilised by Bandag Europe include:

- Investments in automation and AI for retread production to improve efficiency and deliver consistent product quality across its network.
- Deployment of Basys Global, Bridgestone's advanced casing and production management system that is already used to track more than seven million truck and bus tyres globally.
- Adoption of Bridgestone Fleet Care technologies, such as Drive-Over Systems for tread depth measurement to ensure tyres are removed at precisely the right time, reducing fleet costs and tyre waste.

"We are trying to sell fleets fewer tyres. It's counter-intuitive, but we want their tyres to last longer, and we want to optimise their use," says Rosenblum.

"An efficient and satisfied fleet is more sustainable and is a more loyal customer – that's our aim with this revitalisation."



Electric used values shock the system

By Philip Nothard, insight director at Cox Automotive Europe

s more electric vehicles (EVs) enter the used market, the dynamics within the marketplace are shifting.

By the end of the year, Cox Automotive predicts that more than 1.8 million vehicles in the used car parc will be electric, which would represent a 2% increase on 2024.

EV transactions are rising rapidly, now accounting for around 21% of the used market. However, under the surface, challenges are emerging.

RESIDUAL VALUE (RV) VOLATILITY

One such challenge is the significant variance between nearly new EVs and older models, between three-to-five years old.

On the one hand, we are seeing a rapid pace of depreciation in EVs less than 24 months old, with these vehicles selling at 47% of their original cost new (OCN) to trade this year.

Meanwhile, EVs between 48 and 72 months old are performing particularly well, dropping only by 15%, and remain one of the fastest-selling segments.

For younger vehicles, aggressive manufacturer discounts are driving down the cost of these nearly new models, with many brand-new vehicles retailing for less than those in the used marketplace.

On the other hand, historic supply chain challenges squeeze the availability of the three-to-five-year segment, helping them retain strong trade values.

While managing these fluctuations is a challenge for the industry, there are signs that prices are stabilising.

Across all fuel types, we are seeing values returning to more typical seasonal patterns and are cautiously optimistic that values in the electric market will follow a similar pattern.

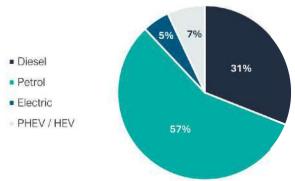
This volatility does make strategic stock selection and strong retail pricing crucial to sustainability, especially within a supply-constrained environment.

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE ATTITUDES HINDER USED MARKET

Looking at commercial vehicles, the used market remains resilient. Manheim Auction Services saw sold volumes increase by 21% year-on-year in Q1 and improvements across days-to-sell and first-time conversions, indicating strong market health.

Diesel remains the dominant fuel type in the sector, as operators prioritise reliability and range.

Used car parc 2025 forecast



While we have observed growth in electric vans across the wholesale market, with a 62.6% increase in electric van arrivals across Manheim sites in Q1, there are still roadblocks.

Buyer confidence is lacking as infrastructure concerns and cost sensitivity have hindered performance, as these vehicles achieved 88% of guide values and only four-in-10 vans selling first time.

Unlike the passenger car market, commercial vehicles are largely driven by buyers purchasing vehicles to fulfil orders, who, on average, are more selective compared with car dealerships.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE FLEET SECTOR?

EVs remain a volatile segment while petrol and diesel vehicles continue to perform consistently.

These challenges leave fleet operators in a tricky position. On the one hand, the fleet market is one of the biggest sources of electric adoption, being driven by manufacturer supply and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) targets. However, concerns are increasing about the viability of the used market with the volume of EVs set to return to a market where RVs have been extremely volatile.

This is particularly concerning for commercial vehicles, as the buyer attitudes lag far behind cars. This buyer segment is increasingly calling for improved infrastructure and battery technology, such as solid state, which, in reality, won't be seen in the used market until closer to 2035.

This plethora of challenges is further compounded by rising reconditioning and logistics costs, which are further squeezing buyers' margins. This makes for more risk-averse buyers, targeting assets that will help protect their profitability.

Closely monitoring evolving market dynamics and RVs will remain a crucial facet of successful disposal strategies, and a forensic approach to stock acquisition and pricing could make a significant difference to business performance in the next 12 months.



Survive and thrive in an ever-changing sector



s technology, legislation and the way organisations operate have evolved significantly in recent years, so, too, have the responsibilities of a fleet decision-maker.

Gone are the days of the spannerwielding fleet manager whose sole focus was to buy and keep vehicles on the road, to be replaced with a role which, as well as looking after the dayto-day operations, is much more strategic.

This includes creating and overseeing fleet management strategies, looking at issues such as safety and cost, sustainable mobility strategies or – perhaps the most topical – decarbonisation.

"Fleet has definitely taken a more prominent position than ever in an organisation and it's not necessarily because an organisation needs some-body to do the nuts and bolts, the transactional stuff," says Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP).

"It's more the transformational stuff; the strategy about where the fleet needs to go over the next few years to improve operational efficiency, improve safety, drive down costs and how to decarbonise has become critical. You just can't outsource some of those things."

In response to the changing demands, Hollick says a lot of organisations are either creating new

HR or a benefits team. But it just made sense that it was with me because of the way those cars are looked at, and because we've gone with a fully-electric scheme."

RAISED PROFILES

For many organisations, the need to transition to electric vehicles (EVs) has been the key factor in creating new roles, while it has also increased the profile of existing fleet decision-makers within their organisations – among both senior managers and the drivers.

However, while it is overwhelmingly positive news for the sector that dedicated fleet managers are back in vogue, they must be able to show they add value to their organisation, says Hollick.

From a finance director's or CEO's point of view, if the fleet team is not adding value then there will always be questions around how valid the roles are and whether the responsibilities should be outsourced or insourced, he adds.

"The transactional element of just doing the paperwork can always be outsourced, but it's in the strategic element where extra value can be found," says Hollick.

"This could be working with finance directors, line managers and the HR community to drive the fleet forward and improve the quality of your choice list, the quality of your driver happiness and well-being while they're out on the roads, improving safety and driving down costs."

Stewart Lightbody, head of group fleet at Sureserve, adds: "If you can communicate well within your organisation, people will understand actually how wide and how deep you are involved in broader business activities.

"You'll never get a ticker tape parade for doing a good job in the fleet world, that just doesn't exist, but you have to demonstrate your value.

"My experience is that everybody knows what a good deal looks like, or think they do. But fleet is getting more and more expensive. I remember when vans were £200 a month, but it's not been like that for a very long time.

"If you only just re-engage in fleet after a long time and you see truly what things cost now, especially post-Covid, the value is in demonstrating how much more expensive fleets could be were we not adding the value that fleet managers do.

"If we can communicate that better, I think, ultimately, people will believe we add value and get the recognition we deserve."

Hollick says one of the most obvious areas in which fleet managers can show how valuable their work is to an organisation is in decarbonisation.

"You really need someone in your organisation that owns your data and information about where you are before you can work out where you need to be" be adds

"If you don't have a good steer on your data, you've got no hope of working out how you're going to be able to create a decarbonisation journey."

MIXED BACKGROUNDS

A further evolution in the position of a fleet decisionmaker is that, while they traditionally tended to have a mechanical or engineering pedigree, people carrying out that role are now coming from different backgrounds, such as procurement, facilities or HR.

This does mean there may be some knowledge gaps which would not have existed in the past, \supset



says Steve Winter, former fleet manager at Centrica and now a fleet consultant.

"The role now is very different to how it was in the past," he adds. "But you need still need someone who understands the mechanics of a fleet, and there are many factors which, all too often, won't be naturally understood if responsibility for the fleet is in a procurement, HR or facilities function."

Winter's replacement at Centrica, Rob Simister, director - fleet operations, adds that one of the key skills required by a modern fleet manager is to be able to sell to the board the concepts they are

"There's a whole heap of partnerships that we've not previously had to form, for instance working with partners to access shared rapid charging for EVs, and/or stitching in new services to get your van charged quicker in the public domain," says Simister, who previously had no fleet exprience.

"You've got to sell a lot of that to the finance teams, to the senior management teams, as it could involve investment.

"I think that's a key skill that's often overlooked the ability to construct a good story, pitch it well and follow through with that.

"That salesmanship is really important and will grease the wheels of a lot of the challenges we've got to deliver."

Of course, skills and knowledge can be learned and the sector is full of highly-competent fleet decision-makers from those backgrounds who have dedicated time and effort into getting to grips with the sector

Plenty of help is available for both new and experienced fleet decision-makers.

This can take the shape of resources and advice from sources such as trusted leasing companies and suppliers, while help with specific areas of fleet management can be gained from organisations such as Driving for Better Business (DfBB), Energy Saving Trust (EST), road safety charity Brake and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

DfBB, for example, is a free programme from National Highways which aims to help organisations reduce work-related road risk, control the associated costs and improve compliance with current legislation and guidance.

It offers tools and case studies to help organisations evaluate practices, strengthen culture, enhance performance and demonstrate leadership in the management of work-related road risk.

Earlier this year it launched an interactive Driving for Work Policy Builder to help decision-makers create, review and update policies to meet their legal requirement to minimise risk.

Meanwhile, the EST focuses on decarbonisation and offers free advice on topics such as how fleets can transition to EVs.

BENEFITS OF TRAINING

A wide variety of training courses are also available to those in fleet, and these have numerous benefits for both employee and employer.

A more effective fleet decision-maker will help an organisation increase operational efficiency, ensure it is compliant and reduce costs.

For employees themselves, training ensures they have the skills necessary to succeed in their roles, improves their confidence and credibility, and allows them to meet career goals by addressing gaps in their personal development.

The importance and value of training is not lost

on those in the fleet sector, with Hollick reporting the AFP's range of courses is proving "unbelievably popular at the moment".

"We've highlighted before that we believe an entire generation of high-level fleet expertise will be lost through retirement in the next few years and this means that training the fleet managers of the future is crucial," he adds.

'There's definitely a thirst for education, particularly classroom-based training rather than online, at the moment."

When the AFP was formed in 2020 from the merger of the Association of Car Fleet Operators and ICFM, one of its aims was to train, educate and develop fleet professionals to raise the standards of corporate fleet operators and associated support service providers.

qualifications that AFP and others provide."

Its Fleet Vehicle Management Pathway courses provide a route map of development for those looking to gain skills in a range of fleet roles, while its Accelerate programme focuses on specific topics.

These are designed to be a deep dive into subjects that are key for fleet professionals, with courses including making the switch to EVs, transitioning to an eLCV fleet, and funding and finance for fleet professionals.

Other accreditation schemes include FORS (Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme), which is a voluntary programme designed to improve standards in the road transport industry.

It assesses and recognises fleet performance in

RANGE OF COURSES

Through its Fleet Academy, it now offers members a range of both online and tutor-led training options.

"We always look out for new entrants into the fleet industry and how we can support those guys," says Hollick.

but have no fleet experience at all. Although they're massively skilled in terms of general management, sometimes they need that element of vocational



key areas – environmental impact, safety and operational efficiency – and provides a framework and sets benchmarks to help operators enhance their performance in these areas.

Training is offered for managers and drivers to enhance their expertise, competence, skills and overall effectiveness in their respective roles.

Undergoing training and gaining qualifications can also help a fleet decision-maker advance their career.

"One thing we are seeing more and more in the jobs world is that those with qualifications, whether they are from AFP or FORS, for example, are the people who are most sought after by organisations," says Hollick.

"We sometimes see the more senior fleet managers moving companies into bigger or more defined roles, which is great to see, and they all tend to be involved with the AFP.

There's definitely a trend for organisations requiring skilled fleet professionals, not only at that senior level, but also ensuring people in their teams have got fleet accreditations to help set strategy and link the fleet with the business needs of the company."

STAY UP TO DATE

It is also important for fleet decision-makers to stay up to date with current and future trends to enable them to shape strategies accordingly. Events such as Fleet & Mobility Live, which takes place this year at the NEC in Birmingham on Tuesday, October 7, and Wednesday, October 8, provide access to expert speakers – as well as suppliers – in one place, while the Fleet 200 Strategy Network adds to this by providing networking opportunities with other fleet decision–makers.

"Networking events are really important to build relationships with your peers," says Winter.

"There may be a presentation going on, and you may pay attention to it, but it's often not the most important thing there.

"It's often about sitting around the table and chewing the fat with other fleet professionals to share your challenges and they can share how they overcame them. I learned so much from that."

Hollick says this sharing of knowledge can extend beyond in-person meetings once a relationship has been formed.





7-8 October 2025 at the NEC, Birmingham

Learn, connect and discover at this year's Fleet & Mobility Live

Leading event for fleets will be back with popular favourites and new key speakers

isitors to this year's free-to-attend Fleet & Mobility Live will get unrivalled access to the best knowledge, learning and peer groups across the fleet sector and come away having discovered new ways to improve their business operations.

The Fleet News team is currently working with the event's Visitor Advisory Board made up of influential fleet operators (see separate panel) to shape a community-driven show that will help support the development of skills and talent throughout fleet via the content-driven seminar programme.

Group editor Stephen Briers says: "This is a strictly 'no sales pitch' event and the majority of presentations will come from fleet managers who have made good progress with innovative initiatives or who just want to help by sharing their journey with the wider fleet community."

What's in store for 2025

A packed agenda of great seminars is already taking shape and several key fleet sector speakers have agreed to take part. There will also be two live Fleet News at 10 discussions.

Seminars will be delivered in three theatres 'Strategy & Leadership', 'Fleet Management' and 'HR, Finance & Procurement'.

Topics covered will include electrification, fleet trailblazer stories, managing serious road incidents that involve your drivers, the use of Al in fleet operations, managing risk, minimising in-life fleet management costs and alternative fuels.

Fleet decision-makers and HR and finance professionals can also learn about how to successfully implement a salary sacrifice scheme, how to extract best value as part of procurement and supply chain management, procuring and disposing of vehicles, how fleet and procurement need to work together, and how to navigate the hoops and hurdles

of a public sector buying framework. A panel discussion including the heads of some of the UK's top leasing companies is also back for 2025 by popular demand.

Also returning is a session run by Peter Eldridge of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) on the basics of fleet management.

Be sure to visit the *Fleet News* website on a regular basis for updates to the seminar programme and the latest speaker announcements.

A host of other features are yet to be announced, including the popular EV Café and Vans at Work sections.

A range of manufacturer brands will also bring their latest vehicles to Fleet & Mobility Live and fleet sector suppliers will showcase their latest products.

Visitors will also have the chance to network with members of the AFP who will be on hand to answer your burning fleet questions.

Since its inception, Fleet & Mobility Live has set out to be the go-to fleet event for fleet operators and suppliers to come together to both define and discuss the key challenges facing the industry – a perfect opportunity to collaborate, innovate and educate, all in one place.

"While the world has changed, the need and the desire hasn't wavered – it is still, in my opinion, the must-attend event"

Stewart Lightbody, Sureserve Group



Meet F&ML's Visitor Advisory Board

Best practice and strategy sessions covering the major issues and long-term challenges at this year's show have been shaped by our Visitor Advisory Board, made up of HR and fleet professionals whose fleets range from fewer than 100 vehicles to more than 1,000.

The board regularly meets with the Fleet News team to identify and discuss the most pressing issues facing fleet and mobility professionals.

Chris Connors, head of fleet and travel (UK &

Ireland) for ISS, said: "Fleet & Mobility Live is one of the 'must-attend' industry events of the year.

"It is a chance to meet with the key fleet suppliers in a very informal way as well as hearing from fleet operators with the seminars providing an excellent insight into a variety of topics."

He adds: "Every year I come away with so much learning and information which proves so valuable to me and enables me to support my business."

And Fleet News Awards 2025 Fleet Manager of

the Year Matt Neale, head of fleet at Platform Housing Group described Fleet & Mobility Live as "the go-to event for anyone looking to stay ahead in the evolving world of fleet management".

Neale adds: "I love how it brings together industry leaders, cutting-edge insights and the latest innovations, all in one place. It's a fantastic opportunity to network, discover new solutions, and gain valuable knowledge to drive your fleet strategy forward."



