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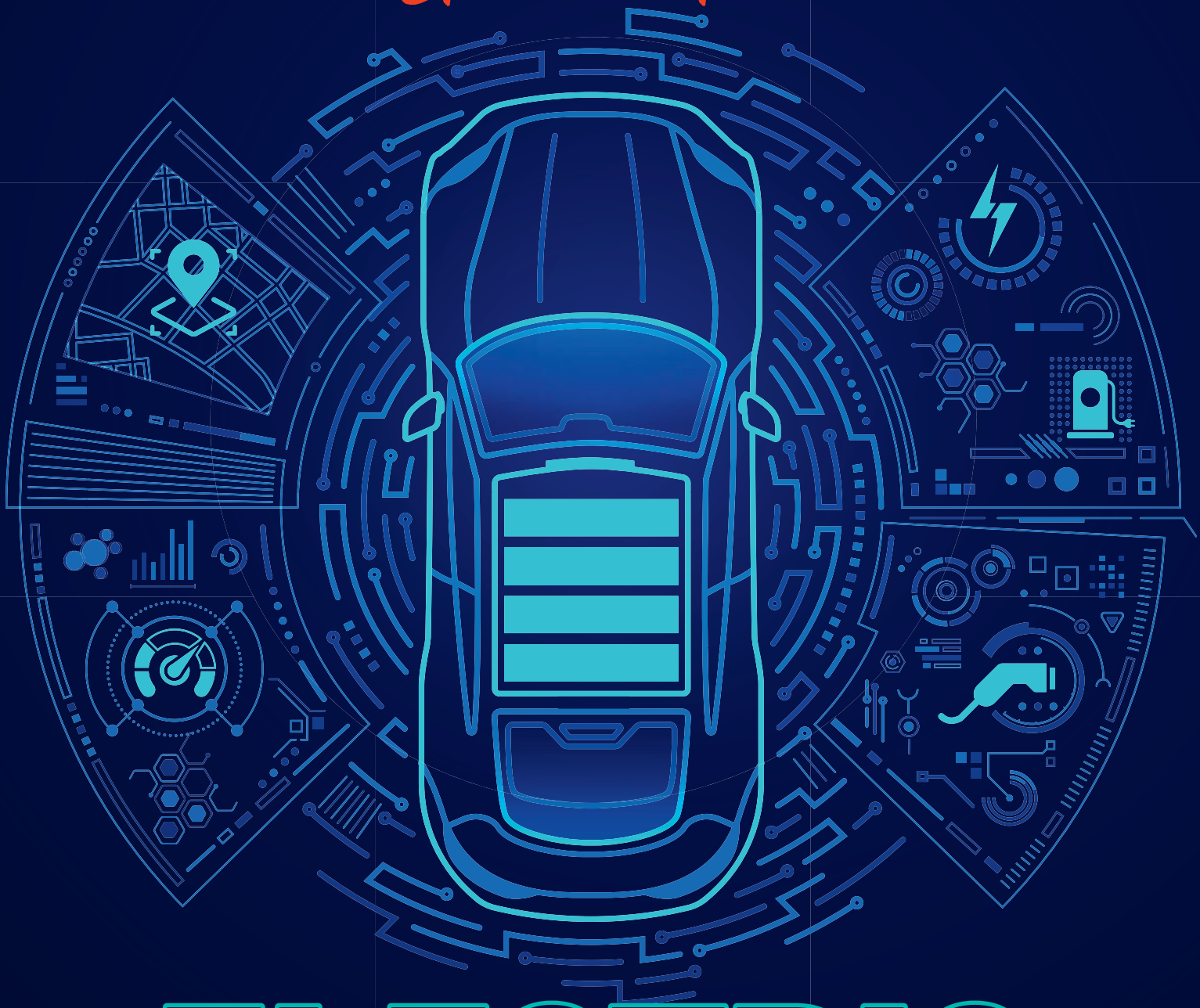

ELECTRIC FLEET

OCTOBER 2023

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WELCOME

Has everything changed or nothing? Rishi Sunak's decision to put back the 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol/diesel cars and vans until 2035 sent my inbox into meltdown with indignation, disgust and concern over what this would mean to the electric vehicle market.

In reality, very little has changed. The Government has committed to the ZEV Mandate, which will require 22% of new cars and 10% of new vans sold next year by each manufacturer to be full electric, rising to 80% and 70% respectively in 2030. No change there, apart from a small pacing amendment for vans (2025 will be 16% not 19%; 2026 will be 24% not 22%).

Several manufacturers have also reaffirmed their commitments to transitioning to a full electric model line-up, including Ford and Volvo (both by 2030).

However, something could potentially change: consumer confidence. With companies making massive investments in transitioning to electric, they need a used car market that is capable of soaking up the rising numbers of electric cars that will be de-fleeted over the next six years.

Will this announcement affect public confidence? Early signs suggest not, if the volume of BEV searches on Auto Trader are to be believed. Its data shows little change in interest following the 2035 announcement, which should give some comfort to fleets and leasing companies.

Our latest Electric Fleet report is intended to guide those fleets that have already started their electric journey, helping them to accelerate their plans but also understand some of the latest innovations that could improve efficiencies and save money.

If you are looking for advice to get you on the first EV rung, check out our beginner's guide to electric report which we published in May here.

Stephen Briers, group editor, *Fleet News*

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CONTENTS

New rules slash EV charging infrastructure costs for fleets

Many businesses no longer need to pay for expensive substation upgrades following a review by Ofgem into the way customers pay to access the electricity network. *Sarah Tooze* reports

One of the biggest hurdles facing businesses wanting to install workplace electric vehicle (EV) charging points has been the eye-watering costs they faced when their site doesn't have enough electricity capacity and they therefore need to pay for a substation upgrade.

Thanks to new rules from regulator Ofgem, which took effect in April 2023, the situation has changed, with the upgrade costs largely being paid for by the Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) instead.

Under the rules, called Access and Forward-Looking Charges Significant Code Review (Access SCR for short), so-called 'demand' customers (those who take electricity from the grid for their own consumption) no longer have to pay for an upgrade.

'Generation' customers (those who generate their own electricity, through wind farms or solar panels, for example, and put some of that electricity back into the grid) now only pay a proportion of the cost to upgrade, apportioned by their voltage level at their point of connection.

All customers still pay for the works to provide their new connection (extension assets).

The changes mean EV infrastructure costs have drastically reduced for many businesses.

"Previously, even if you were only putting two chargers in, if it took the whole estate above the capacity limit then you needed to pay for the upgrade," explains Lorna McAtear, head of fleet at National Grid.

"Now fleet managers don't need to be so concerned about the cost of tipping over capacity."

A board member of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), welcomed the changes saying: "In the past, the costs could be prohibitive – we heard horror stories from AFP members who were being quoted anything from £450,000 to £1 million for an upgrade. Access SCR has made it much easier and cheaper for businesses to transition more of their vehicles to electric."

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) says it has received "positive feedback" from customers and stakeholders on the impact of Access SCR so far.

"For a large proportion of connection requests, DNOs are now fully funding reinforcements associated with demand applications which require an upgrade to supplies, including those required for fleet charging installations, which has reduced project costs drastically for many customers," says a spokesperson.

> "OUR IMMEDIATE FOCUS IS ON ENABLING FLEETS TO CONNECT AS QUICKLY AND CHEAPLY TO THE NETWORK AS POSSIBLE"
>
> **IAN CAMERON, UK POWER NETWORKS**

One of Scotland's largest fleets in the utility sector, which has a site in Inverness requiring a new substation to allow it to install a multi-rapid charging hub for its commercial vehicles, has benefited from the new rules.

The total project costs are £640,000 but with the DNO now responsible for reinforcement costs, the cost to the fleet is now around £130,000.

"This means the project has gone from not being financially viable, to one which we can realistically consider," says a member of the fleet team.

"While we don't expect grid reinforcement at many of our sites, the new rules should make a huge difference for many fleets and will allow previously unviable projects to be more feasible to undertake."

Ian Cameron, director of customer service and innovation at UK Power Networks, says: "Access SCR is good news for fleets and it sets in stone many of the products and services we've been developing over the past five years.

"We're committed to making it cheaper, easier and faster for fleets to connect their charging systems to our network, and we're working closely with the likes of the BVRLA and Logistics UK to support their members."

He adds: "We've developed a free depot planning tool with Royal Mail, through our Optimise Prime innovation programme, the world's largest EV fleet trial which concluded this year. All fleets are able to make use of this innovative tool.

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"We have also developed a range of new connections products such as timed connections when you have access to more capacity at certain periods of the day, and profiled connections which develop a bespoke offer based on the times you use electricity.

"Our immediate focus is on enabling fleets to connect as quickly and cheaply to the network as possible while ensuring the capacity we all need is there in the long-term."

PLANNING FOR FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Businesses planning to install EV charge points should speak to their DNO "at the earliest opportunity", according to McAtear.

"You need to work with your energy company to understand how much capacity you have at your site," she says. "If you already have enough within your authorised supply capacity limit and you don't need the upgrades then Access SCR doesn't apply to you."

Businesses that have reduced their capacity in the past to cut costs should be aware that they can't simply get that capacity back.

"New housing developments or shops may have been built and that capacity may have gone to them," McAtear explains.

She advises fleet managers to plan for future EV charging requirements and to use a 'phased' approach (known as phased capacity management) whereby they apply for the electricity capacity they may need to convert their entire fleet to electric even if it will be several years before the whole fleet has transitioned, and 'draw down' their capacity as and when they need it.

Kester Jones, connections strategy manager – electricity systems at National Grid, says: "We will lay the extension assets now even if you're not using that capacity at this moment.

"The advantage is that we lay the cabling and extension assets just once as opposed to a piece-meal approach where you tell us you want 'X' amount of demand now, we lay some cables, you want a bit more demand in a couple of years' time and those cables still have some capacity, then a couple of years later they are full and we need to put bigger cables in."

Jones says it is a way to "future-proof" capacity, although it is subject to an annual review.

VOLUMES OF APPLICATIONS AND CONNECTIONS TO GROW RAPIDLY

The planned 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles was anticipated to create more than one million domestic EV charger applications per year. The Government heat pump target added a further 600,000 a year, but it is not known what effect its decision to postpone both deadlines to 2035 will have yet.

As National Grid Electricity Distribution owns four licence areas out of 14 in the UK (roughly a third) it expects to have 500,000 low carbon connections to the network, the equivalent of 2,000 for each working day.

This is up from 41,000 EV and heat pump applications in 2022 (164 working days).

To manage that National Grid has created a centralised team and is digitalising its applications and connections process.

EV applications can now be made online and

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Mark Newberry, Commercial Director and Sustainability spokesperson at Europcar Mobility Group UK & Ireland

Europcar is committed to helping customers make the switch to zero in a way they can afford, and a way that fits with their business requirements. But there are many questions that still need to be answered.

That's why a team of Europcar colleagues recently joined a 50-strong convoy of electric cars, vans and trucks on a five-day 1,200-mile EV rally across the British Isles, gaining valuable insights on how EVs work in real world conditions. It provided numerous learnings which will help us as a rental provider committed to helping customers transition to electric driving.

Most importantly, it proved that the switch to zero has to be a 'journey'.

The EV-evangelists don't need to be convinced; but they are still in the minority and what we all now need to do, as a sector, is bring the less certain with us. Whether that's by adding one or two electric vehicles to a company's pool car fleet or including EV in a business travel policy so employees can opt to rent an EV for a few days or weeks to start to understand how they might need to adjust their working practices to take account of the different driving and 'fuelling' needs.

As a committed electric car driver, I am utterly converted.

However, I know there's still a job to do to convince the majority and, at Europcar, we want to help businesses bring employees with them on the decarbonisation journey.

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businesses can use a budget estimate tool and access data on the capacity that is available on the network.

National Grid's planning teams also offer connection surgeries so businesses can discuss their requirements before making an application.

Similarly, SSEN offers regular connection surgeries, workshops and webinars. It also has a business relationship management team, which offers dedicated support for each market segment.

Smaller EV charger requests can be completed online and confirmed "in minutes" with UK Power Networks and it is transitioning to an improved online portal for all other connection applications.

Fleet customers can also access a range of pre-application support services, including a self-service Open Data Portal, 'Ask the Expert' email services and face-to-face or online surgeries where they can discuss their project in detail with an engineer.

> "FLEET MANAGERS DON'T NEED TO BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE COST OF TIPPING OVER CAPACITY"
>
> **LORNA McATEAR, NATIONAL GRID**

A fleet manager who has been through the process advises other businesses to become familiar with their specific DNO's online system for a new connection.

"They all differ, but are becoming better in terms of the user experience," he says.

"If a new application is submitted then you may often be given confirmation of who is dealing with your case. My experience is that talking to the individuals yields a lot better results than engaging over email.

"Also be aware that your installer (regardless of using a new or existing connection) should be informing the DNO of any EV charger installation, to help the grid keep informed of forthcoming additional loads."

CREATING A WORKPLACE CHARGING SCHEME: WHAT TO CONSIDER

An organisation needs to consider a number of factors when installing workplace charging infrastructure.

Firstly, if the site is leased, then it will need to speak to the landlord to gain permission to carry out the work.

It also needs to consider how many charge points are needed.

To determine this, a company will need to consider the number of EVs operated both currently and in the future, the number of available parking bays and the available budget for the installation.

It also needs to think about what speed of charger is required; this will depend largely on the amount of time the vehicle is parked.

If it can be charged overnight, for example, a slow charger may be sufficient, but if the required turnaround is faster, a rapid charge point may be needed to give them the extra range to fulfil all tasks.

There are also big differences in the cost of buying and installing charge points.

For example, a 7kW charge point capable of charging two vehicles at the same time can cost around £2,000 to install, while a 150kW rapid charger is upwards of £35,000.

An organisation should also assess the electricity supply to the premises to check it has the capacity to power all of the chargers needed.

If it doesn't, two main options exist.

A smart charging system could be used and this will be able to spread or reduce the speed of the charging sessions, but still ensure all vehicles are ready when they need to be.

However, if this is not suitable – for example, if all the vehicles have a short turnaround before they need to be used again so need to be charged at the same time – then an upgraded site substation may be required.

Before April 2023 the organisation was responsible for footing the considerable bill, but Ofgem has ruled the cost now has to be spread across the electricity distribution sector instead (see main feature).

Organisations are still responsible for any groundworks needed on their sites, and this will influence the location of any charge points as the more digging needed to lay cables, the more expensive the install becomes.

The closer charge points are to the site's power supply, the less groundwork needs to be carried out.

How to secure workplace charger uptime

Maintenance and monitoring aftercare solutions are essential to avoid the risk of vehicles being incapacitated by flat batteries. *Jonathan Manning* reports

The long list of excuses for being late for a meeting, from traffic jams to train cancellations, now has a new, maybe more convincing addition – my electric vehicle (EV) failed to charge overnight.

Problems with plugging in or power tripping off can be a nuisance for anyone, but for mission-critical fleets they are a nightmare.

Any organisation needs to know that when its vehicles are plugged in at the office or depot, they are actually charging, so that when the cables are unplugged the vehicles are ready to go.

Experience, however, indicates that a potent cocktail of human error, hardware faults, power cuts or internet outages can interrupt charging and leave a vehicle unprepared for its next duty cycle.

As a result, fleet, facilities and transport managers need an aftercare solution to maintain chargers in serviceable condition and monitor chargers in real time, including overnight, so they can instantly spot and diagnose any faults that do occur and provide a swift fix.

After all, a charger that is out of action even for a couple of days could hamstring a business for that time.

The first step to 24/7 charger uptime occurs before a spade has even broken the ground to lay power cables, says Graham Rowlands, managing director of Devitech, which provides commercial EV charging installation, support and aftercare.

"Fleets need to make sure that when the infrastructure goes in, the number of chargers and specification are right for the site, particularly with power capacity. Issues occur if you try to overload a site or install too many chargers," he adds.

Selecting robust chargers made by hardware manufacturers with a ready supply of replacement parts is also important, with infrastructure installers and maintenance companies advising fleet decision-makers to discuss the reliability of chargers with their peers.

Natasha Fry, head of sales at Mer Fleet Services, adds: "Choose hardware that is designed for a workplace environment – in a depot there are far more drivers plugging in, and there is the risk of vehicles bumping into chargers."

The performance of chargers has improved enormously in recent years but, as with vehicles, not all hardware performs to the same standards and any initial savings from buying a poorer quality charger can soon evaporate in vehicle downtime and lost fleet productivity.

The other vital criterion when selecting chargers is to choose models that are Open Charge Point Protocol (OCPP) compliant, adds Fry.

SMART CHARGING FUNCTIONALITY

Since July 2022, the Government's Smart Charging Regulations have made it compulsory for all home, workplace and commercial vehicle chargers sold in the UK to have 'smart functionality'. This allows for charging when there is less demand on the grid, or when more renewable electricity is available. More importantly for fleets, it ensures charge points have the ability to communicate and receive information, essential for the remote monitoring of chargers.

OCPP compliance ensures this back-office monitoring can be done by any company, whereas a non-compliant charger might only be accessible to the hardware manufacturer.

"Invest in the right charger with OCPP functionality and then if you find you have appointed the wrong company to manage your back office, you can go out to the market and find a new back office," says Fry.

OVER-AIR UPDATES

This connectivity matters enormously because it allows for over-the-air firmware updates and provides the foundations for the back office monitoring of chargers.

If there is an interruption to charging, some chargers can 'self-fix' minor issues, and, if this doesn't work, they alert both fleet managers and charging solutions providers to attempt a remote fix.

"It has to be a proactive approach," says Rowlands. "We typically know there's an issue before the client does, we'll fix it remotely, and then let the client know in the morning. We can do remote software


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updates, remote soft and hard resets, and unlock chargers."

In many instances what appears to be a problem is simply a drop of Wi-Fi communication, with the charger still supplying power to a vehicle, but power outages can trip breakers and components do breakdown.

Charger aftercare solutions tend to bundle the remote monitoring of chargers with a maintenance package that sees engineers inspect hardware on a six-monthly or annual basis, paid for on a subscription-type fee per charger.

"Charging hardware has its own warranties, but service and maintenance is a separate package and is probably the most critical part of EV infrastructure at the moment because there's a lack of supply," says Tom Dinnage, head of sales, ElectrAssure.

"Too often, fleets have spent a lot of money on getting chargers installed and power in place, but don't have a plan for when chargers don't work."

If remote fixes don't do the job, ElectrAssure also offers bespoke Call Fix service level agreements (SLAs), which can be tailored to meet individual fleets' specific response and resolution timeframes, dependent on their operational priorities.

"The most demanding SLA I have seen is a four-hour on-site response time for anywhere in the UK," says Dinnage. More typical response time guarantees are three-to-five days.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Charging solution providers are also keen to train fleet and facilities managers to be 'first responders' in the case of a charger failing, with priority given both to the post-installation handover and to instructing drivers about how to charge safely and securely.

"We are putting chargers into Asda's depots and we go along to their driver training sessions," says Fry.

"They do the training with the EVs, and we link in with training them how to use the chargers."

Finally, fleets need to have a Plan B ready in case a charger temporarily fails, with reliance on public charging hubs as a last resort.

Alternative solutions include specifying one or two more fast chargers than required, to act as spares; the installation of a more expensive rapid charger to deliver swift recharges in urgent cases; or the temporary use of a mobile charging unit, says Fry.

"Make sure you work with an organisation that understands the importance of high uptime and utilisation rates," she adds.

"If something does go wrong – and remember, these are technical pieces of equipment so components will fail – what really counts is how that organisation reacts and whether it understands the importance of mission-critical vehicles so the service level can be delivered in line with expectations."

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Alan Bastey, Decarbonisation and Sustainability Consultant at Zenith

We're all on a collective journey towards the 'electrification of everything', with cars and LCVs in the UK specifically accelerating towards the end of the sale of new ICE derivatives by the revised target of 2035.

Delivering this complex and nuanced transition can seem overwhelming and challenging, with policy and regulatory milestones influencing the market, evolving technology and a host of varying demands and opinions. However, help is out there.

At Zenith, we partner with the best suppliers in the sector to deliver bespoke, turnkey solutions through a collaborative framework, co-ordinated, managed and lead by us, to help navigate these perceived complexities.

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- Combine your site and vehicle energy strategy – vehicles become part of your energy landscape, placing additional demand on supply but also offering an inherent storage capacity which can complement your wider energy needs.

Leasing providers are uniquely placed to deliver and recommend a data-first approach based on real-world scenarios. The opportunities are real, but require high levels of engagement, and it's vital that we continue to collaborate with fleet managers to ensure we can offer a tailored delivery that matches your fleet ambitions and sustainability commitments.

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Future-proofing an IT strategy

The creation of Octopus Electric Vehicles demanded systems that would both allow the business to grow rapidly and serve customers today and tomorrow

Few decision-makers at either leasing companies or large fleets have the luxury to start from scratch when specifying a new IT system.

Legacy systems typically force compromises and constraints, rather than the ultimate freedom of a 'greenfield' perspective that greeted Chris Joyce when he started working for Octopus Electric Vehicles three years ago, initially as a consultant and subsequently as Commercial Operations Director.

In the depths of 2020's Covid-19 lockdowns, Octopus EV was a leasing broker with ambitions to become a fully-fledged leasing provider, specialising in the fast-growing salary sacrifice market for electric cars.

Fast-forward to 2023 and Octopus has soared through the threshold of 10,000 live contracts as more than 3,500 employers seize the chance to offer their staff the highly prized benefit of saving hundreds of pounds per month on an electric car lease via salary sacrifice.

Managing every stage of a fast-growing fleet of this size, from initial quotation to disposal, places heavy demands on a software system that has to meet the twin challenges of satisfying challenging operational demands while being intuitive to use for staff who may not have prior experience of using a leasing IT system.

"Octopus is a very demanding company; we deliver a fantastic service, we are moving at a very fast pace, and we have high demands of all of our suppliers all the way from systems to aftermarket and disposals," said Joyce.

He joined the IT selection process after the company had whittled its shortlist down to three options, each of which presented a different proposition to manage Octopus EV's back office operation. One had an off-the-shelf quotation system, but would have had to build the fleet management functionality. Another was in the process of updating its software, which meant varying degrees of interactivity dependent on the function. Finally, Jaama's Key2 management software, a Goldilocks solution used by 30% of FN50 leasing companies, which offered a complete fleet management package.