Stewart Lightbody group head of fleet Sureserve Group



Matt Neale head of fleet and MaaS Platform Housing Group



James Rooney head of fleet Network Rail



Lorna McAtear head of fleet National Grid



Lindi Tembha procurement lead Weetabix Food Company



Jo Hammonds head of fleet services Sanctuary Group



Miles Cooke head of corporate fleet Surrey County Council



James Ferrol fleet manager Dunelm



Matthew Hammond head of fleet and plant Altrad



Cole Pemberton fleet operations manager (UK & Ireland) Beko Europe

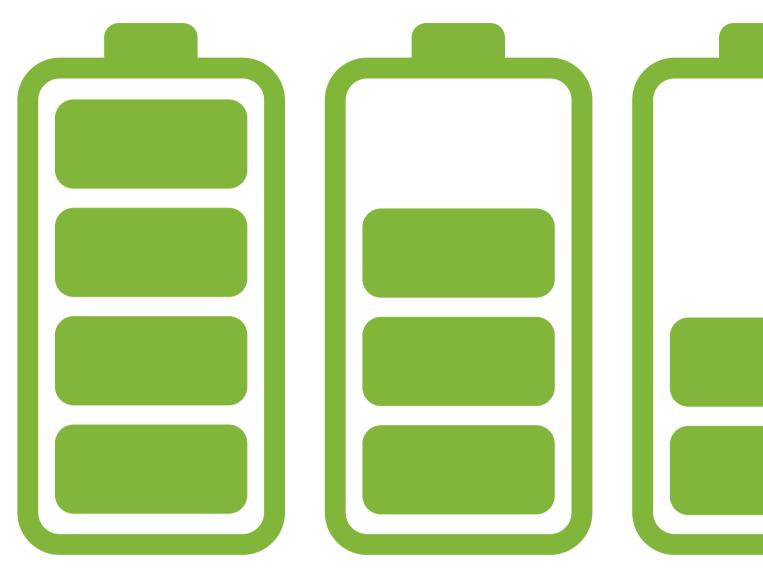


Chris Connors head of fleet and travel (UK & Ireland)



Alison Moriarty managing director Beverley Bell Consulting & Training

Visit www.fleetandmobilitylive.co.uk to register for this year's free-to-attend event



The truth about EV battery degradation

Real-world analysis of thousands of electric vehicles shows that average degradation is just 1.8% a year — helping to lead to growth in used EV leasing. *Andrew Ryan* reports

attery degradation has long been the subject of negative stories, fuelling fears over the longevity and long-term operational capability of electric vehicles (EVs). My neighbour, for example, has been persuaded by elements of the media that battery electric vehicles (BEVs) will need to be scrapped when they are seven or eight years old as their batteries will no longer be fit for purpose.

If true, this would have a significant impact for fleets – and for the wider EV sector as a whole – as

the vehicles would not be desirable as long-term purchases.

After all, any drop in capacity means a comparable fall-off in range. For example, if a battery degrades by 20%, then the distance that vehicle can travel between charges falls by a comparable amount.

For fleets, this could mean a vehicle that was fitfor-purpose when new, may not be suitable for the duty it was bought for just a handful of years later.

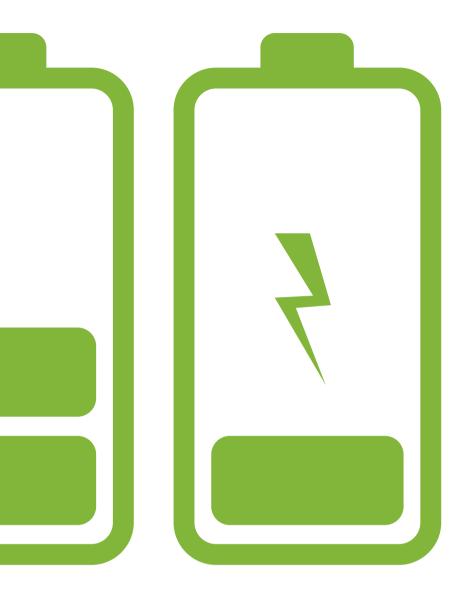
But analysis carried out by a number of fleet

organisations and academics based on thousands of EVs shows these levels of degradation are not rooted in reality, with average degradation being around 1.8% a year.

"The fact is that a 1.8% decline in battery health is unlikely to have a significant impact on most drivers' daily vehicle needs, and this number will only come down further with new EV models and improved battery technology," says Aaron Jarvis, associate vice-president, sales and business development, UK & Ireland, at Geotab.

"People should feel confident that many current EVs are suitable and cost-effective to replace a range of light-, medium- and heavy-duty ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles."

Geotab has analysed the battery health of almost 5,000 fleet and private EVs, representing nearly 1.5 million days of telematics data, to explore how



How to minimise degredation

While some degradation is unavoidable, fleet operators can adopt certain best practices to minimise it.

"First, pay attention to the state-of-charge window," says Generational CEO Phillpott, "Avoid leaving vehicles parked at 100% charge and only charge to the level needed.

"Keeping an average charge level around 50% is better than 80%. Smart charging helps by ensuring vehicles reach the right charge level exactly when needed.

"Second, be mindful of charging power. Limit rapid charging where possible, though operational needs will often dictate. Train your drivers to use regenerative braking and to drive pre-emptively and smoothly to reduce battery stress."

Phillpott says lastly – and where possible – avoid deep discharge cycles. However, this can be the most challenging thing to implement, and very much depends on operational requirements.

"These changes can add up to significant improvements in longevity if they can fit around your business needs," he adds.

the latest battery technology holds up to the rigours of daily use.

The data highlighted how batteries degrade, on average, by 1.8% per year, compared with 2.3% when the company previously performed a wholesale analysis of EV battery health in 2019.

The best-performing EVs in the latest Geotab analysis posted a battery degradation of just 1.0%.

Generational, a UK-based innovator in EV battery health certification, has also seen, on average, degradation of 1.8% a year.

"That is, however, very much an average figure and there is quite a lot of variation across the board," says its CEO Oliver Phillpott.

He adds the results underline the urgent need for transparent, easy-to-understand information to be made available across the used vehicle market (see panel, page 31).

PROGRESS IN BATTERY TECHNOLOGY

Generational has also found that 2023 EVs maintain higher battery health on average than same-mileage 2016/17 models.

EVs from 2016-1017 had an average battery health of 76% at 90,000 miles, with 2023 vehicles recording an average of 86%.

"The results of our EV battery health testing highlights the remarkable progress in battery technology over recent years, and just how much more value it adds than the mileage figure when looking to acquire a used EV," adds Phillpott.

Potential contributors to why some vehicle models, on average, degrade faster than others are battery chemistry and thermal management of the battery pack.

While current EVs mostly use lithium-ion batteries, there are many different variations of lithium-ion chemistries and this will influence how it responds to stress.

Arval provides battery health certificates for its defleeted EVs and its analysis of 8,300 cars from 30 different brands sold in eight countries between March 2023 and November 2024 found the average battery health was 93%.

Almost all (98%) of the measured health statuses were above 80% and, on the vehicles travelling more than 120,000 miles, the battery health was close to 90% on average.

"With these higher levels of sustained health, batteries in the latest EV models will comfortably outlast the usable life of the vehicle and will likely not need to be replaced," says Jarvis.

"However, we still see battery reliability being used as a stick to beat EVs with. Hopefully data like ours can finally put these myths to bed."

Unfortunately, although the levels of degradation are much lower than is often portrayed, some loss of capacity is inevitable.

This is usually split into two mechanisms: calendar degradation which happens over the course of time and is unavoidable, and cycling ageing, which occurs as a result of the battery being charged and discharged.

INCREASING THE STRESS

Cycling ageing escalates when operators increase the stress on batteries through regular rapid charging or deep discharges – charging the battery all the way up to 100% and discharging all the way down to near-empty before charging again.

Phillpott says this type of stress is reduced by modern battery management systems, but while these systems have certainly improved battery protection, the fundamental chemistry remains.

"Overall charge rates are generally increasing, and there's currently a lot of discussion about megawatt charging – but we do have some reservations about what this unrelenting focus on speed will do to longevity," he adds.

One of the knock-on effects of the low levels of degradation is growing confidence in the longevity in the technology and this has led to an increase in the number of companies offering used EV leasing to organisations.

"Used EV programmes present the opportunity to offer lower cost second-hand electric cars to new segments of price-driven consumers, >

One supplier. One platform. Why fleets should ditch the multi-supplier approach

anaging a modern fleet shouldn't mean juggling multiple platforms, logins, or suppliers.
Yet for many fleet operators, this disjointed reality is all too familiar.

From vehicle cameras and telematics to route optimisation and vehicle checks, it's common to see different systems from different providers stitched together to gain control.

Trakm8 changes the game, offering a complete 360-degree fleet view through its single, unified platform, Insight.

With Trakm8, fleet managers can wave goodbye to integration headaches. No more stitching together data from five different sources. No more inconsistent insights or mismatched reporting formats. Just one platform, one login and one supplier, delivering everything you need to manage your fleet efficiently, safely, and cost-effectively.

One platform, all the insights

Trakm8's single-platform solution covers the full range of fleet management needs:

- Advanced telematics for real-time vehicle tracking and driver behaviour analysis.
- Connected cloud-based fleet dashcams with live video streaming.
- Digital vehicle checks for pre-journey compliance and maintenance reporting.
- AI Route planning and optimisation that cuts mileage and fuel consumption.
- Vehicle health monitoring that works across any make or model.

Unlike many providers that rely on thirdparty integrations to offer this functionality, Trakm8 delivers a natively integrated ecosystem which reduces complexity, improves data consistency, and gives fleet managers a single source of truth.

Unifying fragmented fleets

Larger fleets often face a different kind of challenge: inconsistency across the fleet



itself. It's not uncommon for one division to use one telematics provider, while another part of the fleet is tied into a separate system entirely. The result? A fragmented, inefficient, and often frustrating experience for fleet managers.

Trakm8 resolves this by consolidating all telematics, cameras, vehicle health data and optimisation tools into one consistent platform that spans the entire fleet, no matter how complex or distributed.

OEM-agnostic advantage

While some manufacturers offer their own telematics and vehicle health solutions, they're typically locked into a specific make or model.

That's a major limitation for mixed fleets, and a problem Trakm8 solves.

Our platform works across all vehicle types and brands, providing standardised insights whether you're running vans, cars, trucks or a combination.

Why settle for 'almost' integrated?

The industry is awash with partial

solutions. Telematics providers partnering with dashcam companies. Route planning firms plugging into telematics APIs.

These patchwork approaches often come with compatibility issues, support complexity, and hidden costs.

Trakm8's integrated platform is purpose-built to offer fleets everything in one place, no bolt-ons required.

That means faster deployment, simplified training and one point of contact for support and service.

The result? More control, less admin and better outcomes

Fleet managers using Trakm8's platform report reduced accident rates, improved fuel economy, greater compliance and lower operating costs. Most importantly, they gain clarity and control, not chaos and compromise.

Your fleet deserves better

Don't let your technology stack hold you back. Trakm8 gives you the tools to monitor, manage, and optimise your entire fleet from a single screen.

Ready to simplify your fleet operations?
Discover the power of one platform.
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Cenabling more to make the switch and improving EV demand across the market," says Toby Poston, chief executive of the British Vehicle Rental & Leasing Association (BVRLA).

"It also aligns with maximising vehicle life cycles, especially as more first-life EVs become available on the used market," he adds.

Leasing companies report growing interest from organisations. "The demand so far has been incredibly strong, particularly as businesses are looking for cost-saving solutions in a challenging economic climate," says Mike Manners, managing director of CBVC Vehicle Management, which is working with Lex Autolease to ensure a supply of used EVs.

Jo Clark, director of sales at Ogilvie Fleet, echoed this sentiment while highlighting other benefits.

"It's particularly effective when overall costs are rising, but companies are reluctant to increase banding limits," she says.

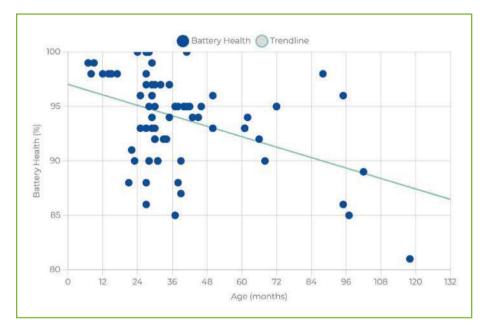
"It allows ICE drivers to switch into EVs quickly, reducing benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax for drivers and lowering total cost of ownership for the business.

"It's also great for companies who have overseas employees working in the UK for 12 or 24 months.

"Many clients are using it to support their sustainability goals, and drivers benefit from access to higher-grade vehicles than they might otherwise be able to afford.

"It's a flexible alternative to daily rental for shorterterm needs, and we've also seen strong uptake through salary sacrifice, with drivers often able to access higher-spec vehicles within their budget."

Tusker offers used EVs through its salary sacrifice schemes, with its managing director Kit



Battery health testing by Generational of a sample pool of 200 electric vehicles shows how battery degradation can vary

Wisdom saying a used sal/sac lease could be anywhere up to 20% cheaper. "It really depends on the make, the model and what the cost of a new car is at that particular moment." he adds.

This lower cost for two- to three-year-old EVs allows employees to enter a salary sacrifice scheme sooner than they might otherwise have

been able to, says Cheryl Clements, head of business development at Tusker.

"We're seeing more people wanting to offer preloved salary sacrifice to help those vehicles back on the road and widen the opportunity of driving an EV to even more people," she adds.

Leasing companies are witnessing the popularity of used EVs grow "month on month".

As awareness increases of their cost and tax efficiencies, as well as the environmental benefits, they expect to see even wider adoption of used EVs.

"Fleets have historically been very cost driven and, basically, it's less expensive to drive a used EV than a new one," explains Clements.

"With costs going up, it will become more of a consideration for fleets which want to offer a wider range of vehicles while keeping costs low."

Clark also suspects that used EV leasing will become "a more prominent option" within fleet strategies moving forward.

"It's particularly compelling for situations where traditional leasing wasn't previously viable or where long-term daily rental was the norm," she says.

Call for battery health certificates

Calls continue for an industry-backed health certificate for EVs, to boost consumer confidence and improve residual values.

The Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) and many other bodies signed a BVRLA open letter in April calling for a battery health certificate scheme among other measures.

"There is a huge amount of misinformation around about EV batteries, ranging from their supposed propensity to self-combust to the speed at which they degrade," says Ric Baird, board member at the AFP.

"However, all the available evidence now shows them to be stable, robust and long-lasting, with degradation generally occurring at a slow and predictable rate. That needs to be communicated."

Research from insurers AXA UK shows that battery health certificates could play a significant role in stimulating the UK's used EV market by providing a measure for vehicle value that does not currently exist.

Its report 'Sparking Change – the case for delivering EV battery health certificates' highlights the benefits of standardised battery health certificates in increasing demand for used EVs and alleviating consumer concerns.

The certificates, it says, would provide consistency in battery health information for all makes and models of used EVs to give consumers more confidence in the longevity of the vehicles they are buying.

"This also has the potential to positively impact insurance premiums by providing a barometer for assessing the value of EVs in a similar way that mileage is used for vehicles with an engine," says Marco Distefano, managing director of AXA Retail.

MIND THE (DIMINISHING) GAP

Chris Salmon, commercial director at SG Fleet, asserts the only threat to the uptake of used EVs by fleets will occur if new vehicle discounts and list prices improve to the point where the price gap between a used EV and new one isn't sufficiently significant.

"But I do think the absence of potentially troublesome mechanical parts does make used EV leasing an increasingly viable option," he adds.

Offering used EV leasing also has business advantages for leasing companies.

As well as increasing their portfolio of products, it can help them mitigate financial losses on used EVs, both from standard defleets and early terminations given the current volatility of EV residual values.

"These schemes also contribute to faster progress towards our sustainability goals by extending the life cycle of EVs and encouraging wider adoption across fleets," says Clark.

Solid-state batteries: the holy grail?

olid-state batteries have long been viewed as the holy grail of electric vehicle energy storage, as they offer greater energy density — which means they can be smaller and lighter than current EV batteries while offering the same range, faster charging speeds and improved safety.

And, while they are not widely available in production vehicles yet, this may change over the next few years.

A number of manufacturers are working with solid-state battery developers and one of them

A number of manufacturers are working with solid-state battery developers and one of them — Mercedes-Benz — became the first to put a car powered by a solid-state battery on the road.

After intensive testing, the prototype solid-state battery made by Factorial Energy was integrated into an EQS at the end of last year, with the vehicle hitting the roads in Germany in February.

"This breakthrough demonstrates that solid-state battery technology has moved beyond the laboratory and into real-world application, setting a new benchmark for the entire automotive industry," says Siyu Huang, CEO and co-founder of Factorial Energy.



The solid-state battery allows for 25% more driving range compared with the same battery weight and size of a corresponding EQS battery. The development vehicle is expected to have a range of more than 620 miles. The current EQS 450 offers a range of 497 miles.

Another manufacturer — Stellantis — is planning to integrate solid-state batteries into a demonstration fleet next year.

eries into a demonstration fleet next year. Laboratory tests have vali-dated its batteries to have an energy density of 375Wh/kg after ompleting 600 charging cycles,

around 25% more than the best-performing current EV batteries.

They also showed that the cells enable a significant reduction in charging time, from

significant reduction in charging time, from 15% to more than 90% charge in just 18 minutes at room temperature.

The major difference to current lithium-ion EV batteries is that the current batteries use liquid electrolytes to transfer electricity within their cells, while solid-state batteries feature – unsurprisingly given their name – solid electrolytes.

prone to unexpected side reactions, there is no risk of electrolyte leakages and they can also operate at higher temperatures.



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How can you run electric vans without disrupting operational efficiency?