"It became an easy choice – Key2 was a comprehensive solution that did it all," said Joyce.

He had already worked with Jaama for a dozen years in previous roles at other leasing companies, an experience that gave him confidence in the firm's people and capabilities, which would prove to be particularly valuable during the initial integration of Key2.

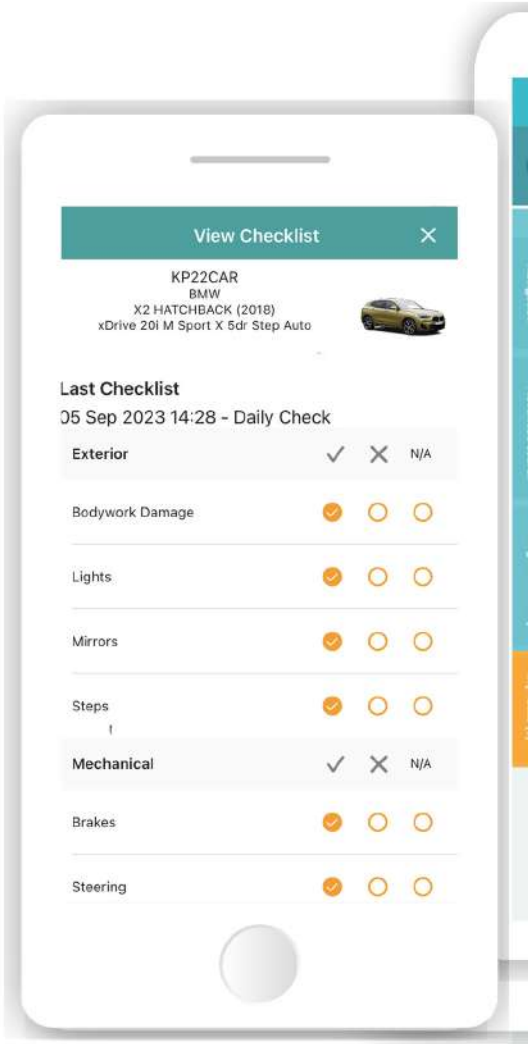
'We were not starting with a bank of assets, but with a blank sheet of paper, so it was important that Jaama could support us in terms of understanding our business, helping us to specify the system and populating the variables to drive the various functions, with a particular focus on quotations, client set-up and early life invoicing," said Joyce.

Three years on, there are still weekly catch-up discussions and monthly meetings between Jaama and Octopus EV to iron out any bugs and plan future IT requirements.

Octopus EV has a large IT department that creates all of the company's front end development, such as quotations and portals for drivers and employers. This front end then needs integration with Jaama's Key2 platform for the in-life operational management of vehicles.

Key2 provides a seamless transition for onboarding drivers and managing all of their in-life requirements, from vehicle servicing and maintenance, to MOTs, tyres and accident management.

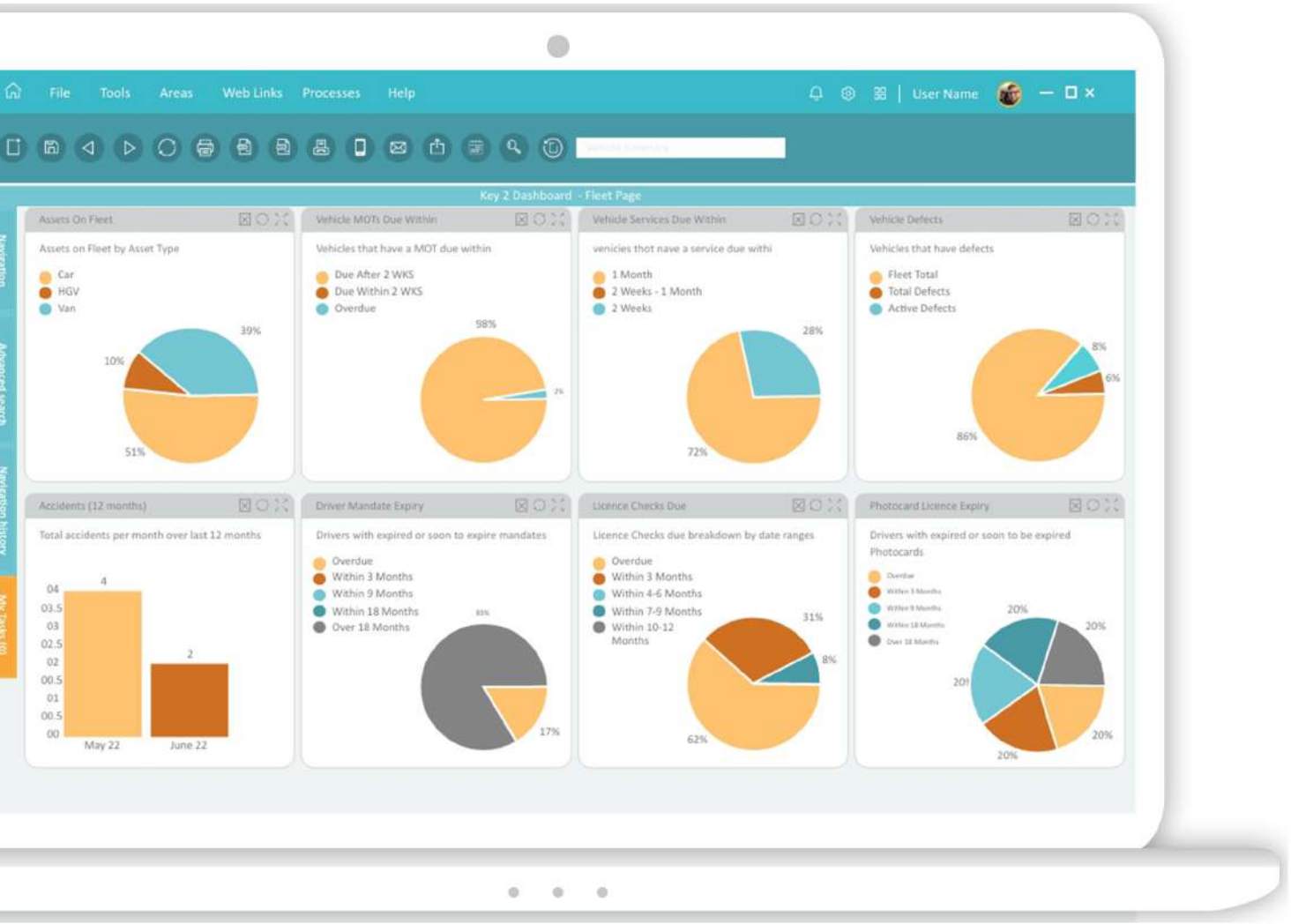
Whenever Octopus EV has sought solutions to problems, Key2 has proved to be flexible, and the advantages of



"We were not starting with a bank of assets, but with a blank sheet of paper, so it was important that Jaama could support us in terms of understanding our business, helping us to specify the system and populating the variables to drive quotations, client set-up and early life invoicing"

Chris Joyce, Commercial Operations Director

octopus electric vehicles



partnering with a specialist fleet software supplier means the leasing company can rely on Jaama to keep the system up-to-date with any legislative changes or industry developments.

The fleet ecosystem is neither as sophisticated nor as swift to change as Joyce would like, particularly in the connectivity of the aftermarket. But at the front end Octopus positions itself at the leading edge of technology developments, integrating Jaama's Signable electronic document signing facility into its salary sacrifice proposition, and future-proofing its operations by ensuring that its software will be able to deal with new developments, such as monitoring and reporting EV battery health or dealing with swappable battery technology.

The recent launch of Octopus EV's innovative salary sacrifice scheme for secondhand electric cars provides a prime case study of how fleet management software has to be flexible to accommodate new products and services.

Naturally, with the volume of data generated by electric vehicles rising exponentially, Octopus EV is looking to Key2 to create a series of bespoke reports, alongside the more standard and predictable reports that any leasing company would require.

With the benefit of hindsight, Joyce expresses an element of relief that Octopus EV chose Key2, and that the system has been able to manage the rapid growth of the company's fleet with relative ease. Jaama hosts the Octopus EV system on a dedicated server, and bills Octopus per 'live' asset on the system.

As for his recommendation to any other leasing or fleet decision-maker going through the procurement process of selecting a new IT infrastructure, Joyce said: "I would advise them to look at the track record of a company (that counts for a lot), what they have been able to deliver, and the type of customers they serve. You have to future-proof yourself and know where a supplier is going to go in terms of IT architecture and new developments, so an understanding of its roadmap is more important now, because of this massive growth in EVs. Slightly different operating models are emerging, particularly at the front end, and any system will need to be able to cope with that."

Maintaining a strong connection

The AC charging cable forms a key, but unsung, role in operating electric vehicles. Looking after them properly can have cost and efficiency benefits. *Andrew Ryan* reports

When fleet decision-makers are thinking about operating electric vehicles (EVs), the AC charging cable is probably way down the list of their considerations – and rightly so.

Range, charging times and where and when to plug the EVs in are among the issues which have a higher importance when it comes to successfully operating battery electric vehicles (BEVs).

However, while cables also lack the glamour of the latest vehicles and developing battery technologies, they play a vital role in their operation.

Understanding their impact, knowing how to care for them and recognising when it is time for a replacement cable can save a fleet time and money, as well as ensuring the vehicles can be charged correctly so they are ready to use when needed.

Often drivers will just use the cable supplied with their vehicle and then put it in their boot, forgetting about it until is needed again.

But this approach could have negative implications for both the employee and fleet decision-maker, says James Louw, director of engineering at EV Cables.

"Charging cables not only deliver electric power from the charge point to your car's battery, they also influence the speed at which your vehicle charges," he says.

"A damaged or inadequate cable could result in slower charging times, increased energy loss and, in extreme cases, could pose safety risks such as electric shocks or fires.

"For fleet operators, cable maintenance is even more critical as it directly impacts operational efficiency and safety on a large scale."

A high-quality, well-maintained cable can minimise energy loss during the charging process, but a lower quality or deteriorated one may result in higher resistance, leading to wasted energy and longer charging times.

"This wasted energy is realised as heat and results in plugs that can get so hot that users burn themselves when trying to remove them from charge," adds Louw.

"A cool cable is a happy cable. For businesses operating fleets of EVs, these small inefficiencies can add up to a significant expense and carbon footprint, and injuries caused by improperly maintained charging equipment leave businesses exposed to expensive legal claims."

Louw recommends regular cable checks should

form part of a daily or weekly maintenance schedule.

A simple, but effective, step is to inspect the cable for visible damage, such as cracks, frayed ends or exposed wires.

Drivers should be instructed to store cables in a clean, dry place when not in use. Moist environments can cause corrosion, while exposure to harsh sunlight may weaken the cable's outer layer.

Trying to yank the cable out of the vehicle or charge point is also discouraged; this can damage the connectors or the cable itself. Drivers should use the connector handle to remove the cable from a socket and not pull on the cable itself.

The most vulnerable parts of a charging cable are the electrical contacts, says Louw.