Decision-makers at a recent *Fleet News* roundtable discussed this and many more challenges facing them in the transition to zero-emission vehicles. *Andrew Ryan* reports

Attendees

Standing, from left to right:

Nick Osborne, national sales manager, Athlon UK

Ryan Mills, national fleet manager, Arcus FM

Chris Cubberley, head of fleet, Mitie

Neil Thomas, head of fleet, Royal Mail Group

Julie Davies, group fleet and plant compliance manager, Amey

Dale Eynon, director, Defra group fleet services

Graham Thomas, fleet operations manager, Ocado

David Haynes, LCV business development manager, Athlon UK

Seated, from left to right:

Lorna McAtear head of fleet, National Grid

Stephen Briers, group editor, Fleet News

Aaron Powell, fleet & logistics director, Speedy Services

Andrew Teer, transport operations manager, Smith Brothers Stores

Jason Gadsby, UK & EMEA fleet manager, Crawford & Company Not pictured: **Rob Simister**, director – fleet operations, Centrica



lectrification and safety are two of the topics topping the vast majority of fleet decision-makers' lists in the UK – and so it proved at a recent *Fleet News* roundtable.

Held at the Crowne Plaza in Stratford-upon-Avon and sponsored by Athlon.

ford-upon-Avon and sponsored by Athlon, attendees discussed the obstacles they faced when transitioning their van fleets to zero emission, how electric van charging can be incorporated into the working day, and how capable the current range of electric vans are.

Attendees also talked about the importance of creating a safety culture in an organisation, including how to ensure drivers get the message.

Fleet News: What obstacles are you encountering with your transition to zero emission fleets?

Dale Eynon, director, Defra group fleet services:

Generally, 100% car fleets are easy because, for most of them, the vehicle is a company perk, or it's the benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax that's driving the agenda. And, where people can charge at home, then why wouldn't you charge at 7p per kWh instead of filling up your petrol car at £6 a gallon?

Commercials and vans are much more difficult. A tool we've used an awful lot is telematics, which has allowed us to analyse our vans, understand what their journeys are, and to understand the sorts of range and charging needed.

One of the things we've noticed over the past three years is that van drivers, in particular, don't want to stop to charge during the day, even though you can build the time in.

We've all got smartphones, emails to do, lunch to eat. There's all sorts of things they can do, but they just don't want to stop. So we've ended up picking vehicles not just average journeys, but also what their maximum mileages are. This way we are choosing all the low-hanging fruit to start with.

Aaron Powell, fleet & logistics director, Speedy Services: We are bringing in a logistics system that'll factor that in, so it'll tell the driver they need to go and charge at this place at that time.

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SAVE THE DATE

7th & 8th October 2025

NEC, Birmingham

"The problem is we're all being forced to move faster and faster, and we can't make those sensible decisions any more"

C Rob Simister, director – fleet operations, Centrica: We're going to try to link the telematics outputs to our dispatch system. We're quite a reactive business at British Gas. We want to take the charging moment away from the responsibility of the driver, but to put it into their roster of jobs.

So, you fix a boiler here, you fix a boiler there, and then your next job is to go to that charge point to charge for X amount of time. After that, they go back to their regular schedule.

We're trying to do what we can to minimise the downtime; a big cost for us is time. There are a number of different options we're looking at to try and disappear the time away by combining it with other things such as loading parts, but it is a logistics nightmare to get all the situations together.

Ryan Mills, national fleet manager at Arcus FM: The issue we've had is around the productivity loss when charging. How do we deal with that?

As a mobile service deliverer, we don't diarise people to refuel. They have a fuel card and it just sort of happens as part of the day. But some of the drivers with electric vehicles will not be able to charge at home and then you have to factor in that they will have to charge during the working day.

It's also difficult to predict how long that will take. Manufacturers say you can get to 80% capacity in 30 minutes, but that's if you can get on the right charger, it's working and giving out the power that it says it will.

There are all those unknown factors, and then we get pushback from field ops that charging is impacting on productivity – their main objective.

FN: How do the electric vans currently available meet your needs?

Dale Eynon: In terms of what we needed in the early days of our transition, a 150-mile range was good enough, but 170 miles was the ultimate, which was about 120-to-130 miles in reality.

That was getting most of our stuff done as 100 miles was our sweet spot, but we're now transitioning vans where we need 150 miles a day. Luckily technology is moving on.

Most of the vans – small, medium and even some of the large ones – offer WLTP ranges of 250 to 260 miles, which, in reality, is about 180 miles. It's just that there is this lag between what cars can do in terms of range versus what vans can do, so we have to go much more slowly on transitioning the vans than our cars, just because we need to keep waiting for the range.

We're learning very rapidly that the one thing we all want and that is not available is what the actual range of the vehicles are with weight on board.

Chris Cubberley, head of fleet at Mitie: The worrying thing is that there doesn't seem to be anything coming through that's going to give us that additional range, whereas, with cars, you can see that we're going to be 400 miles-plus on pretty much anything new by the end of this year/early next year. It's just not happening on vans.

Lorna McAtear, head of fleet at National Grid: The EV architecture in the van is also behind that of cars – so charging speed is also a problem.

Rob Simister: The OEMs are really missing a trick with not stuffing commercial vehicles with car levels of charging capability.

FN: Are you having to make changes to your operations to incorporate electric vans in your fleets?

Dale Eynon: You have to change your operation a little bit to accommodate electric vehicles. You can't just carry on as if it's a petrol or diesel. There's a bit of planning involved. You have to get past it, but for a lot of people there is a bit of a mindset change needed about how you run operations.

We need to talk to team leaders and managers about educating people and changing those operations so that it doesn't cause a problem.

Lorna McAtear: There is a whole challenge around communication because everything is changing constantly after decades of everything being exactly the same.

This meant you could optimise operations to the nth degree.

However, the problems we are talking about today may not be the problem in three months' time. But in six months' time it could become a problem again because everything keeps moving. Rob Simister: The other problem we've got is that the decisions we are making now are based on the technology available now, and not what the available technology may be in six years' time after we've sweated the assets we've acquired.

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With a diesel van, a litre is a litre is a litre, whereas we're basically fixing on a tech platform that has got to stay the same for six years, while in the wider world the available tech platforms are changing.

Lorna McAtear: As long as you buy to fit a need right now, then it's not as bad. The problem is we're all being forced to move faster and faster, and we can't make those sensible decisions any more.

FN: How are you improving driver safety?

Dale Eynon: We have a very strong safety culture across the organisation and it extends to fleet. For example, we don't allow people to make calls in a car, hands-free or anything. That was banned 10 years ago because of the dangers of distraction.

The problem of distraction is getting worse. It used to be smoking or eating your sandwiches in a car, then it was the phone. There's always going to be distractions, though. It's going to get worse because there are no buttons in the newest cars, and people have to try to work out where the fan is and stuff like that.

I think you have to go back to basics and say: 'What's your safety culture with your drivers? Could you do more? Could you do it more often?

I know some organisations have driver awards for the best or safest driver and in one sense it doesn't matter who wins, just the fact that you've got the awards.

We try to instil a culture of safety within our drivers that's every day, every week, every hour, and that's down to us as fleet managers with health and safety people, but it is bloody hard.

Aaron Powell: We've created videos to get the safety message across to our drivers.

These are hard-hitting videos. They feature people such as a lawyer, a police officer and a paramedic all talking about the impact of what you do on the road

The paramedic talks about turning up to a road collision where a baby ended up going through a windscreen because the mum took the seatbelt off it so she could feed it, while the police officers talks about what happens if you get arrested. I want our drivers to be genuinely shocked at what they see. Julie Davies, group fleet and plant compliance manager at Amey: I've always have a Met Police officer at any conference or stand-down day we have at Amey, and they give a talk about road safety. It always scares the living daylights out of drivers about what they think is all right, and what the reality is.





Post-crash strategy is key to cut cost and protect drivers

How a fleet responds to a collision has far-reaching consequences for both the driver's well-being and the organisation's operations.

Andrew Ryan reports

owever good an organisation's risk management strategy is, collisions will still happen.

How a fleet reacts to them will have long-lasting consequences, both from operational and driver wellbeing perspectives.

From an operational angle, best practice is wellestablished. In any incident, the first step is to ensure the safety of the driver and other parties involved.

What happens next is dependent on the severity of the collision.

If it is relatively minor and the emergency services are not involved, then a fleet manager or their accident management provider should take decisive action to reduce disruption and costs.

"The driver should be instructed to follow company protocol, which may include reporting the accident, gathering necessary information and avoiding any admissions of liability," says Mark Young, corporate account director at AX.

If there is a collision involving a third party, a fleet driver should get their name, address, phone number, vehicle registration number and insurance details. Taking photographs of the scene also provides a useful record.

The fleet driver should then contact their employer or its accident management company which will then take up the claim. Many suppliers offer smartphone apps which make immediate reporting convenient and ensure drivers take all the information needed.

Speed is of the essence when it comes to reporting incidents. "Drivers need to get any collision logged straight away," says Lorna McAtear, head of fleet at National Grid.

"It doesn't matter what happens, call it in; end of. Because all of the costs etc. tend to rise the longer it is before the incident is reported."

it is before the incident is reported."

The main cost which can be avoided is credit hire

when a temporary replacement vehicle is

provided by a credit hire organisation (CHO) in the event of a non-fault collision.

The CHO funds the car hire while the vehicle is being repaired and will then claim the hire charges back from the at-fault party's insurer. This is vastly more expensive than the at-fault party sourcing a replacement rental itself, with this cost obviously racking up the longer the repair takes.

INTERVIEW DRIVERS

Fleet managers should also interview their driver as soon as possible to learn from any incident and use their findings to implement training or operational changes to reduce the likelihood of a similar crash happening again.

"Investigate all incidents, whether they are minor or more serious," says Mark Cartwright, head of commercial vehicle incident prevention at National Highways.

He recommends using the 'five whys' method, which involves asking 'why' questions multiple times to identify the root cause of a problem.

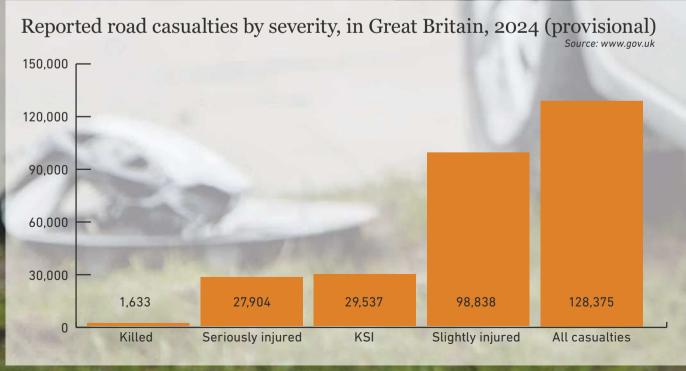
This also helps to differentiate between the contributing factors of a problem and its root cause, and can be learned quickly and does not require statistical analysis to be used.

Cartwright says: "Ask what happened? 'Well, I crashed into them'. Why? 'I didn't see them'. Why didn't you see them? And so on. Dig into it and find out what the root cause of an incident was so you can address it.

"A lot of businesses talk about having a blamefree culture. It's not a blame-free culture. You will go through the investigation process and blame may well actually end up somewhere, but it's having a just culture, a consistent culture, where you're taking everybody's views on board and you are carrying out that investigation in a proper

Potential outcomes may involve the driver







Cundertaking driver training to improve skills or knowledge, facing disciplinary action, while the fleets may also make operational changes if multiple drivers are having similar incidents which could be avoided by a change in procedures, such as hitting the same post in a depot.

BLUE LIGHT INCIDENTS

If the emergency services are called following the collision, then the best-practice procedures are slightly different.

"We call them blue light incidents," says Aaron Powell, fleet and logistics director at Speedy Hire. "If any of the blue light divisions are called out, there is a hierarchy of what to do and who to contact.

"That may be me, my accident manager, our compliance manager or the driver's line manager, and then we would deploy someone to the spot if there was a need to, such as they had sustained serious injuries."

Powell says Speedy also offers drivers legal advice if they require it. "If our driver was arrested, we would deploy a solicitor to the police station or wherever they are, and take control of the situation that way."

Freightlink Europe takes it a step further if any of the emergency services are involved.

"Nobody likes to think that the unthinkable could happen, but it does. So, for us, training our drivers and giving them the confidence of what to do should it happen starts at induction," says Lesley O'Brien, managing director at Freightlink Europe.

"If any of our drivers are involved in a blue light incident on the road, they would not be ringing me, or any of our team.

"Straightaway, they would be ringing our legal helpline and the solicitor, who will then speak to the police and either go to the scene of the incident or the police station."

Freightlink drivers have specific instructions not to speak to the police other than to give their name and details, and information about the vehicle they were driving.

"They do not give a recount of what happened, no matter how guilty or sorry they feel for anyone who is injured," says O'Brien.

"The police will be saying 'tell me what happened', but actually the driver has a right to remain silent and to have legal assistance. They may want to answer simple questions and say they didn't have a good night's sleep as their baby kept them up, and they had told their transport manager, but all of a sudden they're incriminating themselves and they're incriminating the company.

"I understand that the drivers may feel vulnerable in that situation, so they have a letter that they can show to the police saying that they absolutely want to help, but they want to have their legal representation with them."

Drivers are also told not to complete the collision report in the app they use for first notification of loss (FNOL) because the police will take the phone which could be used as evidence.

For the same reason, O'Brien says that an internal investigation into the collision would be done by their legal representatives to have the benefit of being legally privileged.

"Otherwise the police can come in, take all those notes that you've just scribbled down and there

"You, as the guy who gave the driver the keys, are also potentially liable"

DERMOT COUGHLAN, KELLY FLEET SERVICES

could be something there that could incriminate you," she adds.

Alison Moriarty, managing director and head of compliance at Beverley Bell Consulting, adds: "All you need, literally, is for your solicitor to request you do an internal investigation on behalf of them, and then it's legally privileged.

"So you can still do your internal investigation, but you've actually got it protected."

As well as using an external legal team, having an internal team which is trained and understands what needs to be happen – such as talking to the press – when a serious collision occurs is important, says Moriarty.

"You do need quite a comprehensive team so you can contain it until you know what's happened," she adds.

This will also help the fleet manager if there is a police investigation into the incident.

"You, as the guy who gave the driver the keys, are also potentially liable because you need to make sure that they have a valid licence, are looking after the vehicle and doing their walkaround checks, and so on," says Dermot Coughlan, fleet director at Kelly Fleet Services.

"When a driver has a bad accident, the police will go to the driver first and then to the transport manager and go 'okay, where is the defects sheet from last week? When was the last service?'

"And they'll go through every single thing. Hopefully not too many have been through that process, but it's scary. If you've done something wrong, you could end up in the dock too. Fleet managers and operations managers need to know that."

LOOK AFTER DRIVER WELLBEING

As well as potentially sustaining physical injuries, drivers who are involved in a collision can often suffer mental health issues.

"Some drivers have understandable anxiety about getting in a vehicle again, particularly when they are in a situation similar to when they were involved in a crash," says Dr Nicola Lester, clinical consultant for Brake and also of the Psychological Trauma Consultancy.

"They may no longer feel safe when they're in a car, for example. They might be having nightmares.

"They may be thinking all the time about what has happened and that would be a normal response to a traumatic incident as it shows the mind is working really hard to process the event.

"We don't need to look far to know that we don't want anxious drivers on the road."

Moriarty adds: "Even the driver has not been at fault in any way, if they've injured somebody then they may not get over it easily. For a lot of people, it will affect them for the rest of their lives."

Organisations can tackle this anxiety by offering drivers access to mental health support, such as trauma-informed therapy, counselling services and employee assistance programmes (EAPs).

Employers should ensure these resources are easily accessible, confidential and free from stigma, so employees feel empowered to seek the support they need without fear of judgement, says Caitlin Taylor, road safety manager England at RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents).

"It is not enough to offer empty condolences or superficial policies; true support requires a deeper, authentic engagement with the wellbeing of employees," she adds.

"When employers show genuine care, it fosters trust and creates an environment where employees feel safe, valued and supported, enabling them to navigate their trauma with the understanding they truly need."

Support can also take the form of offering affected employees flexible leave options, phased returns and adjustments that can help them transition back when they are ready.

SEND A CLEAR MESSAGE

This support sends a clear message to employees that their wellbeing is the priority, says Taylor. "It acknowledges that while work is important, it is only sustainable when the individual is supported holistically and is allowed to regain their health and strength in their own time."

Colleagues can play a pivotal role in helping employees feel supported, and this may be though simple acts of kindness, such as offering a listening ear or helping with practical tasks.

"By prioritising care and understanding over performance, teams can provide a safety net for those dealing with trauma and loss," says Taylor.

As well as offering support internally, organisations can also provide affected employees with details of independent organisations which offer help, such as the National Road Victim Service run by Brake. This is a free, professional service which provides a telephone hotline, as well as numerous guides with useful information.

Brake will this year also establish a new National Centre of Excellence for Post-Crash Support.

This will supply a commissioned consultancy service offering expert guidance to organisations and practitioners to help them integrate and deliver a trauma-informed response to victims and their families.

The charity adds the centre is committed to research and growing knowledge supporting the development of trauma-informed approaches in the field of post-crash support, and promoting opportunities to ensure that lived experiences and the voices of victims and their families are heard, understood, and inform practice.



Championing women in fleet

New *Fleet News* initiative aims to spotlight and celebrate the achievements of women in the fleet sector

group of female fleet decision-makers will meet for the first time this week as part of the *Fleet News* Empowering Women in Fleet (EWiF) initiative.

This new enterprise, which aims to promote inspiring role models and empower more women to reach their full potential, will bring together influential fleet decision-makers and leaders from both the public and private sectors.

Members will include fleet managers, procurement specialists, HR professionals and finance heads.

The group's inaugural meeting will take place on Friday, 27 June. It will be followed by a second meeting in September and a celebration of EWiF at Fleet & Mobility Live, at the NEC on October 7-8.

An advisory board of leading female fleet professionals will guide the development and direction of the EWiF group.

Board member Denise Hawkins, fleet manager at Stannah Management Services, says: "I'm really excited about the potential of this initiative. We aim to create a safe, inclusive space where women in fleet can develop, participate and showcase the exceptional work they do. By identifying and addressing the barriers to equality, we hope to drive lasting change."

Cathy Wilson, payroll and fleet manager at Flagship Group, adds: "Empowering women in fleet is essential to growing female representation in the industry. This initiative will build confidence and nurture the next generation of professionals, showing that women can thrive and lead in every area of fleet management."

Leah Louise Lindsay, fleet and employee benefits manager at MWH Treatment, sees the initiative as a catalyst for progress. She says: "EWiF has the potential to create meaningful change. I hope it encourages people to think differently and take action toward a more inclusive future."

Joanne Coffey, fleet and transport manager at CEF, adds: "This programme will help nurture emerging female talent and support their rise through the ranks of the industry."

Fleet News group editor Stephen Briers adds: "We believe this initiative presents a valuable opportunity to collaboratively shape a more inclusive future for our industry, one where all voices are heard and celebrated."



Register your interest in joining this network by scanning the QR code



"This programme will help nurture emerging female talent and support their rise through the ranks of the industry"

JOANNE COFFEY. CEF

EWiF pioneers: meet the women inspiring meaningful change in fleet

- Lindi Tembha, procurement lead, Weetabix
- Lorna McAtear, head of fleet, National Grid
- Leah Louise Lindsay, UK employee benefits and fleet manager, MWH Treatment
- S-J Mitchell, senior fleet & supply chain manager, Ovo
- Emma Turness, group fleet manager, Connells
- Sarah Armitage, decarbonisation and vehicle strategy manager, Network Rail
- Denise Hawkins, fleet manager, Stannah Management Services
- Sarah Gilding, head of Joint Vehicle Fleet Management Department at South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
- Kerry Teesdale, head of fleet, MJ Quinn
- Joanne Coffey, fleet and transport manager, CEF
- Cathy Wilson, payroll and fleet manager, Flagship Housing
- Elaine Pringle, fleet manager, Scottish Water
- Sarina Vale, fleet category manager, Otis Elevator
- Debbie Floyde, group fleet and risk & facilities manager, Bauer Media
- Helen Brislane, Group Procurement Manager: Fleet Category Lead, Churchill Group
- Lucy Stuart, head of fleet & logistics, Cadent

VOLVO

Meet the fully electric EX30

Huge news for your fleet.



Discover our fully electric EX30. It travels up to 295 miles on a single charge* and has the smallest CO₂ footprint of any Volvo car to date**. Made with recycled materials and featuring advanced Safe Space technology. But our electric cars are just one piece of our wider ambitions for the future and by 2040, we aspire to be a climate-neutral company across our value chain.

Time to electrify your fleet?

*Fuel economy and CO2 results for the Volvo EX30: Mpg (I/100km): Not applicable, CO2 emissions: 0 g/km, electric range 209.4 – 295.8 miles.

These figures were obtained after the battery had been fully charged. The Volvo EX30 is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. The electric range shown was achieved using the new (WLTP) test procedure. Figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare fuel consumption, CO₂ and electric range figures with other cars tested to the same technica procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

**Based on lifecycle CO2 emissions over 200,000 kms of driving using charging electricity from the EU27 energy mix. Relates to globally available products.

'UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES AND THE KEY GOAL'

Stakeholder engagement, leadership and project management skills result in strategic success for first-time fleet manager.

Stephen Briers reports

y initial response was 'not a chance'!"

After a decade working for Cadent, the UK's largest energy distribution company, in a variety of project manager, transition and risk management roles, Lucy Stuart had a few reservations when first asked about

moving to fleet.

"It was too emotive, and I didn't think I had the relevant knowledge," she says, explaining her reaction when approached by senior management at the start of 2024.

She relented sufficiently to accept an interim position as head of fleet & logistics.

It lasted just two months; by April she was officially appointed.

So what changed? "After reflection, I realised it wasn't knowledge of those (fleet) processes that was required, but the other skills I have such as stakeholder engagement, leadership and project management."

She adds: "I know Cadent, and I understand the areas to improve and where my project management skills will help."

By leaning on the operational knowledge of a 20-strong fleet team (including four network managers, a company car specialist, fleet project manager, two data analysts, fleet technician and two compliance officers), as well as 140 staff in the logistics operation, Stuart was able to focus on the strategic and

policy improvements without getting weighed down in the day-to-day detail.

"I was able to rely on our experienced team and trust their know-how. Going into the role with no knowledge wasn't a hindrance; it was about understanding the team, the business and the role of the fleet within our operations," she says.

"It doesn't matter if it's fleet, property or operations; you simply have

to understand the challenges and the organisation's key goal, which, for Cadent, is to keep people safe and warm in their homes while saving the planet."

An employer of 6,000 staff, Cadent manages 131,000 kilometres of pipeline and supplies gas to 11 million homes and 40,000 industrial

customers. Its network feeds 188 power stations and connects to 47 biomethane production plants, as well as 14 compressed natural gas fuel stations for HGVs.

To fulfil its business-critical role, the organisation relies on a fleet of 3,000 light commercial vehicles (LCVs), 1,200 company cars and six tractor units.

A major assignment in Stuart's first year of heading fleet & logistics was revitalising the risk and driver behaviour policy.

Overseen by the fleet project manager, the objective was to better understand the roles and responsibilities of drivers, build engagement through understanding common concerns and utilise telematics data to improve performance. Education was an underlying theme.

Policies and standards were subsequently updated, making them more user-friendly for drivers and their managers, while a permit to drive was implemented, supported by a change of licence checking provider.

In addition, a year-long programme of communications has been introduced, covering topics such as safer towing, vehicle familiarisation and fleet checks.

"We also had a driver safety stand-down day where we saw a third of the van drivers to get their feedback about the initiatives," Stuart says. "We will use that to drive our journey going forward."

She added: "I started by making a lot of notes, engaging the board, the exec team, our insurers and the drivers. Our fleet project \supset

"Going into the role with no knowledge wasn't a hindrance"

LUCY STUART



C manager looked at the telematics data and how we were using it, and we shared the information with the engineers and trade unions, ensuring they understood the cost of accident management and how insurance works on a big fleet, but also showing our commitment to investing in the fleet."

Telematics data also supports Cadent's decarbonisation strategy on both cars and vans by providing insight into driver journeys, usage and utilisation.

The entire car fleet has already switched to electric, with 62% full-electric and 38% plug-in hybrid (PHEV), as part of a three-year transition plan.

PHEVs are permitted for drivers who travel at least 15,000 miles a year, with mileage reconciled when the car is de-fleeted to ensure they still meet the criteria.

Cadent also committed to move its first responder vehicles – mid-size vans which account for around 30% of the total LCV fleet – to electric over a five-year period. These do not travel large mileages or carry heavy equipment, making them "the logical place to start", Stuart says.

To date, half have transitioned, making Cadent one of the leaders among its peers in the gas distribution utility sector.

"I'm proud of our progress, but we've now reached the 50% milestone and are taking stock of our position due to the public charging infrastructure before going further," Stuart says. "We have an obligation to get to a gas leak within an hour and so we have to have the resilience to offer a 24/7 service.

"Not everyone can charge at home and the range and lack of public charging infrastructure mean that, operationally, we can't go any further at this time."

WORKING HOURS CHARGING

All vans are home-based with around 60% of drivers having off-road parking for charging; the rest rely on the public charging network. However, they can only charge during their working hours, which can have an impact on productivity.

Cadent supports the installation of home chargers for both cars and vans. Car drivers reclaim their business mileage at advisory electric rates while van drivers are reimbursed via the Mina system which integrates their charge point and energy supplier to ensure accurate billing and direct payment, eliminating the need for them to claim expenses.

The rest of the LCV fleet is typically 3.5-tonne vans towing mini diggers with the need for on-board power, putting them out of scope for the electric vans currently available.

'Shattering stereotypes' for women in business

Lucy Stuart is a passionate advocate for diversity, equity and inclusivity. Until recently she was co-chair for Women in Cadent, one of the organisation's ED&I groups.

The group addresses perceptions around roles which are traditionally seen as male positions and aims to "shatter stereotypes", she says.

The company has produced a series of 'Shattering Stereotypes' videos intended to promote and demonstrate the possibilities for women in business.

Stuart recently agreed to join the steering group for the new *Fleet News* initiative Empowering Women in Fleet which has been set up to highlight and celebrate women's achievements in fleet to promote role models and empower women to reach their potential.





Cadent is trialling 50 eDeliver 7 mid-size electric vans from Maxus which offer longer range (230 miles WLTP) together with nine of the larger eDeliver 9 electric vans.

"Until this becomes the real-world range, it will be difficult for us to move the rest of the fleet to electric," Stuart says.

"But we will continue to look at options and we certainly don't want to roll back from what we've done so far – it will be electric-for-electric on all replacements."

She is also responsible for six tractor units as part of the logistics operation. These make deliveries to Cadent's 22 stores.

The Birmingham-based trucks run on CNG, while Stuart keeps an eye on hydrogen developments.

"I want to get on the hydrogen journey but, similar to electric for our cars and lighter vans, there are issues right now with the lack of infrastructure," she says.

As if implementing an enhanced risk and driver behaviour policy alongside managing the electrification transition strategy wasn't enough over the past 16 months, Stuart has also overseen the ongoing migration of funding from outright purchase to contract hire with maintenance, a process which started three years ago.

Around 70% of the fleet has transitioned to leasing, with the balance due to move across within the next year. Cars, leased via Kinto, are on a four-year cycle; vans will be on a five-year lease with Novuna Vehicle Solutions.

Electric vehicles will follow the same replacement cycle, ensuring Cadent has some flexibility should technology improvements lead to increased range.

Stuart is using the renewal programme as an opportunity to ensure vehicles are fit for purpose – for the driver, not just the job.

"For example, we now have microwaves in our 3.5-tonne vans so drivers can heat their food. They can't leave the van because of potential gas escape," she explains. "We also involved our drivers in discussions with Bri-Stor to ensure the racking is designed to suit their needs.

"We will continue to work on specification with our user groups to understand what other improvements we need to make before we go out to procure the next block of vehicles."

IMPACT OF PARTNERS

Working with core partners plays a vital part in running an effective and efficient operation: they can have a fundamental impact on cost and environmental impact.

"Having a good partner on service engagement is important to deliver improvements – you need a partner you can trust," Stuart says.

"They need to understand how you operate and the impact they can have on your fleet – for example, the importance of getting a van back on the road and the critical impact of not having it."

Stuart was recruited into fleet because of her track record of successfully delivering on key projects at Cadent. It underlines how the yardstick for a modern fleet decision-maker is evolving to incorporate a new set of skills.

"Important for this role is project management and stakeholder engagement," Stuart says. "You need to be able to balance that with finance and budgets, while understanding and interpreting the needs

COMPANY: Cadent

HEAD OF FLEET AND LOGISTICS: Lucy Stuart

TIME IN ROLE: 16 months

FLEET SIZE: 1,200 company cars, 3,000 LCVs and six tractor units

OPERATING CYCLE: cars – four years; vans – five years

FUNDING METHOD: contract hire SIZE OF TEAM: fleet – 20; logistics 140



Five tips for perfect procurement

Choosing the right supplier can be a complicated process, but it is vital to ensuring the effective and efficient running of a fleet. *Andrew Ryan* looks at how to achieve this

leet procurement is not the cut and dried process where a buyer simply negotiates a price for a product and gets it fixed for a couple of years.

There are many elements, most of them variable, which makes the task a complex exercise requiring expertise and insight.

"Too often fleet is viewed as just another commodity purchase, with the focus solely on price," says Simon Staton, client management director at Venson Automotive Solutions, which published its Tackling Fleet Procurement Challenges Head-on white paper earlier this year.

"Unlike buying office stationery, for example, fleet procurement is a financial deal that often involves vehicles or a range of in-life services. It's certainly not black and white.

"It is crucial that anyone involved in the procurement process fully understands what they are buying, and that the variables that make up the price are dynamic and can change during the lifetime of a contract." tunity to find the right long-term partner, one that understands the company's objectives, provides transparent and sustainable pricing and fits with their culture.

Procurement processes will differ between organisations and will depend on business model, company size, location, company structure, human resources, budget and spending, but there are some common factors between all of them.

Overleaf, we outline the five key steps needed for a successful process. \supset



Do your homework

It is important for a fleet to build a relationship with potential suppliers before the formal tender process begins.

"They should get to know the providers they are considering," says Christopher Caddick, head of business development at JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions. "Understand their culture, meet their people and test the working relationship before the process begins.

"Cultural fit, mutual trust and confidence in a partner's approach can be as important as price.

"A tender process entered into with little prior understanding between the two parties often leads to misalignment, disappointment and missed potential on both sides."

A high-level understanding of the marketplace is also needed by the fleet decision-maker if the right suppliers are to be asked to tender.

Important information which can be used to identify suitable suppliers can be garnered from the fleet press – particularly *Fleet News* – as well as talking to peers, attending Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) meetings and industry networking.

The fleet should also involve the incumbent provider and discuss with them the reasons for the tender exercise, such as any procedures that could be improved on and new services required.

"It is therefore a good idea that a pre-qualification stage embracing a request for information (RFI) from potential suppliers should then be weighted and scored to enable a shortlist to be compiled who will then respond to the formal tender document," says Venson.

"Such research will result in a targeted tender



exercise being carried out involving potential suppliers that are likely to be able to deliver, with those that have failed to impress having been screened out."

David Savage, chief revenue officer at Lightfoot, warns skipping market research or early-stage trials can be a costly oversight.

"With many providers offering similar-sounding features, it's critical to validate real-world performance, measure driver engagement, assess cultural alignment and confirm ROI," he says.

"The best outcomes occur when the tender process is treated not as a transaction, but as the beginning of a long-term partnership."

Be clear on what you want

One of the most common – yet avoidable – mistakes made during a fleet procurement process is a lack of clarity on objectives/scope, says Caddick, of JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions.

"Organisations need a clearly defined set of objectives or a detailed understanding of what matters most, not only in fleet, but in the wider context of their business strategy," he adds.

"Without a clear scope of services, key performance priorities and a structured set of questions, the responses received are unlikely to be aligned with the business's true needs.

"The format of the tender questions is also key as it can lead to inconsistent responses, making it difficult to benchmark providers effectively or make informed decisions."

It is crucial to involve a range of personnel in the procurement process as they can give vital insight to ensure an appropriate document is compiled.

An organisation's procurement department may well take the lead in the process, but the input of the fleet team is vital.

"We have found some tender documents to be concise, to the point and generally well-written," says Venson. "However, others have been written by people with little to no knowledge of either the fleet their organisation operates or the wider fleet market."

Know what you want and articulate that clearly. Asking a potential supplier to respond to precise operational scenarios enables them to fully detail the actions they would take and gives the opportunity to compare and contrast in the real world.





"One of the crucial points to remember is that value for money should never be mistaken for the lowest price," says Staton, of Venson Automotive Solutions. "There's so such thing as a 'golden deal'.

"It is essential to think of the contract in its entirety, taking into consideration factors such as rate creep, including end-of-contract charges and damage waiver fees.

"Additionally, there's a need to account for current and emerging technology to be factored in.

"Fleet decision-makers should always opt for transparency in a contract that considers long-term value, rather than short-term gain."

Prizing price above all else will mean numerous critical elements will be ignored, warns Savage, of Lightfoot.

These could include warranties, support or performance guarantees, ultimately costing more over the contract's lifetime.

"Often a solution that appears more expensive initially can deliver two to four times the ROI," he adds.

"Another pitfall is focusing too heavily on product features rather than tangible value and outcomes a solution can deliver.



"We frequently see tenders that are overly pricedriven. Cost is always a factor, but an excessive focus on upfront pricing can push fleets towards commodity solutions that lack long-term value." Staton recommends that when scoring a tender, price should account for no more than 40% of the score. Allocating a greater proportion makes price too important.



How organisations weigh up the importance of the different factors such as value for money, quality, reliability and service, will depend on business priorities and strategy.