"By periodically using non-conductive contact cleaners, any corrosion can be cleaned away before oxide build-up can start causing a noticeable effect on cable performance," he says.

TIME TO REPLACE

There are three occasions when a charging cable should be replaced: physical damage, charging inconsistencies or scheduled replacement.

"If there are visible signs of wear and tear, such as fraying or cracks, it's time to replace the cable," Louw adds.

"If you notice the charging time has increased inexplicably or if there are intermittent interruptions, the cable might be the culprit.

"A common mode of failure for EV charging cables is the breakage of the communication line within the cable. Because this core is usually thinner than the power cores, it is usually the first to break when the cable is exposed to excessive strain."

Under the current Electricity at Work Regulations, there is no requirement for a charging cable to be PAT (portable appliance testing) tested but, for commercial vehicles, EV Cables recommends a yearly cable inspection and thorough testing of areas such as insulation resistance, contact resistance and continuity tests.

Louw adds all charging cables are rated for 10,000 insertion cycles, but, in reality, a cable will need to be replaced well before this. He recommends cables for commercial vehicles are replaced after three years.

"Planned lifecycles allow fleet operators to minimise downtime risk and budget for the equipment needed to keep their fleets charged and moving," says Louw.

ENERGY LOSS WHEN CHARGING VEHICLES

The Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) is investigating discrepancies in the amount of energy lost between a charge point and a vehicle battery after some of its members reporting discrepancies of as much as 15%.

Fleets are able to monitor the respective values by comparing data from the charge point and a vehicle's telematics system.

"(Fleets) have been seeing, on average, a 5-7% loss. In some instances, it is as extreme as nearly 14% or 15%," says AFP chairman Paul Hollick.

The AFP wants to help fleets understand what is the cause of the apparent electricity loss, with consideration being given to how charge points are calibrated and the accuracy of telematics data.

Hollick says it is too early to draw conclusions, but suggested that some of the electricity being lost could be down to the EV charging cable, with its length potentially playing a part.

Lorna McAtear, fleet manager at National Grid, says: "There's more than just the cable that needs to be factored in, it's not just that."

She says there are "so many variables" including the efficiency of the charger and the impact of different systems within the car on its energy usage and storage.

"It might not be the cable that's losing anything at all, it might be what the manufacturer has stated versus what you're physically able to get," she adds.

Research conducted by German automobile club ADAC last year showed that charging losses vary greatly, dependent on how charging is carried out – at home using a domestic AC plug socket, using a wallbox with up to 11kW or with half the power.

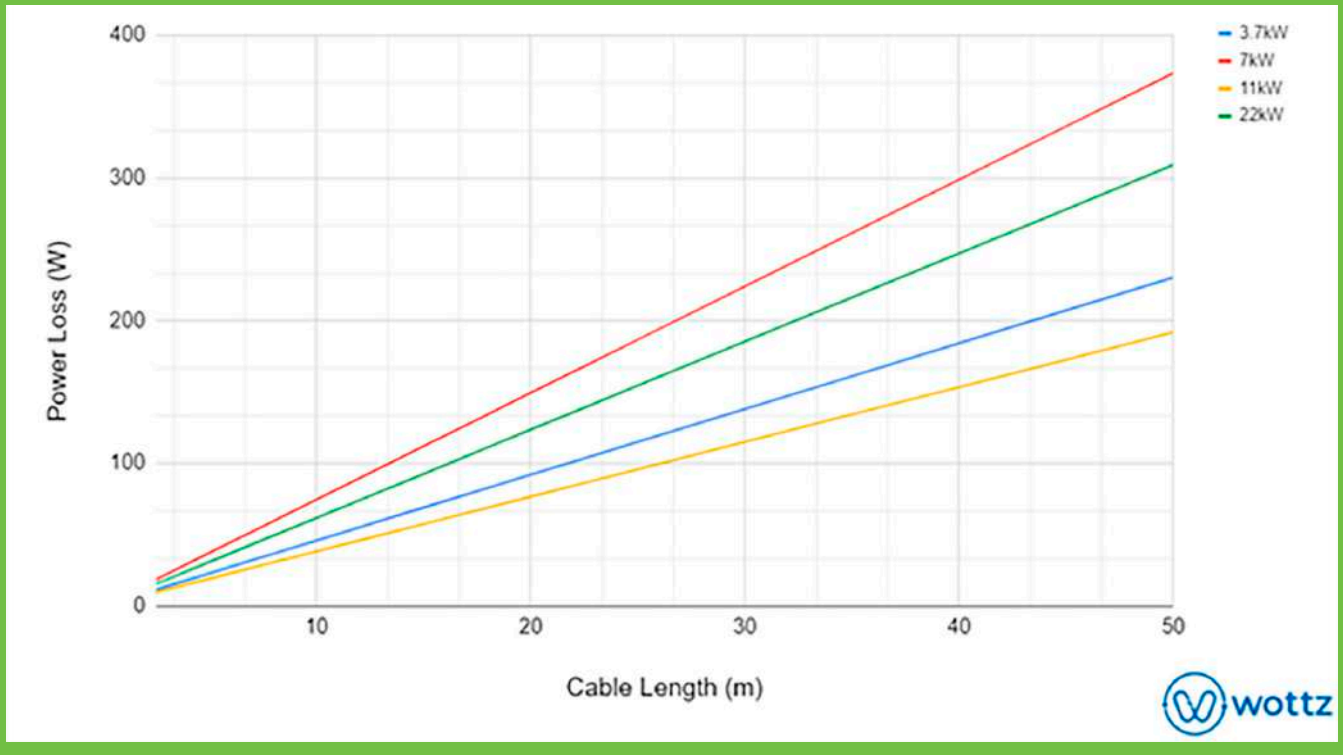
It found that charging losses at the household socket are between 10-30%, while wallbox charging losses are between 5-10%.

It noted that the on-board electronics and some of the vehicle's control units are active during the entire charging process and therefore consume electricity.

When charging with AC, the rule of thumb applies, it says. "The higher the charging power, the shorter the charging process and thus the time in which charging loss occurs," adds ADAC.

EV Cables has done its own research on this issue, and found the power loss increases as the cable gets longer (see graph below).

"I believe (power loss) concerns people more when investigating longer cable runs," says James Louw of EV Cables.



Reliable, scalable and interoperable: Powering the future of EV fleet infrastructure

In the UK, road transport is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, making up nearly a quarter (24%) of total emissions.[1] While the transition to EVs is becoming more feasible and the number of charge points increasing, challenges such as interoperability and access to robust and scalable charging solutions remain front of mind for fleet operators looking to transition.

Euan Moir, the new Head of Shell Fleet Solutions UK, shares his thoughts on the importance of easy access to reliable charging infrastructure and how charge point operators (CPOs) can work with businesses to deliver it.

What do you see as a key challenge fleets face when it comes to EV charging?

One key challenge is that on-the-go EV charging is not always as easy as it could be. As things stand, charge point reliability and interoperability between CPOs requires improvement. Many drivers are using multiple charge cards and apps to access and pay for the power they need, and reduced charge point reliability inhibits uptime. The situation is inconvenient for drivers and potentially increases the total cost of ownership (TCO) of EVs for fleet operators.

What is your perspective on the latest changes in the Public Charge Point Regulations?[2]

I think the new legislation is a positive step – and we hope that this helps reduce anxiety around accessing a reliable public charging network for both consumers and businesses. Equally, it sets a strong precedence for the future growth of our UK EV charging network, with accountable and consistent charge point entities.

The new reliability requirements, which maintain a standard of 99% uptime for rapid charge points each calendar year, are critical as they help to reassure fleets that are transitioning to EVs that the infrastructure will be there to support their needs. Equally, the new rules on roaming help to address interoperability, which is a key consideration in how we built our own network.

I am sure there will be elements to watch – for example, how you fairly measure the reliability of charge points and the definition of which charge points would be considered within or out of scope.

How can Shell Fleet Solutions help businesses to adapt to these changes, and implement an EV infrastructure strategy?

The new regulations align closely with our own steps to reduce the complexity of EV charging. For example, our Shell Card already provides easy roaming access to more than 20,000 public charge points across the UK – a network we will continue to expand. This sits alongside our range of depot, office, and home charging solutions.

Our approach is to help fleets with their electrification journey and this is why interoperability has long been a focus for us. Giving fleets and drivers one card and one app to manage their mobility needs can help to make EV operations more efficient.

Ultimately, we want to continue advancing our eMobility portfolio to offer customers a range of solutions that can be scaled and tailored to their business' specific mobility needs.

SHELL FLEET SOLUTIONS
TOGETHER ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Discover more about how Shell Fleet Solutions is bringing simplicity to public EV charging with the Shell Card, here.

[1] Gov.UK Department for Transport, Transport and Environment Statistics, 2022
[2] Gov.UK, The Public Charge Point Regulations, July 2023

Intelligent infrastructure: Designing a customised charging ecosystem for every fleet

Using a combination of charging solutions based on each fleet's specific needs is critical for driving efficiency, performance, and sustainability.

eDepot charging* **02:00 am**

Customised solution design

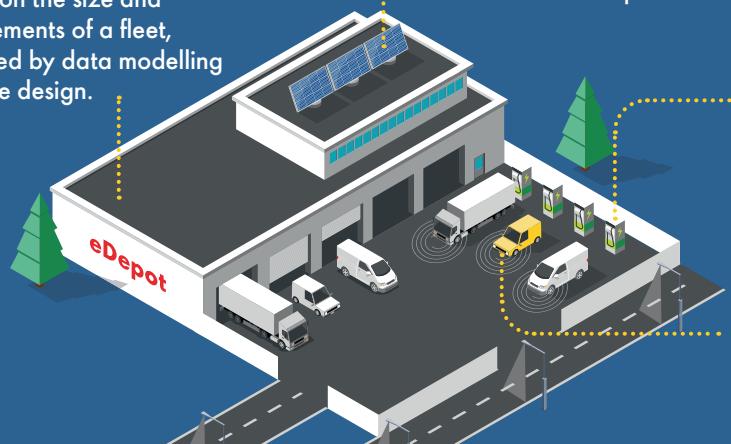
Based on the size and requirements of a fleet, informed by data modelling and site design.

On-site energy solutions

From renewable power sources to energy management capabilities that help reduce costs and carbon intensity.

High-performing hardware

Specially selected based on a fleet's vehicle mix, operations, and required power outputs.