Taking a full balanced score card approach, appropriately weighted and measuring key criteria including capability, risk, financial stability and ESG issues as well as value for money and price will, if done properly, ensure that the organisation with the highest score will win the contract.

As mentioned in the previous section, when evaluating a tender, price should account for no more than 40% of the score. Weighting the tender more than 50% for price – unless it is a very simple commodity – is missing a trick and making price too important.

Staton says some suppliers are prepared to pay a 'signing on fee' or a so-called 'golden hello' to win fleet business, but leasing and fleet management companies offering such incentives are likely to retrieve the cost of any such payment during the lifetime of the contract.

"There is not a lot that is 'fixed' in a vehicle leasing contract," says Staton. "In short, nothing is 'free' and the reasons that vehicle leasing and fleet management companies offering such incentives will find for changing prices are all legitimate.

"Procurement managers and their colleagues may award a contract believing that they have locked down a deal and secured a golden hello, but it will invariably prove to be a false economy.

"It is critical that, if quotes obtained are out of line with the market, then the question that must be asked is 'why?'.

"If the price is considerably lower, the answer is almost certainly that a supplier is attempting to buy



business at a price that will be unsustainable across the lifetime of the contract.

"As a result, the perceived saving will evaporate and will, likely, become a cost."

Fleets should provide a clear and consistent pricing matrix to enable like-for-like comparisons, but also to promote transparency in understanding the full cost of the services being proposed, says Caddick, of JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions.

"From that point, they need to ask when each pricing component might be subject to change, why and under what conditions, and contract on that basis," he adds.

"This helps to guard against headline rates that

look attractive initially, but are not sustainable or reflective of the long-term costs."

Other key characteristics which should be looked for when considering tenders are capability, risk, financial stability, ESG issues, speed of response and flexibility, and clear communication.

The final shortlist should contain no more than four suppliers, says Staton. This means focus can be given to obtaining full and final offers from the companies deemed best-in-class to supply the required services.

Having assessed tender responses, it is important organisations contact the shortlisted suppliers as it gives them the chance to clear up any ambiguities and reshape their answers if necessary.





duration of the agreement.

"It can be surprisingly difficult to track contract performance over its full life cycle particularly when automation and workflow tools are in place," says Lightfoot's Savage.

"In many cases, automation streamlines day-to-day operations, but also risks creating complacency. When everything seems to be running smoothly in the background, it's easy to assume performance is on track - until a problem arises.

"Effective monitoring needs to be proactive, structured and linked to a set of KPIs (key performance indicators).

These should extend beyond compliance and cost, encompassing service levels, driver engagement, environmental impact and operational efficiency."

These KPIs should support SLAs (service level agreements) that both parties are happy with and,

adapt to the changing needs of the business and the market."

Caddick adds the real value in monitoring service delivery lies not just in protecting performance, but in enhancing it.

"A structured, transparent and collaborative approach ensures the contract remains live and dynamic, helping both fleet and supplier grow and improve together," he says.

"Ultimately, the goal is not just to deliver the service, but to evolve it."

Smart telematics are now key to winning new business



onnected fleet technology isn't just making operations safer, more sustainable and more efficient. It's also streamlining processes, reducing costs and helping fleets win new business.

Organisations that have invested in digital transformation are effectively telling existing and prospective customers: "We take performance, accountability and innovation seriously – and we have the data to prove it."

From real-time tracking and AI dashcams to fuel reporting and emissions data, Samsara enables operators to show – not just say – that they're running a modern, safe, efficient and sustainable fleet. And that's exactly what customers want to see.

In terms of safety, a connected operations platform that uses AI-enabled dashcams is a sure-fire indicator that safety is a priority. And, when paired with driver coaching and positive recognition, the technology helps to nurture a culture that takes safety seriously. And the knock-on effect? A focus on improving safety helps to de-risk a fleet.

Good safety is good business

That doesn't just help keep a lid on costs. It tells potential customers that safety is paramount. In other words, good safety is good business. And it's the kind of transparency that builds trust and gives customers confidence that a supplier can deliver.

It's a principle not lost on Fox Brothers, a FORS Gold-accredited haulage firm. Fox had built its reputation on maintaining the highest standards of fleet operations in the construction supply and haulage industry. So when things started to slip, it looked to Samsara to help turn things around.

"We have FORS Gold status and that's something we really need to keep," said Managing Director Paul Fox. "The previous system left us blind to what was happening on the road. With Samsara, we can monitor everything in real time."

Samsara's platform brings together real-time visibility, automated reporting and AI-powered insights to help operators meet – and exceed – key performance indicators across safety, compliance, sustainability and efficiency.

Whether it's evidencing driver behaviour improvements, tracking carbon emissions, streamlining maintenance, improving fuel efficiency, or staying audit-ready, the platform transforms operational data into measurable results.

Dαtα-driven decisions win business

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Ford Pro: 60 YEARS AS THE NATION'S FAVOURITE

Communication and collaboration with customers are foundations for the continued success of Ford's vans. **Matt de Prez** reports

t is no longer enough to simply be a vehicle provider; the modern fleet needs a working partner. In today's fast-paced commercial land-scape, for many, the question is no longer about which van to buy, but more about what a brand can do in the fight against rising costs, changing legislation and the day-to-day challenges of running a fleet. Fully understanding that fleets require additional support, four years ago Ford set out to revitalise its commercial vehicle division, under the Ford Pro banner, to meet the brief.

Customers, and their businesses, are at the heart of the Ford Pro strategy, which offers a support system of software and connected services to boost efficiency and maximise the time vehicles spend working hard on the road. The programme is clearly paying off given that Ford remains the UK's leading light commercial brand.

Fresh from receiving its Van Manufacturer of the Year trophy at this year's Fleet News Awards, Mandy Dean, commercial vehicle director, Ford of Britain and Ireland, tells *Fleet News* why the blue oval resonates so strongly with fleets.

She says: "I think being the market leader going into our 60th year, we do know our customers quite well, and we have built very strong relationships with them over the years. We listen to them, we understand the pain points, and we evolve to try to support them."

Since the first vehicle left the production line in 1965, Transit has



become a byword for getting the job done – reliably and efficiently. Fast forward 60 years, and a new generation of connected and electrified Transit vans seeks to raise productivity to a new level.

The latest Transit line-up from Ford Pro features four key models – Courier, Connect, Custom and the larger two-tonne Transit, each available with electrified powertrain options and full connectivity to Ford Pro's supporting services.

Dean, who has led Ford's commercial vehicle division since 2020, adds: "It's not just about the vehicles, of course, it's about the connected ecosystem that makes those vehicles very efficient to operate.

"Software, charging services, uptime services, financial services and fleet management services - we've got everything our customers need to manage their operations, maximise their vehicle capability, all under one roof, and it's seamlessly connected because the vehicles all have embedded modems."

Ford Liive, the uptime management system launched in 2021, has played a significant role in improving the performance of fleets by monitoring vehicle health and addressing problems before they result in significant downtime.

Much of the work required to manage reams of data from the connected services can be done by Ford Pro, with outputs relayed to the Ford dealer network for resolution.

"Uptime has become really important," explains Dean. Using Ford Liive, data from a vehicle can be replayed to a fleet manager in real time. That can then be passed on to the local Transit centre where a remote diagnostic process can take place.

She adds: "The vehicle goes in for one appointment, the parts are already there, it is fixed and back on the road in a few hours. Without that connected service, that one issue could have been a significant downtime event had the vehicle required multiple trips to a dealer."

By analysing data, the Ford Pro team is able to take a proactive approach and suggest maintenance activity before a van shows any signs of failure.

A third of all light commercial vehicles sold in the UK last year wore a Ford badge and Dean expects sales to continue growing now Ford Pro has renewed its entire vehicle line-up.

The most important vehicle in its range is the Transit Custom, the UK's best-selling van. It entered a new generation last year bringing an electric powertrain option, for the first time, along with plug-in hybrid and diesel variants.

Development of the Transit Custom was completed in partnership with Volkswagen as part of an ongoing collaboration between the two manufacturers. Ford took the lead on the Transit Custom, which VW now offers as the Transporter. The Ford Ranger is produced in the same way, with VW offering a rebadged version as the Amarok.

The new Ford Transit Connect is a VW product, derived from the Caddy. It gives a long-range plug-in hybrid option in the compact van segment and compliments the Transit Courier, which is a Ford-only product as is the larger Transit.

ELECTRIFICATION REMAINS A CHALLENGE

Electric powertrains are available on Transit Courier, Transit Custom and Transit, while plug-in hybrid power features on Transit Connect, Transit Custom and Ranger.

Dean believes the plug-in hybrid options will be crucial for fleet customers in the coming years as businesses grapple with the challenges of fully electrifying their fleets.

She says: "We're experiencing encouraging take-up of plug-in hybrids and we are seeing EV sales pick up. But we are again seeing a form of inertia about making that move. That's why we're launching the Ford Pro power promise, just to take away those barriers for businesses."

A recent report commissioned by Ford Pro and published by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) found that electric vans could save small businesses in the UK almost £12,000 per vehicle over three years, mainly attributable to reduced energy and maintenance costs.

C Despite the potential savings, the report also found many businesses are lacking the confidence to make the switch. Charging times (38.1% of respondents), availability of public charging (29.1%) and the cost of installing charging infrastructure (28.4%) ranked high on the list of concerns

The Ford Power Promise includes charging solutions, warranty and servicing, in a bid to overcome some of these challenges. It builds on Ford Pro's home charging offer, which launched in 2024, and the package provides a discounted home charger or a contribution towards a charging installation at a commercial premises; free five-year service and roadside assistance plan; eight-year high-voltage battery warranty; 12-month free vehicle management software and access to Ford's expansive BlueOval Charge Network (BOCN) - all included with the vehicle.

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE

Customers who do not have the ability to install a home charger and don't need depot charging will receive a £500 discount on any eligible vehicle purchase.

Like all manufacturers, Ford Pro must meet Government-dictated targets for the sale of electric vans in line with the ZEV (zero emissions vehicle) Mandate scheme. This requires a certain percentage of the brand's annual sales to be electric.

For 2025, the target is 16%. But in the first four months of the year, the industry is tracking at just 8%.

Ford is lagging behind at 5%, although it is the margue that has sold the largest volume of electric vans this year.

These targets run alongside the Government's overall ambition to end the sale of all new petrol and diesel vans by 2035. The target was recently pushed back, from 2030, to give fleets and business owners more flexibility.

Dean believes the change sends a mixed message to customers: "While the Government has said that diesels can stay on sale until 2035, what they're not telling people is that the trajectory at which we need to move to electrification hasn't changed. Next year, one-in-four vans sold needs to be electric. So, on one hand they're saying you can buy diesel until 2035 and, on the other, they're saying manufacturers need to meet these quotas.

"What we really need is support in convincing customers to go



models

Transit Courier Price: From £17.450 Fuel: Petrol, diesel, electric Payload: >849kg Loadspace: 2.9cu m

Transit Connect Price: From £23,500 Fuel: Diesel, plug-in hybrid Payload: >790kg Loadspace: 3.7cu m

Transit Custom Price: From £33,350 Fuel: Diesel, plug-in hybrid, electric Pavload: >1.327kg Loadspace: >6.8cu m

Transit

Price: From £42,235 Fuel: Diesel, electric Payload: >2,447kg Loadspace: >15.1cu m

Ranger

Price: From £29.275 Fuel: Diesel, plug-in hybrid Payload: >1,200kg

Transit Chassis cab Price: From £40.820 Fuel: Diesel, electric Payload: >2,983kg





electric, in line with the net zero objectives the Government has.

"Things such as the plug-in van grant need to be strengthened and it needs to be extended. That's what we'll continue to try to lobby for. And other barriers to entry, such as some of the larger electric vehicles having to have their heavy goods vehicle MOTs, are another concern to vehicle operators. We need to all continue to lobby for those things to be changed."

WORKING WITH FLEETS TO REFINE SOLUTIONS

One of the factors that led to Ford winning four trophies at the 2025 Fleet News Awards was its commitment to working with the operators of its vehicles to ensure the vans are fit for the job.

This starts at the development stage for a new vehicle, where customers are encouraged to provide suggestions and feedback to shape forthcoming models.

Dean says: "Getting the input from fleet managers who are so close to how the vehicles are used and making sure we've got happy drivers is really important.

"Market research and voice of the customer is so important in evolving. I think that we always have done that, and we will always continue to do that to ensure we really understand exactly how,

particularly in new segments, those operators use the vehicles."

Once new models hit the road, along with its uptime management and connected services, Ford Pro has also developed a customisable technology platform that provides enhanced integration of third-party systems

The infotainment system built into each vehicle can be configured to control apps and equipment specific to the operator's needs. This means that third-party controllers, handheld devices and other aftermarket equipment no longer needs to be fitted to the vehicle.

Following a successful trial of the Ford Pro Upfit Integration System, The AA signed a deal for more than 700 Transit Customs.

They all integrate the control of specialist tools and equipment into the van's factory-fitted 13-inch display, enabling patrols to activate everything from LED hazard beacons to breakdown diagnostics, jump-start connection points and towing equipment from the touchscreen.

Ford can also see how the driver is using the equipment which can be fed back to The AA.

Previously, The AA had a Toughbook tablet mounted in the back which had the details of the job allocation and routing which got relayed to the dashboard screen. The new system completely replaces this system and the associated costs of it being fitted and then removed at defleet.

CUSTOMER FIRST IS A CULTURE WE LIVE AND BREATHE'

If we want to help fleets with their strategy, we must get the day-to-day right, Novuna deputy managing director tells **Stephen Briers**

o supplier has ever enjoyed a period of domination at the Fleet News Awards to compare with Novuna Vehicle Solutions' current purple patch.

An unprecedented run of six wins in the 'leasing company of the year – more than 20,000 vehicles' category dating back to the days of Hitachi in 2019 was only broken, briefly, by Zenith in 2023.

During that time, two people have been ever-present at the helm of the business – managing director Jon Lawes and deputy MD Lucy Line.

And, even then, Novuna was highly commended.

Together, they have racked up 46 years: 24 for Lawes and 22 for Line. Speaking to *Fleet News* at the recent Fleet200 Strategy Network meeting near Reading – Novuna has been a sponsor for the past two years – Line encapsulates a key reason why the leasing provider has been so successful by recounting her own experiences.

"I work for a company that is very good at developing people; it's an organisation where you can thrive personally – and I've taken all the opportunities," she says.

Looking inward and embracing the needs of its own people is a core pillar for Novuna; it recognises that a happy, motivated workforce normally delivers the best customer service.

PROGRESSION OF LEADING ROLES

Line was promoted to deputy MD in 2023, essentially an expansion of her role as head of operations, held since 2012. Since April this year, she also became responsible for sales and account management in the specialist division.

When Lawes is away in Europe – he is also European MD of MHC Mobility, the sister company of Novuna, operating in nine countries – Line has full delegated responsibility for the UK business.

That business consists of three delineated divisions: broker, corporate and specialist.

Line was already embedded in the corporate account management side with major fleets Network Rail, Amey and Centrica. among her portfolio. The sales element is an opportunity to add new skills to her CV.

"I've always been ambitious and Novuna has always given me the extra stretch when required," she says. "It's exciting to now have responsibility for operational delivery of the sales side; it's an opportunity to deliver even better outcomes for the customer."

Never a business to rest on its laurels, Novuna has spent the past 18 months conducting 'independent listening' sessions with around 50 corporate customers who expressed, in detail, the aspects Novuna does well and, vitally, the areas for improvement.

Among the changes already introduced as a result are improvements to its digital tools and refinements to the way it reacts post-Covid.

"We are investing £20 million into our digital tools and apps, giving customers a choice of when and how they interact with us and providing them with all their data in one place, so they have the right insights at the right time," Line says.

EMBRACING AI

Part of a Fusion programme, which seeks to future-proof workflow systems, it will also embrace artificial intelligence (AI) founded on uniform and well-mapped data.

Line anticipates its usage in downtime management, identifying common themes for customer-wide learnings, as well as integration with telematics for proactive and preventative maintenance.

"Data can be overwhelming; it needs to be in one place and have the 'so what – what is it telling me?;" she says.

"One use case is where the vehicle tells us about a fault or issue and uses the workflow to advise the customer while informing the garage about the parts required – all done automatically. We are being asked about AI a lot by our customers."

Data is driving a shift in the role of fleet managers who are becoming less focused on registration numbers and more about using insight to drive strategy. "Difference skills sets are emerging on technology, data and strategy," Line says. "They are also using data to improve the service they give their own customers."

Further feedback from the independent listening sessions has forced Novuna to examine its performance on maximising



Pioneering downtime management technology underpins Grosvenor's strategic shift

ebruary 2025 saw Grosvenor launch its new company brand and a shift in strategic direction to meet the future needs of businesses with vehicle fleets.

Signalling its intent to spearhead innovation and change, just weeks later the UK's largest privately-owned contract hire, fleet management and EV salary sacrifice specialist launched Advanced Remote Connectivity (ARC), developed in partnership with Targa Telematics.

Drawing data directly from each vehicle, this real-time connection feeds into Grosvenor's award-winning OSCAR fleet management system to provide crucial information, including true odometer readings, service and maintenance countdowns, fuel or EV battery levels, and vehicle dashboard warning lights.

Remote activation without the need for a physical device

For most vehicles, the system can be activated remotely, eliminating the need for device installation and connecting via their onboard diagnostics (OBD) systems, providing instant data access. As a result, Grosvenor's maintenance team has complete visibility of each vehicle's health status, manufacturer-recommended service schedules and crucial driving behaviour metrics – all vital components in significantly improving the management of SMR and reducing vehicle downtime.





The operational advantages delivered by ARC are tangible. It facilitates proactive SMR co-ordination, moving beyond reactive repairs. It also includes a full telematics solution.

Shift towards sustainable, flexible and technology-driven transport solutions

ARC is just the first of many innovations planned by Grosvenor.

Extensive customer and industry research found a shift towards sustainable, flexible and technology-driven transportation solutions, influenced by environmental concerns, changing work patterns and the preferences of a new generation.

Yet, despite the increased use of technology, Grosvenor's research also reinforced the desire that software should enhance, but not replace, traditional customer service. The ability to talk to someone remains key, with customers and drivers not wishing to do everything through an app.

As a result, Grosvenor's rebrand reflects its expanding portfolio of fleet funding and management solutions to meet the needs of more agile workforces, offering greater choice as to how employees get from A to B. Customers demand leading digital

solutions underpinned by people and personal service.

Lee Brown, managing director, said: "The move to EVs, the importance of ESG (environmental, social and governance), well-being and CSR (corporate social responsibility) are all driving change, with AI also set to transform our lives. Younger and more tech-savvy motorists are poised to drive change and are far more environmentally aware than previous generations. As a result, we are readying ourselves for a future where flexible appbased, sustainable travel solutions will be used alongside, or even instead of, traditional company cars and grey fleet.

"However, research has confirmed our long-standing belief that we need to continue to uphold our values, by working with integrity, excellence and agility, plus prioritise the personal touch by offering even greater access to our staff and management in a market increasingly focused on digitisation.

"ARC is a great example of how we intend to drive forward a new era of fleet mobility solutions, and it marks an important strategic shift for Grosvenor as we enhance our proposition to use technology cleverly, supported by exceptional customer service."

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C vehicle availability during supply shortages in the post-Covid landscape, as well as ensuring fleets are safe and compliant.

It has issued a more robust service level agreement to its network of approved repairers and has extended its

mobile service offering in addition to assessing how it can improve parts availability.

"We developed 'FOMO' – fleet operation mindset and ownership – do our teams understand the impact of what they do and don't do from the customer perspective," Line says. "We are doing case studies with fleets where they explain all of this. We are also focusing on downtime training and how we get the best outcome with the garage to get the best outcome for the customer."

She adds: "If we want to be at the table and help customers with their strategy, we must get the day-to-day right. We have to meet their expectations on the things that they value. It's about being customer obsessed!"

Decarbonisation remains the "number one challenge we all share", according to Line.

Novuna is fuel agnostic and is participating in hydrogen trials. It also operates a rapid charging forecourt at its Trowbridge head

office in Wiltshire as a test bed to better understand the challenges of workplace charging and to trial shared charging options.

The Virtual Depot Concept supports an ecosystem of network sharing. App-based, it sits on the Novuna Charge Point Management System and enables drivers to access their company depot chargers as well as chargers shared by other organisations while opening up the public infrastructure.

Among the functionalities are driver access control, payment

integration and dynamic pricing. Novuna is also collaborating with grid partners to negotiate compensation for customers who reduce charging during peak grid demand times.

"We have the technology to enable this and it's now about unlocking the relationships to make it a reality," Line says.

With more than 80% of its car order book either full electric or plug-in hybrid, Novuna's attention has turned to supporting its van customers' transition. Many have taken the initial steps to move smaller vans to electric and are now looking at more complex use cases.

"Specialised vans are a particular challenge with the lack of range, insufficient towing capacity and concerns about the charging infrastructure," Line says.

Novuna has partnered with a couple of start-ups to offer customers portable chargers that are plugged into depot commander sockets.

Offering 40kW, they are ideal for sites where a charging infrastructure would be costly or impossible to instal. Fleets can either buy the chargers or take them on a lease.

"We started offering them in 2024 and have had a lot of interest with some customers starting to trial them," Line says.

RESIDUAL VALUES

Speaking to *Fleet News* last year, MD Lawes acknowledged the impact EV residual values (RVs) were having on leasing profits across the industry, but said: "Every leasing company will be losing money on BEVs because of the RVs, but you have to have the long-term vision and strategy to carry on."

RVs remain a challenge, admits Line, although differences are emerging across various asset types.

"Cars are the worst, but vans are not as bad, especially as there are few eLCVs," she says. "We are insulated because of our total asset solutions, even though there is pain. Being a pioneer isn't without risk."

Novuna Flex, born during Covid when customers needed additional vehicles to replace multi-occupancy and enable social distancing, gives some protection by offering ex-lease vehicles on a second lease. It provides vehicles typically three years old to customers who must commit to a minimum three-month lease. "After that, they can give the vehicle back at any time," Line says. "The rates are better than rental."

Interest is greatest when lead times for new vehicles are long, but some customers also appreciate the savings that can be achieved.

Novuna remains on track for its "outrageous ambition" of funding 150,000 vehicles by 2030.

It currently sits at just less than 113,000 assets, a rise of around 20,000 over the figures reported in the 2024 FN50. Broker accounts for the largest share at 40%, while corporate and specialist each contribute 30%.

New contracts are a crucial driver for growth, but the leasing provider also has an opportunity to secure more business with existing customers where it does not cover the full breadth of their fleet.

Renowned for its commercial vehicle prowess and fixation on managing downtime – "you never get a day off with downtime", Line says – sometimes Novuna gets overlooked for cars. It is seeking to redress that.

Novuna recently introduced a SME/broker quote and order system which has resulted in a rise in business, while demand for salary sacrifice has also led to new contracts.

But Line expects all three divisions to contribute to growth across all three asset types: cars, vans and HGVs.

"It's our approach to multi-asset management, tailoring our solutions to our fleet customers by listening to their needs," she says. "That will help us achieve those aspirations."

She adds: "Customer first is a culture we live and breathe. We have great customers who are happy to be a critical friend and that helps to drive us and ensure we stay relevant, as well as create the space for them to develop their strategies."

"Novuna has always given me the extra stretch when required"

LUCY LINE

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Running cost calculator

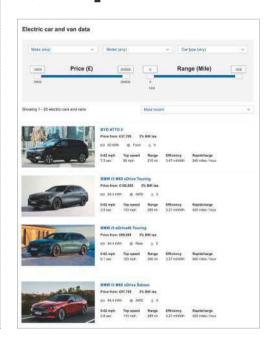
The Fleet News Running Cost Calculator gives you important information about the three key vehicle costs: depreciation, fuel and service, maintenance and repair (SMR). It enables fleet decision-makers to compare models to benchmark costs and determine which are best suited to their budgets using pence per mile or full-cycle figures. fleetnews.co.uk/car-running-costs-calculator



Electric car and van data

Whether you are beginning your research or have a good idea of what you're interested in, the electric car and van database tool can help with all the essential information, from range, tax and charging speeds for electric cars and vans to stats on acceleration, cargo volume and the number of seats for 32 manufacturers' models.

70 unique makes 243 unique models 1,000-plus variants



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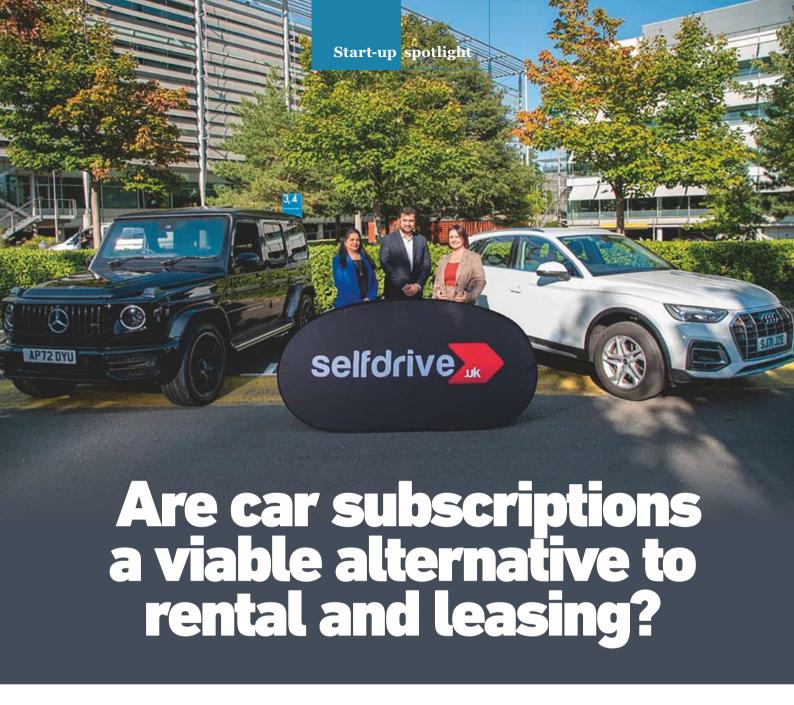
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SelfDrive Mobility claims new product is 'as easy as ordering a takeaway'. *Tom Seymour* reports

new player in the mobility market has launched in the UK, offering an alternative to traditional car rental and leasing.

SelfDrive Mobility, a subscription-based platform originally established in the UAE with 1.5 million subscribers, is in early-stage scale-up mode and is targeting 50,000 active subscribers from the UK within three years, positioning itself as a tech-enabled, low-friction alternative for businesses and individuals shifting away from long-term ownership.

SelfDrive is targeting a mix of corporate users such as senior executives, project-based consultants and SMEs, as well as individual retail customers.

The concept provides new and manufacturerapproved used cars with insurance, servicing and maintenance included in the fee. Prices start from £199 a month.

One of the company's key differentiators is making subscriptions available without a deposit or upfront rental fee. Short-term options start from £249 per month for three-month periods.

Initially, the company is focusing on launching in

major UK cities – including London, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh – where it believes demand for flexible transport is growing among urban professionals, project-based workers and business travellers.

SelfDrive says this regional-first strategy is designed to meet localised mobility needs while laying the groundwork for a phased national roll-out.

The platform, operated by Pinewoods Technology UK, is sourcing stock by partnering with dealer groups to utilise vehicles from idle new or used inventory.

All vehicles undergo eligibility checks and are provided fully maintained and insured.

SelfDrive founder Soham Shah (pictured above) says: "Our technology platform can list vehicles from dealerships in real time and dynamically offer services such as daily, weekly or monthly subscriptions and yearly lease options for customers.

"We manage customer acquisition, verification, payment and support."

While unable to share names at this early stage of its UK introduction, SelfDrive Mobility says it is in

"active collaboration" with several established dealer groups in Greater London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Brands such as VW Group, Kia and Hyundai are already live on SelfDrive's platform.

The concept of car subscriptions has seen mixed progress in the UK market, with some high-profile exits such as Volvo's decision to wind down its subscription service in 2024.

However, providers such as SelfDrive are betting on renewed interest, particularly from drivers or fleets seeking lower-commitment alternatives to traditional acquisition models.

Shah says the priority for the vehicles that join the service is quality and reliability, so whether they are new or used – they all are expected to satisfy "strict eligibility criteria".

He adds: "We want to disrupt the market and redefine how UK drivers access vehicles.

"Subscribing to a car with SelfDrive is as easy as ordering a takeaway. We've stripped away the paperwork, deposits and delays, so we can get users into a vehicle as quickly as possible."



How to write a robust fleet policy

Whether you are starting from scratch or updating an ageing document, this AFP Fleet Academy guide explains the foundations of a modern fleet policy

leet policy should be built like a pyramid. You don't start with the pointy end; you start with the base, nice and wide, and build it up from there."

That is the AFP (Association of Fleet Professionals) Fleet Academy's training consultant, Peter Eldridge, summarising how best to approach a modern fleet policy, either from scratch or the common scenario in which managers inherit an outdated existing document in need of an overhaul.

He advocates building the policy around five pillars of fleet management, each accommodating contemporary trends and nuances, such as ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) objectives, distinct approaches to EVs (electric vehicles) and ICEs (internal combustion engines) and business travel and mobility beyond company cars.

The key questions you need to answer

- What are your organisation's strategic objectives? Review the policy to ensure it aligns with them.
- Who are your fleet stakeholders? Arrange a review session with all relevant parties to examine what works and what does not.
- Does the policy reflect your current vehicle mix (ICE, EV, PHEV, cars, vans, HGV, PSV) and how those vehicles are used?
- If your fleet includes plug-in vehicles, does the policy address how, where and when drivers are expected to charge them?
- Does the policy include the option of an automated mobility allowance instead of a company car?
- Are vehicle funding options clearly defined, along with expectations and limitations around how and for how long each type is used?

The five pillars of fleet management

01





Stakeholder engagement

A fleet policy is more than a simple tick-box document for drivers. Good examples are applicable to multiple areas and levels of a business and extend their reach and relevance well beyond vehicles.

"You can't build anything unless you are working together and in agreement about what the objectives are and how you go about achieving them," explains Eldridge.

"The days of an individual as the primary stakeholder responsible for a fleet should not exist any more. For me, it's at least three or four other stakeholders in any business."

HR, finance and fleet administrators

– not just managers and decision-makers

– are the most obvious candidates,
because each will encounter vehicles,
drivers and employee mobility schemes
to some degree, as may other
departments and individuals. A coherent
fleet policy will acknowledge as much,
and should ideally be drafted and
amended in consultation with every
relevant party.



For more information on AFP Fleet Academy training, go to: www.theafp.co.uk/education-training/

Vehicle acquisition and disposal

Often considered among a fleet manager's core tasks, there is a great deal more to vehicle acquisition and disposal than simply commissioning a leasing company. Good policies reflect that and influence choices accordingly.

Environmental objectives and taxation are huge motivators, and it is clearly within fleets' interests to opt for EVs. However, vehicles should always be selected according to their abilities to tackle core tasks, so policies must steer drivers and stakeholders towards the right cars and vans for the job and acknowledge the distinctions between EVs and ICEs.

"Our chair, Paul Hollick, used some terminology that I liked in relation to different fuel types," says Eldridge. "He said, "if you've got electric, think electric; if you've got petrol or diesel, think ICE. You can't mix and match the two in terms of your approach to them. They're very different animals."

Attention should also be paid to both residual values and the condition in which vehicles are likely to be returned. A van operating in a quarry, for instance, is unlikely to remain in the same condition as a director's company car.

Effective fleet policies reflect changing attitudes and values, including the question of whether a vehicle is necessary at all. Younger employees, especially, may value a travel or mobility allowance more than a company car, as Eldridge explains.

"They're smart people, and they often have very little appetite for ownership, so they might not want a company car. They might rather have a facility for business travel that doesn't cost them anything and is completely automated, so there are no issues with expense claims at the end of the month. That is something I would build into a modern fleet policy."

03

04







Funding

Every type of funding has its place, and drivers, fleet managers and policies need to be clear about what that is.

Conventional contract hire may be completely appropriate for perk company car drivers, but it is far less likely to suit vans acquired for a six-month project. A well-designed policy should also set out clear expectations and limitations regarding the applications of different forms of funding, with a keen eye on economics.

"Funding methods are becoming more and more complex, because of the variations on a theme – mostly the different forms of leasing and daily rental," says Eldridge. "Many fleets are running rental vehicles for more than 12 months on a daily rate. Fleet stakeholders need to understand the difference between that and a conventional company car because, although both have their place, they're managed differently."





Operational administration

Key day-to-day responsibilities for stakeholders should be spelled out in the policy, so employees know where to go and who to contact for the fundamental aspects of fleet management.

"This embraces everything, whether

"This embraces everything, whether it be penalty charge management, fuel reimbursement, SMR or accident management," explains Eldridge. "All of that comes under operational administration, and it ought to be the baseline at which most fleet administrators would excel."

administration, and it ought to be the baseline at which most fleet administrators would excel."

The basics have changed over time, though, and elements that have recently joined the list of core responsibilities may be unaddressed by legacy policies in need of an update.

"Let's take fuel as a simple example," adds Eldridge. "Does the policy clearly state how, where and when drivers should recharge their electric vehicles when they're not at home?

"It's the old argument about not filling up your car at an expensive motorway service station. The same logic applies to recharging, because anywhere between 24p and 70p is possible on the public network"

Compliance

It is often said that business vehicles are an extension of the workplace. It is far rarer that they are treated as such. Any fleet policy should acknowledge

Any fleet policy should acknowledge that health and safety and duty of care apply equally to mobile employees as to those on site.

"I like compliance to be a demonstration of 'this is why we're asking you to do this', says Eldridge. "These are the things that not only can go wrong, they do go wrong, and we're trying to protect you."

A good policy may include examples and explanations of why the business expects employees to conduct themselves in a certain way.