Charge point management system

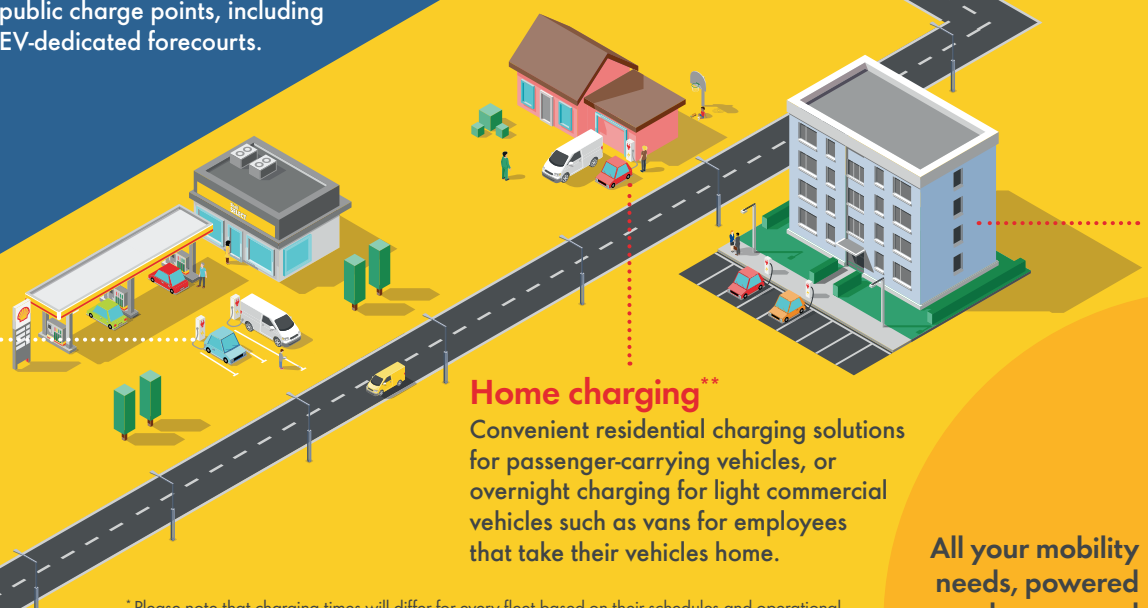
Software managing charging times, regulating charging speeds, and prioritising charging based on operational schedules.

Operations and maintenance

To facilitate asset repairs and support network uptime.

On-the-go charging* **15:30 pm**

Charge EVs as needed while out on the road with a network of public charge points, including EV-dedicated forecourts.



Office charging**

Turn car parks into reliable charging locations, providing on-site business charging solutions for passenger-carrying vehicles.

Home charging**

Convenient residential charging solutions for passenger-carrying vehicles, or overnight charging for light commercial vehicles such as vans for employees that take their vehicles home.

All your mobility needs, powered by one card and one invoice

* Please note that charging times will differ for every fleet based on their schedules and operational requirements. This graphic depicts the example charging times for one vehicle in a delivery or operational fleet. ** Home and office charging solutions are only available in specific countries.

Boost EV sustainability with solar power

Installing solar panels and a battery energy storage system can help a fleet to cut its costs as well as Scope 2 emissions. *Andrew Ryan* reports

One of the oft-heard criticisms of electric vehicles (EVs) is that, although they may be zero emission at the tailpipe, millions of tonnes of CO_2 is created during the generation of their energy.

While there is some truth in this given that huge amounts of fossil fuels are burnt by power stations, an increasing amount of electricity is generated through zero-emission sources.

Last year, for example, figures from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero showed that more came from renewable and nuclear power sources than from fossil fuels – after gas (38%), wind was the second largest source of electricity at 25%. Solar, hydro and marine were at 6%.

While organisations can opt for a green energy electricity tariff to improve their sustainability, an increasing number are installing solar arrays at their premises.

As well as generating the power to charge their EVs themselves, this also means the organisations can cut costs.

One example of this is City of Doncaster Council. It estimates it will save approximately £33,633 in electricity costs each year through a 20-space car park covered by a solar panel roof.

This facility, which is close to its Civic Office in Waterdale, will generate an average of 88,510kWh each year, have 10 dual-socket charge points and be home to 20 of the council's electric pool cars.

Even taking into account the £658,798 cost of construction, it expects to make an overall saving of £180,000 over the typical life expectancy of 25 years for such a facility.

BATTERY STORAGE

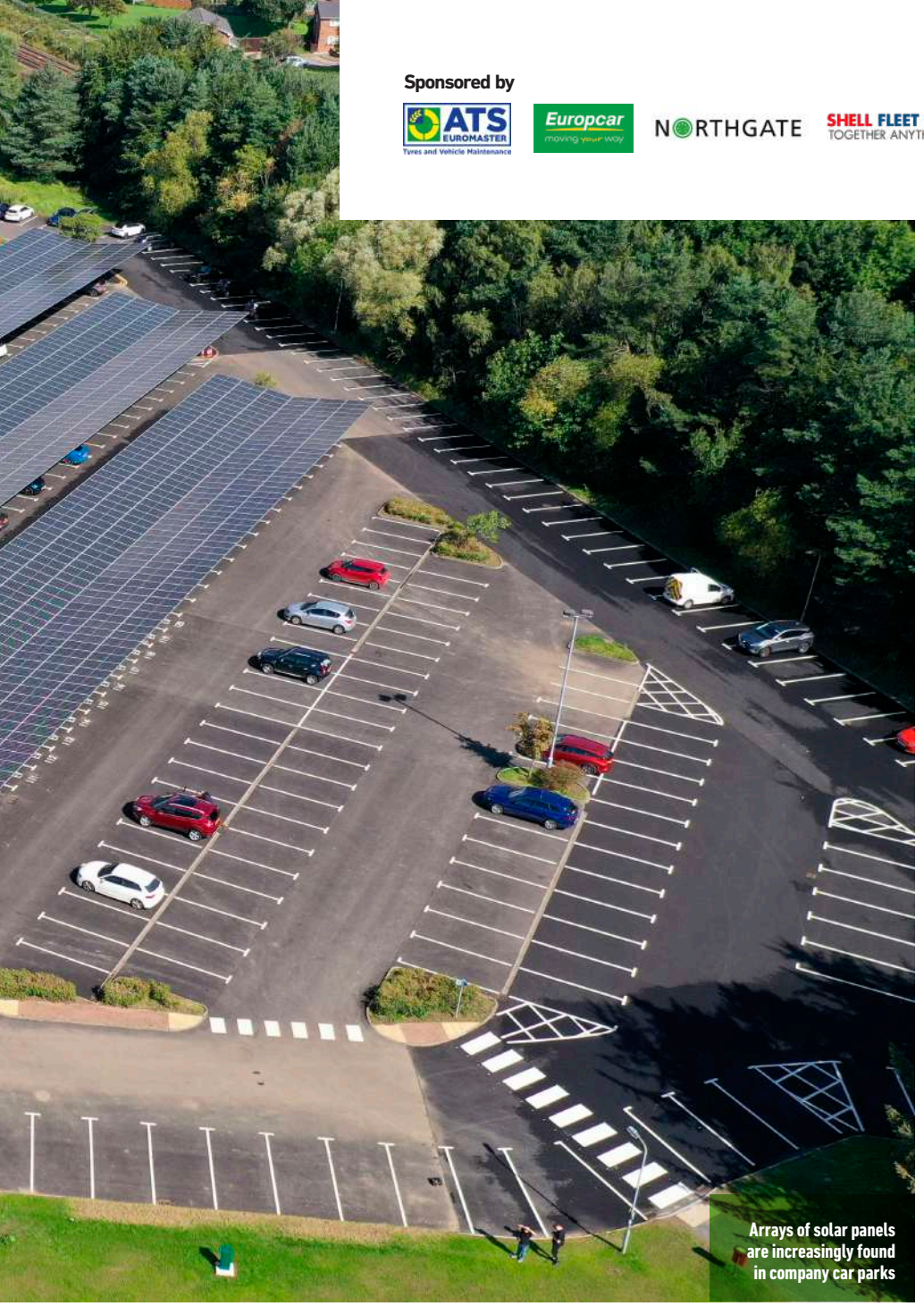
Combining solar arrays with batteries to create a battery energy storage system (BESS) unlocks another level of usability. These act like a reservoir to store electricity generated during quiet times, either from on-site renewables or the grid, and delivers that power during peak periods.

The reason battery storage systems are so useful is down to the intelligent control systems that can solve several problems for businesses, says Matthew Lumsden, founder and CEO of Connected Energy, which is a leading provider of BESS to the fleet and EV charging sectors.

"They can help support a fleet's decarbonisation goals, reduce energy bills and enable fleets to accelerate their electrification plans," he adds.

"This technology is going to become increasingly relevant as fleets move towards mass adoption of EVs."

North Tyneside Council installed a BESS after recognising it would be giving 15% of the energy created by its state-of-the-art solar car port array at its Killingworth site back to the grid.



Arrays of solar panels are increasingly found in company car parks

"In the first three months since installing and commissioning the solar array in February 2023, we generated more than 100,000kW of green energy," says Ian Lillie, strategic facilities manager for North Tyneside Council.

"However, we had to give back more than 20,000kW to the grid because we couldn't store it.

"By using BESS, we can capture that energy and use it to charge our electric vans and, indeed, power the buildings on site overnight.

"And in the winter, we can use it to store energy from the grid on lower tariffs at night, to use during the day.

"The combination of solar and BESS should significantly reduce our electricity bills while also cutting carbon emissions from our energy consumption."

The solar array, installed as part of a multi-million pound project supported by the European Regional Development Fund, is capable of developing 700kW of electricity at peak times, generating around 600,000kWh each year.

The energy will be used to power the building and facilities as well as charge the council's electric vehicles. More than 40 chargers are being installed.

ACCELERATE FLEET ELECTRIFICATION

Installing a BESS can also help accelerate fleet electrification. Numerous organisations face grid capacity issues as in many places the infrastructure to support banks of EV charge points is not sufficient.

One solution is to have a site's connection to the grid upgraded, and although fleets are no longer liable for the potentially huge cost of this due to new Access SCR regulations (see page six), there are long waiting lists for DNO upgrades.

"A BESS can be a much quicker route to the extra power needed to deploy the next wave of EV charging infrastructure," says Lumsden.

He adds it can also aid organisations with 'peak shaving', which is the industry name for reducing spikes in energy demand on the grid.

For fleets, these spikes are increasingly higher due to larger numbers of EV chargers.

This was a key issue for Nottingham City

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Jason Chamberlain, Sales Director, ATS Euromaster

The direction towards fleet decarbonisation is clear, and we would encourage all fleets to accelerate plans to embrace the new electric world of motoring.

Obviously it's easier at the moment for car fleets, but I think this year we will see more commercial vehicle fleets able to start the transition as the choice of vehicle becomes wider and more accessible.

While this change to zero emission fleets is significant in itself, there also needs to be a mindset change in the management of an electric fleet.

This means greater communication between fleets and their drivers about the switch to electric and what to expect.

Hand-in-hand with this is the requirement for driver training and familiarisation, because the driving character of electric vehicles is significantly different. Limiting accident damage during the first few weeks is a vital investment. It's also a good idea for drivers to understand how – and where – to charge vehicles.

Greater consideration also needs to be placed on servicing, with planning for longer service, maintenance and repair lead times until demand and availability of trained workshops is equalised.

So, too, with tyre replacement. Fleet drivers can no longer expect to drop into a fast-fit centre and pick up the set of tyres needed. Because of the wide range of tyres required across ICE and EV vehicles, a centre might not have the correct tyres in stock, which will then require ordering.

So greater maintenance planning will lead to better outcomes and more efficiency in the fleet overall.

To support fleet managers, ATS Euromaster is proud to be sponsoring this feature in *Fleet News*. To see our EV myth-busting facts and how they can benefit you and your journey to electrification please see page 45.

ATS EUROMASTER
Tyres and Vehicle Maintenance

A Connected Energy battery energy storage system, which uses second-life EV batteries to store electricity

Council when it installed a BESS at its fleet depot, which is home to around 20 vehicles.