There is obviously a limit to the amount that can be included in one document, but fleet stakeholders should be able to elaborate and provide further guidance on request.

Policies should also provide best practice advice on how to respond to accidents, because even the smallest fleet will almost certainly encounter them at some point. Accepting this reality and issuing drivers with a clear post-incident procedure is the best way forward.



The case for going electric: Why switching to an EV fleet makes business sense

aking the transition to an electric fleet can feel like a big step, but the benefits – both immediate and long-term – are compelling. From cost savings and reduced emissions to operational resilience and improved stakeholder confidence, switching your depot fleet to electric vehicles (EVs) represents an opportunity for businesses to lead the way in sustainable transport.

Smarter energy use

One of the first considerations in any EV transition is power supply. The good news? Many depot sites already have sufficient grid capacity. For those that don't, upgrades can be planned with minimal disruption. At Mer, we can help design and implement smart charging solutions such as load balancing and scheduled charging, while allowing operators to optimise energy use and reduce charging costs by avoiding peak tariffs.

Greater financial control

Cost is another area where EV fleets can triumph over their internal combustion engine (ICE) equivalents. Although the upfront investment may seem high, long-term savings on fuel, tax and maintenance quickly add up. At Mer, our strength lies in providing accurate, transparent cost modelling, so clients can clearly see the financial benefits and plan with confidence. This clarity is also key to securing stakeholder buy-in.

It isn't just the project stakeholders we need to keep well informed. In previous





projects we have found that the drivers and depot staff themselves can become the biggest advocates of fleet transition. To ensure this, we provide on-boarding training sessions and long-term user support. It's vital for depot teams to feel empowered and not overwhelmed. Training is often one of the biggest factors in smooth operational implementation and change management.

In practice

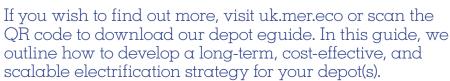
Every depot is different. This is why Mer takes a consultancy-led approach rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions. Early engagement with key stakeholders ensures alignment on scope, investment and timelines. Site visits are integral to our process: by observing how a depot operates day-to-day, we design practical charging solutions that support existing workflows rather than disrupt them.

In sectors where downtime is a critical issue, such as last-mile deliveries, EV infrastructure must be robust and dependable. That's why Mer offers tailored aftercare and maintenance packages, with service level agreements that reflect your fleet's criticality. For instance, we chose The AA as our



frontline responders to ensure that coverage outside of normal working hours is unmatched in the industry.

We have the expertise of working on large, private, multi-site depot projects with key partners for grid upgrades. We work with more than 700 business customers including Ikea and DX Delivery. We have been named one of the UK's most trusted suppliers for fleet EV charging, as voted by the Fleet News Recommended Programme for 2025.





Fleet Choices

Helping you to select the best car and van models to meet your fleet requirements





BMW's i5 Touring vs the Audi A6 e-tron Avant p76

New cars and vans coming soon





Audi A5 and A6 plug-in hybrids

Following the introduction of its new A5 and A6 models, Audi will soon start deliveries of the eHybrid plug-in hybrid versions.

The new A5 is a fastback saloon that replaces the existing A4. The A6 saloon will be sold alongside the electric A6 e-tron. Both new models are also available with an estate body.

Audi's new plug-in hybrid engine develops 299PS and has a 25.9kWh battery. It provides a zero-emission range of up to 67 miles in the A5 and 64 miles in the A6.

The A5 eHybrid starts at £49,675 and the A6 is priced from £61,755.

Kia PV5

Kia's first commercial vehicle has been designed for modularity and is available in numerous configurations such as panel van (Cargo), chassis cab and passenger carrier.

It uses a bespoke EV platform developed specifically for commercial applications. The tech is closely linked to that found in Kia's electric cars.

There's a choice of two powertrains: Standard Range and Long Range. The Standard Range van gets a 51.4kWh battery and provides a range of up to 181 miles. The Long Range gets a 71.2kWh unit and can cover 247 miles between charges.

All PV5 variants offer 400V fast-charging capability. When connected to a 150kW charging point the PV5 battery (both Standard Range or Long Range) can be topped up from 10%-to-80% in less than half an hour.

Range) can be topped up from 10%-to-80% in less than hatr an hour.

A single motor powers the front wheels, developing 163PS and 250Nm.

The panel van has a cargo volume of 4.4 cubic metres and allows for two standard euro-pallets to be accommodated with ease. Maximum payload is 790kg for the standard range battery, while the long range battery has a 690kg payload. Two larger versions will launch in 2026.

Pricing starts at £27,695 (ex VAT) for the PV5 Cargo Essential Standard Range, rising to £30,145 for the Long Range. The vehicle is also eligible for the £5,000 plug-in van grant – dropping the starting price to £22,695 (ex VAT).



Some of the key models that will be available to order in the coming months



Fiat Grande Panda

The Fiat Panda will return as a rugged five-door compact SUV. It features retro-styling and will be available with an electric powertrain. Fiat says the Grande Panda is the "literal clone" of the first Panda, making it a new B segment vehicle which is both affordable and family-friendly.

The Grande Panda Electric is priced from £20,795. It has It has a compact footprint, with a length of 3.99m and a width of 1.76m. Fiat says there is ample room for five passengers, due to clever packaging, and a 361-litre boot. With a 44kWh battery, the electric Grande Panda offers more than 195 miles of range. It also features a unique integrated charging cable.

Omoda 9

The Omoda 9 is a high-performance plug-in hybrid SUV that is priced from £44.995.

It's powered by a Super Hybrid System (SHS) that combines a 1.5-litre petrol engine and two electric motors. The car has all-wheel drive and a power output of 449PS.

Omoda claims an overall driving range of more than 700 miles and the 9's zero-emission range is 93 miles. As a result, it attracts a 6% benefit-in-kind tax rate.

At 4.77m in length and 1.9m in width, the Omoda 9 has a larger footprint than most C-segment SUVs. It's a similar size to a Renault Rafale, which will also be a key rival.



FIC-579-ZC-

Renault 4 E-Tech

Renault will start taking orders for the new 4 E-Tech in July, with deliveries expected in late summer.

The compact electric SUV has a 52kWh battery and a 150PS motor, giving a range of up to 247 miles.

It is available from £26,995 and joins the recently-launched 5 E-Tech as part of a new line-up of reinvented Renaults.

Both models use the same AmpR Small platform, although the 4 is the larger of the two.

A number of design cues are taken from the original Renault 4 and modernised. There's the one-piece front grille, which is illuminated, along with the three-piece rear tail lights. The 4 E-Tech also comes with a retractable canvas sunroof.





hether you wish to trace the roots of the coupé SUV body style back to the mid-90's Suzuki X-90 or the mid-00's BMW X6, it's only comparatively recently that mainstream brands have started taking the trend seriously.

There's no shortage of raised up crossovers with raked rooflines. Audi offers Sportback versions of almost all its SUVs, charging customers a little more for a car with a little less. BMW is still involved, too. The X6 lives on, alongside the more compact X4 and electric iX2.

The most recent brands to embrace the trend are Cupra and Ford, both utilising VW Group underpinnings which can also be found in – you guessed it – the Škoda Enyaq Coupé and VW ID5.

The Tavascan represents a big step forward for Cupra. It's a total rebody, unlike its first EV, the Born, which was a 'lightly tweaked' version of the Volkswagen product. Equally, the Capri revives one of Ford's most popular nameplates. It's essentially an Explorer Coupé – or is it? The two cars bear little resemblance, highlighting the significance of SUV coupés to Ford.

Joining them in this group test is the Polestar 2. While it's not quite as high-riding as the Capri or Tavascan, with its Volvo XC40 underpinnings and plastic wheel arch trims it's more rugged than a regular car while offering the same sloped rear end.

Cupra Tayascan Va

Cupra is rapidly becoming a force to be reckoned with in the fleet market. With its line-up of sporty plug-in hybrids and new electric models, company car drivers are choosing them in droves.

The Tavascan is Cupra's second electric car and sits above the Born as a larger and pricier model. It's aimed squarely at the premium competition, sporting upmarket materials, incredible design and a high specification.

For this test we've chosen the Tavascan V2. It's a mid-spec variant that should have significant fleet appeal thanks to its combination of range, performance and equipment.

Powered by a 286PS electric motor and 77kWh battery the Tavascan V2 promises a WLTP range of up to 339 miles.

We've stuck with the single motor powertrain,

rather than opting for the more potent 340PS twin motor version. With 0-62mph taking 6.8 seconds, it's plenty fast enough in this company.

Once you've got past its eye-catching exterior, the Tavascan continues to impress on the inside. The flowing T-shaped centre console looks like it's straight out of a concept car. The surfaces are finished in high-quality materials and the attention to detail is really impressive. The small Cupra logos across the doors, for example, light up at night as part of the car's ambient lighting arrangement.

The thin-rimmed steering wheel adds to the sporty theme which continues once on the road.

As the most driver-focused brand in this test, we had high expectations of the Tavascan and it didn't disappoint.

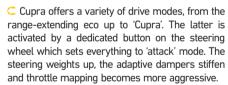
It's an engaging car, with swift throttle response, ample power delivery and a keen chassis. Steering is precise and nicely weighted, enabling

Steering is precise and nicely weighted, enabling the Tavascan to switch direction swiftly. There's not much float in the suspension, either, which gives confidence when cornering. Grip is plentiful from the 21-inch wheels, although these do contribute to a choppier ride.



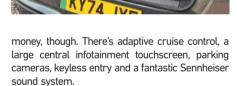






It transforms the car from its more comfortfocused modes, providing two distinctly different personas.

Of course, this comes at a price: £53,780, to be precise. Which makes the Tavascan the most expensive car in our test. You do get plenty for your



The bucket-style front seats are electrically adjustable, heated and equipped with a massage function. Upholstery is a recycled microfibre, which feels a bit like suede.

In our economy test, the Tavascan returned an unremarkable 3.7mi/kWh. It was the worst performance in our test, despite all three cars being driven on the same route at the same time. Real-world range, then, falls short of the official figure by 16% at around 285 miles.

At fixed motorway speeds, the figure was 3.0mi/kWh, while overall efficiency on our test day was 3.4mi/kWh. This particular Tavascan is part of our long-term fleet (if you hadn't already noticed) and these figures are on par with what we've been achieving over the past few months with the car.



Ford Capri Extended Range Select

The Capri certainly draws attention, although that could mainly be due to its yellow paint rather than any other aspect of its appearance. The soft, curvy,



front end bears little resemblance to the original Capri. Only the retro lettering on the boot lid and a small silver trim piece on the steering wheel give any indication of the nameplate's history.

Given the recent excitement around Renault's new 5, perhaps Ford might regret not injecting a little bit more heritage into the new Capri. Time – and sales figures – will tell.

The model range is fairly simple. You can have Standard Range or Extended Range powertrains with either Select or Premium trim levels. Our car is the mid-range version, packing the larger battery option with the lower specification.

It puts the Capri in an advantageous position when it comes to price. This one costs £48,020, making it the cheapest car in the test.

Like the Tavascan, the Capri is based on VW's MEB platform – albeit with a re-designed body and interior. Ford has worked hard to hide the VW Group ties, although some small giveaways remain.

A 286PS electric motor powers the Capri's rear wheels – it's the same set-up that's in the Tavascan. You get similar power delivery, although the Ford is actually a tad faster to 62mph; likely due to it being around 100kg lighter than the Cupra.

That weight difference also pays dividends when it comes to efficiency. The Capri breezed through our tests coming out with top marks.

It managed 4.5mi/kWh on the official loop – enough for a 346-mile range. In the motorway test it returned 3.5mi/kWh, ending the day with an overall figure of 4.0mi/kWh.

Ford has tuned the Capri chassis very differently compared with the Cupra. It's much softer. Ride quality is fantastic and it's noticeably the softest car on test. The 19-inch wheels probably help somewhat, but it's the suspension changes that have the biggest effect.

The downside is that the Capri rolls and wallows around with much less grace than the Tavascan. It's a far less dynamic experience and without adaptive





dampers, drivers have no option to alter the set-up. Brake pedal feel is also a problem in the Ford, along with the Cupra. In fact, it plagues all VW Group EVs using the MEB platform.

The first half of the pedal engages just the regenerative braking, but that isn't quite sufficient to scrub speed when, for example, approaching a roundabout on a dual carriageway. You have to really stand on the pedal to engage the friction brakes, which can be a little unnerving.

Driveability aside, the cabin feels well appointed. There's a giant portrait touchscreen that has a hidden storage bin behind. Leather upholstery comes as standard, with a two-tone colour scheme, along with the usual heated front seats, dual-zone climate and suite of driver aids.

An obscure square steering wheel includes VW's touch-sensitive steering wheel controls. These are a bit fiddly, as is the touch-sensitive volume control slider beneath the main display.

Polestar 2 Single Motor Long Range

Like Cupra, Polestar started life as a performance division of another car brand. Polestar's impact on the fleet sector has been significant, with the majority of its sales, to date, coming from company car drivers.

The Polestar 2 might be four years old, but it still looks just as fresh as its competitors in this test. Its design is less flamboyant, more prestige and clearly appeals to those looking for a family-friendly electric car.



With its chassis and powertrain derived from the Volvo XC40, the Polestar 2 sits slightly higher than a conventional saloon and towers over something such as a BMW i4. Yet, compared with the Capri and Tavascan, its roofline is significantly lower.

The interior feels more cramped, as a result. It's a sportier cockpit, with a raised centre console that cocoons the driver. Perceived quality is very spec dependent. Lower-grade cars have cloth trim that feels decidedly less premium that what Cupra, and even Ford, manage. Opt for a higher-spec car and the nappa leather feels much more suited to an upmarket model.

Pricing for the Polestar 2 is compelling. Our test model has a P11D value of £49,095, placing it mid-table in this test. But, at the time of writing, Polestar is offering the same spec car for £47,160 as part of a seasonal offer.

The Prime Pack comes as standard and includes Pilot Assist adaptive cruise control with lane-centring, a Harmon Kardon sound system, heated front and rear seats, a heat pump and a panoramic glass roof.

Following a recent facelift, the Polestar 2 comes with 79kWh battery and a 295PS motor that powers the rear wheels. Official range is 408 miles – the longest in our test.

We achieved 3.9mi/kWh in our efficiency test, just enough to break the 300-mile range barrier with a projected 308 miles of real-world range.

On the motorway, the Polestar 2 managed to achieve 3.2mi/kWh; so expect closer to 250 miles at a constant 70mph. Overall efficiency was 3.4mi/kWh, placing the Polestar 2 mid-table.

While it's not the most efficient, the Polestar is the quickest. Zero to 62mph takes 6.2 seconds and the 2 packs a decent punch in the mid-range with immediate power delivery.

Driver engagement lags behind the Tavascan, with less precise steering and a chassis set-up that favours ride comfort and motorway cruising.

As a result of its smaller dimensions, the Polestar 2 does struggle when it comes to luggage space in this test. Its boot provides 407 litres, which is more than 100 litres down against the other two cars.

You do, however, get a second 'frunk' under the bonnet – something the VW MEB-based cars can't offer – along with a large storage space beneath the boot floor.



	CUPRA TAVASCAN V2	POLESTAR 2 SM LONG RANGE PRIME	FORD CAPRI Ext range select
Price (P11D)	£53,780	£49,095	£48,020
BIK %	3%	3%	3%
BIK @ 20%	£323	£295	£288
BIK @ 40%	£645	£589	£576
VED (4yrs)	£1,870	£1,870	£1,870
Residual (4yrs/80k)	£17,400	£15,375	£17,400
Depreciation	45ppm	42ppm	38ppm
SMR	4.8ppm	5.5ppm	4.7ppm
Fuel cost	2.3ppm	2.1ppm	2.0ppm
Running cost	52.6ppm	49.8ppm	45.0ppm
Battery usable	77kWh	79kWh	77kWh
WLTP range	339mi	408mi	389mi
WLTP efficiency	4.4mi/kWh	5.2mi/kWh	5.0mi/kWh
FN test range	285mi	308mi	346mi
FN test efficency	3.7mi/kWh	3.9mi/kWh	4.5mi/kWh
Max charge AC	11kW	11kW	11kW
Max charge DC	135kW	205kW	135kW
Charge time 7.4kWh	12.25hrs	12.75hrs	12.25hrs
Charge time 22kWh	8.25hrs	8.5hrs	8.25hrs
Max DC charge time 10%-80%	28mins	28mins	28mins
Power	282PS	295PS	282PS
Torque	545Nm	489Nm	545Nm
0-62mph	6.8sec	6.2sec	6.4sec
Max speed	112mph	127mph	112mph

Verdict

As the new kid on the block, the Capri is a strong proposition. At least on paper. It's cheap, highly efficient and is well equipped. In the flesh it seems less appealing. The styling is bland and does little to justify the revival of the Capri nameplate.