The depot includes 40 vehicle-to-grid (V2G) bi-directional chargers with three solar arrays to give a combined generation of 176kW. It also has two 300kWh energy storage systems.

"By using intelligently managed BESS and V2G, on-site solar energy can be maximised and the depot will effectively be able to isolate itself from the grid," says Steve Cornes, principal energy projects officer at Nottingham City Council.

"The system will allow us to ensure production costs of electricity will be negligible, allowing us to peak shave so we can avoid high electricity tariffs and give us the opportunity to trade electricity back to the grid."

While many battery storage systems are connected to solar array, they still have many advantages if they are standalone units, including potentially avoiding the need for grid upgrades, and helping with peak shaving.

Used this way, they can also help an organisation reduce its energy bills. The BESS can buy energy from the grid on off-peak tariffs, then provide it to charge points during peak times.

"This becomes even more relevant if those spikes in demand are leading you to exceed your maximum import capacity (MIC)," says Lumsden.

Sometimes also referred to as a kVA allowance, MIC is the limit on how much electricity you can take from the grid. These limits exist because business premises are often on a shared grid connection, so they prevent a depot from using too much power at the expense of its neighbours.

"If you breach your MIC due to too many EVs charging at once, you will face surcharges on your energy bills. In these cases, a BESS can be a cost-effective alternative," adds Lumsden.

SECOND-LIFE BATTERIES

An organisation can further enhance its environmental credentials by installing a BESS which uses second-life batteries.

These often come from EVs which have reached the end of their life with the batteries typically retaining up to 80% of energy storage capabilities.

"Those that are too degraded for second-life applications can be recycled, but analysts estimate this will be a relatively small number – around 15%," says Lumsden.

"The remainder are still robust enough

SWAPPABLE POWERBANK MAY SOLVE CHARGING HEADACHE

A start-up company believes it has created the ideal charging solution for return-to-home electric vans where the driver is unable to charge at their own property.

"We've spent the past 18 months working with some of the UK's largest fleets and found 20% of drivers have to charge their van every day and 45% have to charge every other day," says Philip Clarke, founder and CEO of OnCharge. "If you can't charge at home, it eats into the working day or into your personal life – neither is great for the business or the driver when they lose at least an hour sitting at a public charger."

To counter this, OnCharge has developed a swappable powerbank which can be collected from a hub, used to charge the vehicle while it is parked, and then returned to be charged again.

"To be clear, we don't swap out the traction battery," says Clarke. "This is a scaled-up version of what you already do with your mobile phone: it's a grab and go powerbank when you need it."

The OnCharge unit has a 50kW capacity, and can extend the range of a van by between 120 to more than 200 miles dependent on vehicle efficiency.

It weighs 270kg (about the weight of a full oil drum), although "this will go down" says Clarke, and takes up less than 5% of the available space in the average van.

The powerbank locks into a dock on the bulkhead and uses a simple internal DC charging connection and takes around 90 seconds to load or unload.

Clarke says OnCharge has trialled a prototype system with DPD at its Bicester eco-depot.

"Engineering, construction and facilities fleets are lining up to trial it, and we're gaining OEM support as well," he adds.

Ahead of the charge

Plugging in accident management data supports EV buying decisions for the long-term

The wider supply chain is easy to overlook when moving to an electric vehicle (EV) fleet. There are so many elements to the project that thinking about what might happen if your new EV is in an accident probably feels a long way off.

Here, we look at the implications of vehicle repair for EVs and consider how a strong accident management partner can support your fleet's transition to electric vehicles:

Is the repair industry ready for EV?

Greater EV volumes mean increased demand for their repair. The high voltage system within an EV brings serious safety considerations for anyone involved in recovery, repair or even storage. The right training and equipment are vital.

According to a recent report* from the Institute of the Motor Industry, there are already more than 42,000 EV-trained technicians in the UK, representing around 18% of the total workforce.

This is an impressive figure; however current forecasts still predict an EV skills shortage in the next 10 years.

Callum Langan, sopp+sopp Managing Director, says: "Industry-wide data shows average EV key-to-key times are two days longer than their internal combustion engine (ICE) counterparts, but that doesn't have to be the case.

"At sopp+sopp we've focused on developing UK-wide EV capability in partnership with our repair network. We've also invested in the latest technology and training at our owned Activate Accident Repair sites.

"As a result, we've seen EV key-to-key times reduce by 9% year-on-year, making them slightly lower than similar ICE repairs, while average repair costs remain comparable."

How can your accident management partner support your transition to EV?

Data to inform vehicle buying strategies

As you assess which EV best meets your needs, you'll be calculating the total cost of ownership (TCO). Your accident management partner should be able to provide detailed data to support this calculation.

> We're now in a great position to support fleet partners as they work towards their environmental goals
>
> **Callum Langan, sopp+sopp**

"We work with a range of fleets across all sectors, and that means we have access to a large pool of EV repair data," explains Callum. "To support customers in making the right decisions for their fleets, we can provide trend analysis on specific makes and models, including repair time, cost and parts availability. This rich data allows fleets to make a comparison between current performance with an ICE fleet and the predicted impact of moving to EV. This will help fleet managers to identify which vehicles will deliver cost-effective repairs that minimise vehicle downtime."

Fully prepared to support your EV fleet

Working in partnership with your suppliers as you make the move to EV will support a much smoother transition.

Callum continues: "We're very focused on ensuring we have the right processes and infrastructure in place to support EV fleets.

"We've amended our incident reporting process to include key safety questions for EVs, and developed UK-wide EV coverage for recovery and repair.

"This means we're now in a great position to support fleet partners as they work towards their environmental goals.

"My advice would be to talk to your suppliers as early as possible about your goal to transition to EV. That way they can be fully prepared to support your fleet and may be able to offer useful insight to support the planning process."

*EV Techsafe Technician Forecast, June 2023.

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to be repurposed in another energy storage application."

Market analysts McKinsey estimate than in 2025 there will be 800 million tonnes of EV batteries ending first-life applications. This will increase in the future, mirroring the EV adoption curve.

"The potential for positive environmental impact by reusing as many of these batteries as possible is enormous," says Lumsden.

"In 2025, 800m tonnes amounts to circa 90m MWh of second-life battery capacity. Assuming that even 25% of these batteries are reusable, that could deliver estimated savings of 10,1250m tonnes of CO_2 compared with using first-life batteries.

"We commissioned research which found that our systems can provide a positive carbon benefit of 450tCO2e for every 1MWh installed, compared with a BESS fitted with brand new batteries.

"So, if a fleet is serious about decarbonisation, using second life systems makes much more sense.

"There is a huge potential for this technology to take fleet depots off grid entirely in the future. And there is a neat circularity about batteries from yesterday's EVs helping to power the EVs of tomorrow."

CHARGING ROBOTS TO APPROVE ACCESSIBILITY

Robots which can automatically connect a charger to an electric vehicle and then remove it when the battery is full are being developed.

Earlier this year, Hyundai revealed details of its Automatic Charging Robot (ACR) which, when the EV is parked next to it, communicates with the vehicle to open the charging port, calculating the exact location and angle through a camera mounted inside it.

Once charging is complete, the robot removes the charger, returns it to its rightful place and closes the cover of the vehicle's charging port.

Dong Jin Hyun, head of robotics lab at Hyundai Motor Group, says: "The ACR will help to make charging easier and more convenient, especially in dark environments.

"It will also improve accessibility, particularly for people with mobility barriers, as charging cables become thicker and heavier to enable high-speed charging.

"We will continue developing the ACR for increased safety and more convenience, so that all EV customers can soon benefit from using it at charging stations."

When developing its ACR, Hyundai's robotics lab considered a wide range of variables, such as the parking location of the vehicle, the shape of the charging port, the weather, potential obstacles and weight of the charging cable.

In addition, engineers have installed a safety pole with a built-in sensor around the robot to prevent possible accidents by enabling it to detect stationary and moving obstacles.

Other companies are also developing charging robots, such as Sator Tech. The Chinese company says the technology will become increasingly more important as vehicles become more autonomous and park themselves in locations with car parks such as airports, shopping centres and places of work.

Cars will be able to park themselves and then the robots can charge them up while the driver goes about their business.

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Callum Langan,
Managing Director, sopp+sopp

The race to 2030 may have been extended, but, for the fleet sector, that certainly isn't the only driver behind EV transition.

For many of the fleets we work with, EVs are key to hitting environmental targets and there's a genuine commitment to making the switch.

The main thing now is ensuring that infrastructure and support services match fleet ambitions, and fleet suppliers like sopp+sopp have a big role to play.

We've now worked with several large fleets as they transitioned to EV, and one piece of advice I would give is to get your suppliers on board early.

First and foremost because it will allow them to get ready to support your new electric vehicles more effectively.

Plus, it's likely they'll be able to provide insight to support the planning process. The growth in EVs over the past five years means we now have rich data that enables trend analysis.

For example, as accident management specialists we can provide repair time and cost data for specific makes and models to support far more accurate TCO calculations.

Working in partnership to understand our customers' EV goals has led us to accelerate our own EV strategy. We've increased repair and recovery capability across the UK, driving down EV key-to-key times.

The move to EV involves many different elements; including your suppliers early will remove some of the stress and help to make the transition as smooth as possible.

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FleetNews

AWARDS 2024

Wednesday 13th March 2024
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AUDI: DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF FLEET

Over the next two years, Audi will accelerate its electric transition with the launch of 10 exciting new battery electric vehicles, taking its model line-up to 13. As the UK's market-leading premium brand, Audi has a crucial role to play in helping fleets and their drivers seamlessly switch to electric.

In association with

Audi Electric: making progress personal

Audi aims to collaborate even more closely with fleet partners to address their challenges

With the strength of relationship between fleets and their manufacturer partners becoming ever more crucial as the sector transitions to electric vehicles (EVs), Audi UK National Fleet Sales Manager Lisa Plater has fixed her sights on ensuring Audi is "the brand that customers want to partner with".

It's all part of Audi's pursuit in becoming not just the number one premium brand in true fleet, but the number one true fleet brand, period. So far this year, it is tracking top in premium and, with a 9% share of true fleet, is second overall only behind sister brand Volkswagen.

Appointed National Fleet Sales Manager in 2022, Plater rose through the ranks at Audi, starting 18 years ago as a Local Business Development Manager in the franchised network. She joined Audi UK as an Area Fleet Manager in March 2016, becoming Key Account Manager three years later.

Plater's current role finds her responsible for the teams she used to work with, giving her first-hand insight into the challenges and opportunities they and their customers face.

She is steadfastly both Audi- and customer-focused, describing herself as "equally passionate about both".

"Audi delivers a premium and progressive experience; this is realised at every customer touchpoint and through the exciting range of cars in our portfolio," she says.

"My passion for customers is centred around helping people with their own fleet challenges; it's never boring."

The next two years promise to be an exciting time for Audi as it embarks upon the most radical reinvention of its model line-up ever, with 20 new launches by 2025, half of which will be fully electric.

Change is already coursing through the business. Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) account for an impressive 93% of the true fleet order bank, with diesel at just 2.6%.

"We are seeing a massive transformation with PHEV and BEV," Plater says. "This year, our focus is on being the brand that customers want to partner with.