On-road manners are well suited to

steady drivers who favour range and

comfort over driveability, while the interior is pleasant and spacious.
It's very different to the Tavascan, despite both cars sharing a platform. The Cupra is more edgy. It draws the eye, feels premium and sporty while also offering plenty of space and practicality. We love the Tavascan's design details,

advanced technology and keen chassis everyday driving the ride is too choppy however. It's a big price to pay for the keener handling, but we have to consid where these cars will spend the major of their time.

The Cupra's efficiency is also hard to forgive. When driven bumper-to-bump with its competitors, it simply used mo electricity. That means higher running costs and more frequent charging stops.
Then there's the Polestar. It's older,

more restrained and the most established model in this test. It blends the benefits of the Capri and the Tavascan perfectly, without too much compromise on factors such as practicality.

Cap HPI data ranks the Ford as the most sensible choice, with a predicted running cost of 45p per mile over four years (80,000 miles) – almost 5ppm cheaper than the Polestar and significantly less

than the Cupra's 52.6ppm.

Where does that leave us? Well, if range is your primary concern then the Capri is the best choice. If you want a car that stands out and is fun to drive, the Cupra nails the brief. But, it's the Polestar that makes the most sense, on balance.

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Drivetrain RWD RWD RWD 4,644mm Length 4,606mm 4,643mm 1,861mm 1,859mm 1,872mm Width Height 1,597mm 1,479mm 1,626mm Weight (unladen) 2,178kg 2,084kg 2,098kg 540l 407l **Boot volume seats up** 572l Boot volume seats down 1,550l 1,0971 1,510l 1,500kg 1,000kg **Towing capacity** 1,000kg 14.6-inch Infotainment screen 15-inch 11.2-inch **Heat pump** Opt £1,335 Opt £1,050 **Heated front seats Adaptive cruise Blind spot monitor Keyless entry** Apple Carplay/ **Android Auto Test figures** 3.0mi/kWh 3.2mi/kWh 3.5mi/kWh **Motorway** 3.4mi/kWh 3.4mi/kWh 4.0mi/kWh Mixed (70mi) 3.7mi/kWh 3.9mi/kWh 4.5mi/kWh Test loop





Forget about SUVs, estates are the new executive order









f you're looking for a practical, family-friendly electric car then there's an almost endless choice of crossovers and SUVs. All big and heavy with – in the majority of cases – the aerodynamic properties of a brick wall. That means they need giant batteries to provide mediocre ranges, at best. All so you can fit a dog in the back.

The British public's obsession with high-riding cars is getting out of control. Almost two-thirds of all cars sold last year were SUVs. When you factor in an electric powertrain, where every electron needs to be utilised as efficiently as possible, an SUV just doesn't make sense.

What people really need is an estate car. Estates are lower, sleeker, better to drive and, crucially, more efficient. Yet, you don't lose any practicality. Kids, dogs, bikes – they'll all fit in a decent estate.

The problem has been, until recently, the number of electric estates available totalled just one. In 2020, the only electric estate car on the market was the MG 5 EV.

Thankfully, manufacturers have now started to

expand their line-ups and the choice is growing.

While Mercedes-Benz and Volvo are still absent from the electric estate market, Audi and BMW aren't. As such, the A6 e-tron and i5 Touring are keen rivals.

What we've got here, is two electric executive cars that can spend all week ferrying upper management types around the country in sublime comfort, while at the weekend they can perform family duties, pick up flat-pack furniture, do tip runs and carry all sorts of lifestyle accessories – such and bikes and kayaks – with little fuss.

Oh, and of course they bring all the tax efficiencies and cost savings that fleets and drivers can expect from electric cars.

Audi A6 Avant e-tron

The A6 e-tron is the newest model in our test, having arrived on UK roads at the start of the year. It's based on Audi's new electric car platform that was co-developed with Porsche and it's impressive from the off.

We've opted for the Performance model, which doesn't mean it's the fastest, but, rather, the one with the greater range.

Using a single electric motor, the A6 e-tron Performance develops a hefty 367PS, giving it potent acceleration. It's noticeably quicker than the BMW i5, as a result.

With a giant 94.9kWh (usable) battery, the Audi promises the best range, too. Officially, it can cover up to 435 miles on a charge (WLTP). It also has a faster charging speed, making it more suitable for long-distance drivers.

In our efficiency test, the Audi came out on top. It managed 3.4mi/kWh over our 100-mile test route, which includes sections of motorway, B-roads and low-speed urban driving. That translates to a real-world range of 322 miles.

The Audi owes a lot to its aerodynamic body. It's a sleek, futuristic-looking offering with soft lines that help it cut through the air more cleanly.

It's a smaller car than the BMW, overall. With a length of just less than five metres, the more compact A6 e-tron also has less interior space.

That means the boot is smaller than the BMW's. Audi quotes 502 litres, with the rear seats up, and 1,422 litres if they're folded.

Audi has packed the car with technology as standard, with highlights including adaptive cruise control, keyless entry and 360-degree parking cameras. The central infotainment screen is crucial for most functions, in lieu of physical switchgear.

Our test car was equipped with an optional third display for the front passenger. This gives them access to the sat-nav and audio, with the option to use multimedia apps. It also had virtual door mirrors, which use cameras and screens.

We didn't get on with the latter. The screens on the door panels are too small and the digital image prevents any depth perception. Audi claims the set-up improves aerodynamics, but it's a £1,495 option box we'd leave unticked.

Interior plastics and materials feel less tactile than we're used to from Audi. You still get leather seats, but there's a lot of black plastic and it doesn't all feel particularly premium.

BMW i5 Touring

As part of the wider 5 Series family, the i5 differs from the A6 e-tron when it comes to platform. Where the Audi's is bespoke for electric vehicles.





C the i5 has to share a base with petrol and plug-in hybrid models.

Some manufacturers say this arrangement leads to compromises, but, in the case of the i5, it's hard to see any.

As the bigger of the two cars, the i5 is intimidating to get to grips with. It's almost as big as a previous generation 7 Series. That pays dividends when it comes to loadspace, however. There's 570 litres of boot space and an impressive 1,700 litres when the rear seats are folded.

Passenger space is equally generous. The i5 has a classy interior and feels more spacious and upmarket than the Audi, overall.

When it comes to power, the eDrive 40 version of the i5 packs 340PS from its rear-axle motor. The battery capacity is 81.2kWh, significantly down on the Audi. Maximum range is 360 miles, as a result.

In our test, the i5 was less efficient than the A6. It managed 3.2mi/kWh, in which both cars were driven bumper-to-bumper over the same route.

In the real world, you can expect a range closer to 260 miles from i5 Touring.

It's also the slower car of the two. Throttle mapping is less eager and the i5 doesn't feel as light or responsive as the Audi.

Where the BMW loses out in acceleration, it makes up for in other areas. It's more agile and better to drive. It takes corners with grace, the steering is precise, but not too quick. There's excellent balance, as you might expect from BMW.

Verdict

Comparing these two estate cars isn't easy. Both have their merits and each comes with compromises. If we're basing this match-up purely on practicality, then the i5 is the better estate car, hands down. But estate cars are multi-purpose. They

But estate cars are multi-purpose. They don't spend all day lugging loads and that's where the Audi claws back points. Its longer range is a big bonus – going an extra 60 miles between charges could be the difference between having to stop en route or making it to a destination.

en route or making it to a destination.

While the Audi is also quicker, it's the
BMW that gives a more engaging drive.
And, if cornering fast isn't a priority, the
i5 is simply more supple and more
comfortable, too.

comfortable, too.

Specification differences also need to be

Both cars have a similar list price, but the Audi is the cheaper of the two and it comes with stacks of equipment as standard compared with the BMW.

From a fleet perspective, the Audi's lower running costs are bolstered by a stronger residual value. Data from Cap HPI predicts a 67p per mile cost for the A6 and 73ppm for the i5.

When the day of testing was over, the Audi emerged as our fleet pick. We can't overlook the efficiency, specification and running costs advantages, despite it being a slightly smaller car overall.

It was, however, the i5 that I chose to drive home.

10 of the best...

Plug-in hybrid powertrains have been a lifeline for company car drivers in a world of ever-increasing taxation. With current company car tax rates favouring vehicles with CO2 emissions of less than 50g/km, even bigger savings can be made when opting for vehicles with longer zero-emission ranges.

We've selected 10 plug-in hybrid cars, using data from the Fleet News Car Running Costs Tool (www.fleetnews.co.uk/car-running-costs-calculator), that are cost-effective for businesses and drivers.

Audi A3 40 TFSIe Price: £39,125

Benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax: 6%

While the Audi A3's most recent facelift didn't bring any major changes to its look, more significant improvements were implemented beneath the skin.

There's an all-new plug-in hybrid powertrain that uses a battery with almost double the capacity of the old model.

The 25.7kWh unit provides an electric range of up to 88 miles and features



faster charging - up to 11kW using AC and, for the first time, DC fast charging at 50kW.

Performance remains as before, with the new system providing the same 204PS output as the old car.

The electric motor is able to give greater assistance to the 1.5-litre petrol engine and it has a more advanced recuperation system to maximise the electric driving range.

BMW 330e Price: £46,930

BIK: 9%

The 330e is one of the most popular plug-in hybrids on sale, yet BMW has found a way to make it even better for 2025. A larger battery enhances the car's zero-emission range and drops it into the 9% BIK tax band.

With a 22.3kWh capacity, the new unit boosts range from less than 40 miles to 63. It's paired with the same 2.0-litre petrol engine, which gives



a great blend of performance and efficiency.

The 3 Series continues to deliver a top-drawer driving experience with a compact, nimble chassis and an impressive 292PS power output.

Real-world efficiency is easily on par with a diesel and drivers benefit from greater refinement when running on electric.

Cupra Formentor eHybrid

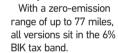
Price: £41,455

BIK: 6%

Cupra resonates well in the fleet market by offering smart and practical cars with a sporty edge. The Formentor embodies those principles perfectly as a compact SUV. It has sharp styling that sets it apart on the road, while the interior is spacious and family-friendly.

Two plug-in hybrid powertrains are offered, with either 204PS or 272PS. They both use the same basic hardware which consists of a 1.5-litre petrol

engine and a 25.8kWh battery.



It's more characterful than rival models, with keener handling and more aggressive styling, vet, when it comes to sensible factors, such as running costs, it's also among the best in class.



Hyundai Tucson PHEV

Price: £39,220 **BIK: 9**%

Recent updates have taken the Tucson from strength-to-strength and boosted its fleet appeal. The car's eye-catching styling has been sharpened and its upmarket interior made even more premium.

More importantly, tweaks to the powertrain improve the Tucson's zeroemission range to 43 miles. The hybrid battery is smaller than most, at



13.8kWh, but it uses power efficiently. When the electric motor is deployed alongside the 1.6-litre petrol engine there's a healthy 252PS output.

Ride and handling are impressive for a family SUV and there's plenty of tech on board to improve the value proposition.

Mercedes-Benz CLE 300 e

Price: £60.555 **BIK: 9%**

The sleek Mercedes-Benz CLE deserves a mention as it's the only two-door coupé available with plug-in hybrid power. It utilises the powertrain and underpinnings from the C-Class and E-Class in a more attractive body.

It's an upmarket executive car with a classy interior, great technology and good performance. While rear-seat space is a tad cramped, for those who don't carry more than one passenger regularly, the CLE is an excellent choice.

The car has a 25.4kWh battery, giving a range of up to 52 miles. That means just 9% BIK tax, while combined power output is 308PS.



Range Rover Sport P460e

Price: £90.145

BIK: 6%

It may only be available to a small pool of drivers, but the Range Rover Sport is a plug-in hybrid that is hard to overlook. That's why it was given the Driver's Choice Award at the 2023 Fleet News Awards.

It's one of only a few premium cars to attract 6% BIK tax, which means a 40% taxpayer will pay just £180 per month for the privilege of driving one.

A 38.2kWh battery gives a zero-emission range of 70 miles and the car also features 50kW rapid charging, allowing a re-charge in less than an hour.



Škoda Superb iV Price: £41,410

BIK: 6%

The Škoda Superb ticks a lot of boxes for company car drivers. It's large, comfortable and easy to drive. Pricing is also very competitive.

Its plug-in hybrid powertrain is capable of more than 60 zero-emission miles, too, meaning company car tax of 6%. It uses a new 1.5-litre petrol engine, with a giant 25.7kWh battery.

Only an estate body is available, providing excellent practicality. There's a suite of safety and comfort features to suit long distance travel.



Toyota Prius PHEV

Price: £37.730

BIK: 9%

Toyota was the pioneer of hybrid powertrains and its latest Prius model continues to set a benchmark.

The third-generation Prius promises greater fuel economy, emissions efficiency and EV driving capability

Powered by a 2.0-litre plug-in hybrid system that delivers 223PS, up to 53 miles of EV driving range is possible. For longer trips, or when charging is not practical, the plug-in hybrid system has a combined CO2 emissions rating of 12g/km - the lowest yet for a Prius.



Volkswagen Golf eHybrid

Price: £36,115

BIK: 6%

The Golf has always been a strong fleet performer and the latest eHybrid version is no exception. It's cheap, well-equipped and great to drive.

Power comes from the VW Group's new 1.5-litre petrol engine, which replaced the outgoing 1.4-litre unit. Battery capacity has almost doubled, with the Golf plug-in hybrids now using a 25.7kWh pack. This gives a zeroemission range of almost 90 miles, dropping them into the 6% BIK tax band. It produces 204PS, while a GTE version is also available with 272PS.



Volkswagen Tiguan eHybrid

BIK: 6%

The third generation Tiguan adopts new styling inside and out that is aligned to VW's ID electric car range. Smoother lines improve the aerodynamics.

There's no electric powertrain for the Tiguan, however. It shares the same eHybrid units available in the Golf. As such, the Tiguan eHybrid is capable of up to 77 miles using electricity, which means it slips into the 6% BIK band.

Two power outputs are available - 204PS and 272PS - and both are capable of 11kW AC charging and will also support 50kW rapid charging.



Alison Moriarty



Why fleet?

Like so many people, I never planned to work in the transport industry, but rather came across it while doing other roles. I think that once you do start working in fleet, you don't ever want to leave. It is such an interesting industry with many different facets to it and no day is ever the same as the last one.

How I got here

I began my career in Health and Safety and really enjoyed doing something that made a difference to people's working lives. During this time, I realised that there was a huge disparity in the way that on-site safety was treated, as opposed to on-road safety. This seemed crazy to me, given that you are far more likely to be injured or killed driving for work, than doing almost any other work activity. I re-qualified and moved into a role that focused on the safety of drivers and vehicles and never looked back.

Latest products, developments and achievements

My greatest achievements are

always when I make a difference to the overall safety of a fleet. I have done this in my operational roles, but love working with many diverse industries now in a consultancy role. My two greatest professional achievements were being the recipient of the Kevin Storey Award for outstanding contribution to road safety (Brake) and being inducted into the Fleet News Hall of Fame

My company in three words Integrity, Quality, Diligence.

Career influence

That's really difficult to pinpoint as there have been so many people that I have admired and who have inspired me. David Foster was the first ever Health and Safety director I worked for and he really set me on the path that I am still on. I also have to mention Julie Madoui, who was the head of fleet at Skanska. and with whom I worked for many years. Between us we achieved some great things, Last, but definitely not least, I would say Beverley Bell CBE. We met when

she was still the Senior Traffic Commissioner, and her dedication and knowledge was inspirational.

What makes a good manager/

I much prefer the term 'leader' because I think that is a big part of the role. I think you need to develop people to reach their potential, understand that people are very different and learn and grow in different ways and treat them accordingly. You have to be fair and make sure that your actions are always setting the right standard.

Advice to fleet newcomers

Keep at it. Don't be afraid to ask the oldies, like me, for advice and find your niche. As I said previously there are so many different roles in fleet that it is almost inevitable that one will suit you.

If I wasn't in fleet

I would still probably be in HSEQ (health, safety, environment and quality) because making sure that people are not adversely affected by their job is very important to me.

The advice I would give to my

18-year-old self?
Don't worry so much about planning the future, life has a way of taking you where you

The song I would have on my driving playlist?

Too many to mention, but if I have to pick one it would be 'Rock n Roll' by Led Zeppelin.

My first memory associated

Driving from Preston to Cornwall in my parents' Hillman Imp and the fan belt going. My dad mended it with a pair of my mum's tights, I was about five and thought he was a genius.

Favourite movie quote?

"Life moves pretty fast, if you don't stop and look around once in a while you could miss it" – Ferris Bueller's Day Off.

If money was no object? I would travel a lot more; I love

seeing other cultures and exploring their history.

A book that I would recommend others read? The Six Wives of Henry VIII by

Alison Weir. I love Tudor history and this book focuses on the individual queens rather than Henry! I always think it's really disrespectful that they are mainly known for how they died.

My hobbies and interests? Football (Leeds United), history, music and nature.

My pet hate?

People who are rude to anyone working in the service industry. It says a lot about their character.

If I were made transport

minister for the day...
I would simplify things so operators have a fighting chance of understanding what they need to do. There is much that could be viewed as advice, but is really essential to be compliant. Let's just say that!



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