"It is critical that we understand the needs of our customers and collaborate to provide solutions and build long-term relationships with both our existing customers and with new customers."

She labels it a "back to basics" approach which relies on face-to-face conversations, enabling the team to build a knowledge of their customers' businesses that leads to more tailored fleet solutions, as well as the opportunity to test drive the range.

Audi has utilised roadshows to re-engage the fleet sector over the past couple of years. The Audi Q8 e-tron launch event drew 58 customers and reached 240 key decision-makers, influencers and drivers, for example.

In June, Audi held an all-electric event in three locations for its top 150 customers and leasing companies to present its halo model, the Audi e-tron GT alongside the Audi Q8 e-tron and Audi Q4 e-tron. The same month, it wowed the crowds at Fleet News Company Car In Action, with a relentless stream of test drives carried out on the test tracks at Millbrook Proving Ground.

"It gave customers a chance to see, feel and truly experience our models

"It is critical that we understand the needs of our customers and collaborate to provide solutions and build long-term relationships"

Lisa Plater, Audi UK National Fleet Sales Manager

and enabled us to update them about Audi as a brand and the impressive models we have coming," Plater says.

However, Audi wants to develop deeper relationships with customers and is bringing a much more consultative approach to those conversations.

"We want to be consultative rather than selling and we have tools to support this, such as the total cost of ownership (TCO) tool which our teams can use with customers who aren't yet on the EV path," Plater says.

"We want to be collaborative with customers to support their overarching sustainability strategies and we share our real-life experiences from across the team with blog-style updates about range and charging hints and tips."

It isn't just about offering BEV and PHEV cars, though. Audi has a global target to be net carbon-neutral by 2050 across its entire supply chain. It is assuming responsibility for its employees, the environment and society, making sustainable management an integral part of all decisions and products. This includes carbon-neutral production facilities (Brussels is the first), shifting component transportation from road to rail, recycling scrap aluminium and the use of a sustainability rating to measure the performance of suppliers.

The Audi Q8 e-tron is one of the first models to be certified carbon-neutral, and it's a move that is not going unnoticed among the larger corporates.

Plater says: "We are seeing corporate customers becoming much more interested in the whole lifecycle of the vehicle and what it truly means to be carbon-neutral. Sustainability criteria is being included in more tenders as well."

New initiatives are bringing fleets closer to the Audi business by putting key information at their fingertips, improving both transparency and communications.

'Fleet Gateway', Audi's newly launched dedicated portal, enables customers to see their terms and agreements, access model data and nominate their leasing companies to get automatic updates.

Meanwhile, a restructure of the fleet team last year saw a new Key Account Manager for direct sales appointed to complement the five Area Fleet Managers, 80 Local Business Development Managers (LBDMs) and 20 Corporate Sales Managers in Audi Centres across the country.

They are supported by the relatively new Audi Live Tour, a virtual interactive showroom where an expert gives fleets and drivers a visual walk round the car to demonstrate key vehicle features, such as boot space – courtesy of a stuffed dog and some suitcases! – and how to use the infotainment system.

Live Tour is available at www.audi.co.uk by clicking the red tab. If our Audi experts are not immediately available, drivers can book a virtual tour at a time suitable for them.

"It's a great feature that brings the car to life and adds a human touch," Plater says. "We are exploring with individual customers whether we can use this on a wider scale for model launches or to broadcast to a wider audience such as for a salary sacrifice launch, for example."

Audi is helping to facilitate the fleet transformation to electric by directly addressing one of the biggest concerns: the public charging infrastructure. It has launched the Audi Charging Service which offers access to around 500,000 charging units across 27 European countries, including the UK, all via one card and with one billing process for drivers.

"It helps fleets and their drivers to dip a toe into the charging network without having to register for lots of different apps," Plater says. "We're getting good feedback from customers."

Audi – like all manufacturers – is facing an increasingly congested market with a host of new BEV entrants coming from China over the next couple of years.

Plater is confident Audi is in a strong position to stand out from the crowd thanks to its existing and forthcoming model line-up, and the incredible levels of support offered by the well-established fleet team, LBDMs and aftersales network.

"We aren't complacent, but with our relationships, innovative new products, consultative approach and the support network in sales and aftersales, we're confident we have the strength to withstand competitor activity," she says.

"Audi is all about progress: we want to be the leading provider for sustainable mobility and electric is at the heart of our strategy and offer that point of differentiation to our customers."

In the business of progress.

The fully electric Audi e-tron models.

Together, we can design your business fleet of the future,
audifleetsales@audi.co.uk

Official fuel consumption for the Audi e-tron GT in mpg (l/100km): N/A. CO_2 emissions: 0g/km.

The Audi e-tron GT is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Zero emissions while driving. Model shown is Audi RS e-tron GT. Features optional equipment. Audi RS e-tron GT BIK is 2%.


823 TAS

Wireless-charging taxi trial creates significant fleet interest

Nottingham's pioneering WiCET project saw nine taxis charge while waiting for their next fare, proving the viability of the technology. *Andrew Ryan* reports

A trial in Nottingham which saw a fleet of electric and range-extender taxis wirelessly charge while they were waiting for their next fare has helped generate much interest from fleets in the potential of the technology.

The Wireless Charging of Electric Taxis (WiCET) initiative ran for four months, ending last January.

It saw five 11kW induction charging pads installed in the road surface in the taxi rank in Trent Street, outside the central railway station.

Nine vehicles – five LEVC TXs and four Nissan eNV200 Dynamo taxi conversions – were modified so they could charge when the driver, using the guidance of an HMI screen in the cabin, aligned their vehicle over a ground pad.

The system was able to differentiate between cars thus enabling the appropriate drivers to be billed through a web-based app, meaning the drivers had no need to leave their vehicles during charging.

"The core technology worked very well and there's been high levels of interest in the trial, including from the NHS which is very appreciative of the possibilities for ambulances," says Richard Sander, technical consultant and project manager at Cenex, which led the initiative.

The system used a resonant induction method and the charging area was protected by a 'light curtain' system which, if broken, stopped the charging. The light curtain was very much an element of the innovation trial but will not be included in commercial deployments.

A further system was able to detect foreign metal objects which would heat up if present on the pad during charging.

The wireless charging system achieved 90% power transfer efficiency, which makes it comparable with plug-in chargers.

"The charging facility was aimed at top-up charging rather than being a replacement for plug-in charging," says Sander.

He likens this approach to 'grazing', where the battery is kept at a consistent state of charge instead of running the battery down and then recharging fully.

However, Sander says the drivers in the trial struggled with this concept.

"They didn't really appreciate the opportunity of regular top-up charging, which is something worth thinking about for other potential user groups going forward," he adds.

"Because they were looking at it as a direct replacement for plug-in charging, they saw the 11kW rating as being too low."

However, the data collected in the trial shows that regular topping up on the rank would have been sufficient for the majority of operating duty cycles seen in the daily shifts.

The 11kW power limit was imposed by the technical standard applied as the system was developed. The power level will increase in future, and some systems are already delivering a higher output.

Other findings concluded that the communication 'handshake' sequence, which engages the vehicle to the ground system, was too slow.

"If the system had operated to the ISO 15118-20 vehicle-to-grid communications standard it would have taken around seven seconds to achieve connection from the vehicle overlapping the ground pad," says Sander.

"Even when we worked around the standard, it still took two seconds to make the comms connection and share alignment data. That's a really key learning point."

There were also reliability issues around Wi-Fi dropouts affecting the connection between vehicle and ground systems, while the protection systems were not well suited and adjusted to real-world applications. All these wider system issues will be resolved for commercial deployment.

Overall findings indicated that wireless charging is viable and would have numerous benefits for many fleets, says Sander.

"Some benefits will be very obvious, some less so," he adds. "It's very easy to use once the driver is used to it.

"They drive up, line up and the EV starts charging until they drive away. It avoids having any cables lying around which can get damaged or be trip hazards, so it's perfect for operational working areas.

Taxi drivers can line up over the charging pads with no need to leave their vehicles

"There are not any exposed electrical contacts, so it's well suited to dirty environments; there are no moving mechanical parts, meaning there is less wear and tear.

"There is the potential to deploy it with minimal or no street furniture/hardware on the charging site, and if you can deploy it for top-up charging you could potentially reduce the size and weight of the propulsion battery within the vehicle."

Potential fleet uses include taxis and private hire vehicles, emergency vehicles, autonomous vehicles, depot charging and micromobility solutions, he says.

"There are many commercial sectors where it may be perfect on its own, but it could also be deployed to be complementary to plug-in charging," adds Sander.

"We also know of at least two companies that are working on bi-directional wireless charging, so V2G (vehicle-to-grid) may also be possible."

He says there will be a premium cost for fitment of the system to the vehicle, and to the groundside charging hardware compared with a plug-in system, but, in many use cases, the convenience and operational benefits will easily justify that higher initial investment.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The WiCET trial received £3.4 million funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and Innovate UK. It was managed by Cenex, an independent not-for-profit company involved in the research and development of lower emission transport and energy structure.

Six other organisations were part of the WiCET consortium. Here is how they contributed:

- **Nottingham City Council procured the vehicles, the vehicle and groundside wireless charging assemblies, and associated materials. It also provided trial locations and managed the groundside installations.**
- **Coventry University experts engaged with taxi drivers and other stakeholders to help understand their motivations, behaviours and attitudes to electric vehicles and charging.**
- **Sprint Power developed the interfacing systems to allow the vehicles to be retrofitted with wireless charging technology.**
- **Hangar-19 developed the back office authentication and billing system, as well as developing site controllers to interface with the pads.**
- **Shell Research provided a data analysis team.**
- **Transport for London participated to learn about the technology for potential deployment in the capital.**

Why charging success depends on speed and convenience

As electric company cars and van become more widespread, fleets are demanding rapid and ultra-rapid chargers to minimise downtime and protect productivity

If the first wave of electric vehicle (EV) adoption was characterised by cars with modest ranges that charged at home, the second wave looks very different.

The rapid transition of fleets to electric powertrains is creating a tsunami of electric company cars, capable of longer ranges and faster-charging, with an increasing number driven by employees unable to install a home charger because off-street parking is not available to them.

The result is a surge in demand for convenient, ultra-fast public charging, both close to home and on the road, as drivers undertake longer journeys that require mid trip battery top-ups and charges.

"What we hear from our fleet customers is that they want rapid and ultra-fast charging," said Jens Andersen, Chief Network Officer at bp pulse. "They are on the go, transient, busy, and they want to minimise their downtime. Fleets don't want downtime, it's a cost."

bp pulse is committed to developing its high-speed charging network, already one of the largest in the country, with plans to invest up to £1 billion by the end of the decade to enable the electrification of mobility. An ultra-fast 150kW charger is capable of adding 100 miles of range in around 15 minutes, and around 40% of the bp pulse network is already made up of rapid or ultra-fast charge points, with 70% of the energy being delivered by rapid and ultra-fast chargers.

The focus is on EV charging hubs that serve 'transient' drivers at key infrastructure points and along the UK's strategic road network, as well as city locations where fleets with specific high-speed charging needs, such as ride-hailing companies and last-mile delivery operators, need to top up their batteries in minutes to avoid the lost productivity of downtime.

This requires the construction of charging infrastructure in the right locations where fleets need to charge and with bays large enough for electric light commercial vehicles to use.

As the size of batteries increases and the speed at which they can charge accelerates, so does the demand for ultra-fast charging.

Examples of this are its new location in Kettering, featuring 10 ultra-fast 300kW chargers, equating to 20 150kW charge points. Its new NEC site has 30 150kW charge points, and further hubs have opened this year at Macclesfield, Tamworth, Mansfield and Hull as the company accelerates its nationwide coverage.

"We are working hard to make our bp pulse network available at bp retail sites and we will add hundreds of hubs between now and 2030," said Andersen.

Moreover, by ensuring that all its electricity comes from renewable sources, bp pulse is helping businesses with electric vehicles to shrink their carbon footprints. Last year, bp pulse powered 150 million electric miles in the UK.

Alongside speed and location of charging, the other requirement of EV drivers is for certainty – confidence that there will be a spare charge point when they stop at a charging station, and faith that it will be in service.

"Drivers increasingly want to see more than one charger at a station, so they are asking for hubs where there is a higher degree of certainty that there will be a charger available to them," said Andersen, adding that the bp pulse app can show drivers whether a charge point is vacant or occupied before they arrive.

"And we are working tirelessly to improve the reliability of our existing network, updating, replacing, or removing charge points that are unreliable. We are upgrading our legacy estate and installing the latest technology, and our charger uptime is now around 98%."

Back office systems instantly create alerts if a charge point fails, and bp pulse has its own team of field service engineers to fix faults quickly.

bp pulse also has a dedicated in-house customer care team to help drivers 24/7 who experience any problems when trying to charge.

Supporting fleets transition to EV is at the core of the mobility transition. This requires the provision of the right infrastructure to give confidence.

"The key for us is to work with fleets, understand their driver needs and work to install hubs in places that support them," said Andersen.

"By doing this, there's an opportunity to work together to build capacity and underpin demand. That's what we are looking for – demand partners.

"That's how we already work with our ride-hailing partners, creating bespoke offers to make the transition easy."

Mobility giant Uber has a partnership with bp pulse that includes dedicate charging bays at strategic hubs, giving privileged access to drivers in order to minimise their downtime. These relationships have helped to create a blueprint for how bp pulse can work with fleets to smooth the transition to EV.

"We already work with our partners to give them the best offer available to make sure their drivers come to our network, in terms of location, availability, speed of charging and pricing," said Andersen.

"The key for us is to work with fleets, understand their driver needs and work to install hubs in places that support them"

Jens Andersen, bp pulse

bp pulse expert is also actively seeking partnerships with fleets that have land and locations which could accommodate a charging hub where they live and work, with the possibility that some chargers would be reserved exclusively for the fleet while others are open to the public.

"The speed of charging is becoming more and more important for these kinds of fleet, which is why we are putting in 300kW and 400kW chargers," said Andersen.

Drivers also want access to convenience to grab a drink or some food while charging. bp retail sites already provide a wide-ranging convenience offer to service this need.

In addition, new hubs such as Kettering and NEC also provide a prime example, with being co-located with national coffee chain outlets.

"We want to work with all fleets to forge partnerships, understanding how we can service their requirements, where they need hubs and what kind of services their drivers want," added Andersen.

This becomes a powerful relationship and makes the energy transition feasible for all.

Visit: www.bppulse.co.uk or email: salesdesk@bp.com

bp pulse

Ringtons blends home charging into its EV strategy. Supported by Allstar.

For 115 years, Ringtons Ltd has delivered tea, coffee, and sweet treats door to door to more than 220,000 customers, including cafés, restaurants, hotels, and workplaces around the UK.

With more than 45 million Ringtons drinks produced every week, the beverage specialist is steeped in British tradition. First delivering its goods from a horse and cart, a key distinguisher is its doorstep delivery service, now carried out by its 300-strong fleet.

Comprising of 260 vans and around 40 cars, Ringtons' fleet typically avoids using motorway networks, instead focusing on delivering goods around smaller urban areas, completing low mileage trips. As a carbon neutral business, Ringtons has a focus on consistently improving its environmentally friendly efforts. Bolstering these efforts, the organisation has pledged to convert all vans to electric by 2034.

Challenge: Evolving fleet needs.

Ringtons has utilised Allstar Business Solutions' fuel cards for more than a decade, having initially switched to benefit from its vast network, meaning drivers could refuel almost anywhere. However, like all fleets, Ringtons is now carefully considering its roadmap to a fully electric fleet ahead of the government's 2030 deadline for ending the sale of new ICE vehicles.

The tea and coffee provider therefore integrated electric vans into its fleet, but the question of how to efficiently manage payments for charging these vehicles was soon raised. Ringtons realised that it was not practical or possible for drivers to be only recharging the vehicles when on the road.

The challenge, therefore, was how to effectively manage its mixed fleet of electric vehicles (EVs) and internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles to ensure no impact to the deliveries the drivers were making while also not having any of its drivers out of pocket for refuelling or recharging their work vehicles.

Enter Allstar.

Allstar's combined solution for a mixed fleet.

Following the success of utilising Allstar's fuel cards for its petrol and diesel vehicles, the relationship has gone from strength to strength as Ringtons' needs and its vehicles have evolved. Allstar was able to cater to its changing requirements, adding EV services and charging cards to support the new fleet. The beverage expert adopted the Allstar One Electric fuel card for its EV vehicles in the business's portfolio, before being one of the first to pilot and then integrate Allstar Homecharge to harness the power of home charging to fuel drivers' vehicles for a full day's travel. Allstar Homecharge helps simplify charging at home by accurately paying for drivers' home charging directly to their energy supplier. With one consolidated view through one supplier, Ringtons have complete visibility of home charging and payments across their fleet. As it is hardware agnostic, Homecharge could easily and quickly integrate with the hardware already installed at drivers' homes.

Allstar as the partner of choice.

Stephen Killinger, Operations Manager at Ringtons Ltd, said:

"Allstar is our partner of choice for our mixed fleet as it can support both our traditional vehicles, our EVs and we know it will continue to serve our needs as we continue to evolve long into the future."

An all-electric future.

Looking to the future, Ringtons aims to move away from diesel vehicles as soon as it can and instead have all drivers using EVs. Throughout its transition, it will continue to look to Allstar for tools that will support it, which will include further utilising Allstar Homecharge to ease the recharging process.

Allstar One Electric. Got yours yet?

allstarcard.co.uk

The ultimate circular solution?

Not going to waste – Westminster City Council is powering its 50%-plus electric refuse truck fleet by burning the rubbish it collects. *Andrew Ryan* reports

Westminster City Council has invested £20 million in 45 new fully-electric refuse trucks, the vast majority of which will be charged by burning the waste they collect.

Thirty-eight of the electric vehicles (EVs), which are operated by the local authority's environmental partner Veolia, will be based at its fully-electric depot in Landmann Way, near South Bermondsey.

They will charge their batteries by drawing electricity from the adjacent South East London Combined Heat and Power (SELCHP) facility, which burns waste collected from homes and businesses in Westminster.

The facility creates 265GWh of electricity, supplying enough juice to the grid to power 48,000 homes, and generate heat for a local district heating scheme serving more than 2,800 homes.

More than 50% of the electricity generated by SELCHP qualifies as renewable under the Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO).

It is connected to the depot through a private wire, which enables the facility to charge 54 vehicles simultaneously through a smart charging infrastructure.

This allows the vehicles to charge at non-peak times to maximise local resources and strengthen the grid's resilience.

Each of the 26-tonne electric refuse collection vehicles (eRCV) reduces CO_2 emissions by up to 89% compared with the diesel it replaces, leading to the Landmann Way depot reducing its carbon emissions by 2,000 tonnes each year.

"We've created a really virtuous circle that operates 365 days a year," says Paul Dimoldenberg, cabinet member for city management and air quality at Westminster City Council.

"We collect the rubbish, we burn it and we use electricity from the burning to power our EVs."

The Landmann Way depot has 30 different charging units, the majority of which are dual chargers. It is also home to 16 street collection vehicles, which are smaller electric 'cage' vehicles and e-cargo bikes.

The council will gradually replace its entire 80-strong RCV fleet in the biggest decarbonisation programme of its kind by a UK local authority.

INCREASED EFFICIENCY

"The vehicles based at Landmann Way already took the black bag waste from Westminster residents to the energy facility next door, where it was burned," says Briony Bendle, municipal strategy manager at Veolia.

"We thought about how we could make our operation even more efficient and one way was to build a private wire from the energy recovery facility to the depot itself.

"Essentially, that means the electricity is supplied directly from the plant into the chargers at the depot and therefore into the vehicles, so it creates a circular economy solution.

"What was great is that the SELCHP is an asset

NORTHGATE, HELPING BUSINESSES DRIVE TO ZERO.

As a leading vehicle fleet solutions provider, Northgate is proud of its award-winning, industry leading emission reduction programme, Drive to Zero, which provides customers with a full suite of tools and solutions to aid the transition to electric LCVs.

Decades of meeting customers' fleet mobility needs has shown that when it comes to the process of transitioning to an electric future, supportive solutions are needed across the whole spectrum of fleet management to ensure that business needs are understood and met.

FLEET ANALYSIS

Northgate provides EV industry experts to ensure that it can support businesses, which begins with a thorough assessment of a company's fleet and its suitability for electrification.

Through the interrogation of telematics data, Northgate builds a complete understanding of vehicle needs, movements, distances travelled and journey times, which allows customers to understand which vehicles can be immediately switched to electric without any other considerations. Plus, trial vehicles are also available.

A WIDE CHOICE OF E-LCVS FOR ALL NEEDS

Vehicle choice plays a major part in fleet electrification, and Northgate works closely with existing and emerging OEMs to continually add to our industry-leading range of electric LCVs. including a wide selection of e-LCVs which are ready to go, so manufacturer delays need not become a business hold-up. Technology is evolving rapidly, so being able to swap to the latest models as technology improves is an important consideration for fleets. Northgate's flexible hire packages provide the opportunity to change vehicles without being stuck in long-term, inflexible contracts.

Servicing and maintenance remain key considerations when running EVs, so Northgate has invested heavily in its fully equipped workshops and 67-strong branch network, ensuring that trained EV technicians are employed across the country.

CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

The provision of suitable charging infrastructure is a crucial step to ensuring a smooth transition for any business. Northgate works with leading EV charging installation experts, ChargedEV, which is part of the Redde Northgate Group to ensure that whether a customer needs to consider workplace charging, home charging or even public charging facilities, the best possible solution can be found.

With more than 35,000 charge points installed to date, ChargedEV's specialist engineers will advise customers on every step of the infrastructure journey. Northgate's extensive range of charging solutions are both hardware and energy agnostic, to fit bespoke needs.

E-LCV AND CHARGER BUNDLES

Northgate also offers rental and charging bundles as part of its 12months+ contract. In addition to Northgate's full-service rental proposal and wide choice of vehicles, the bundle includes installation of a 7kw charging unit. The units come with servicing and maintenance included within the monthly bundle price, so it really is a plug-and-play option for businesses.

DEVELOPING A ROBUST TRANSITION PLAN THAT WORKS FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

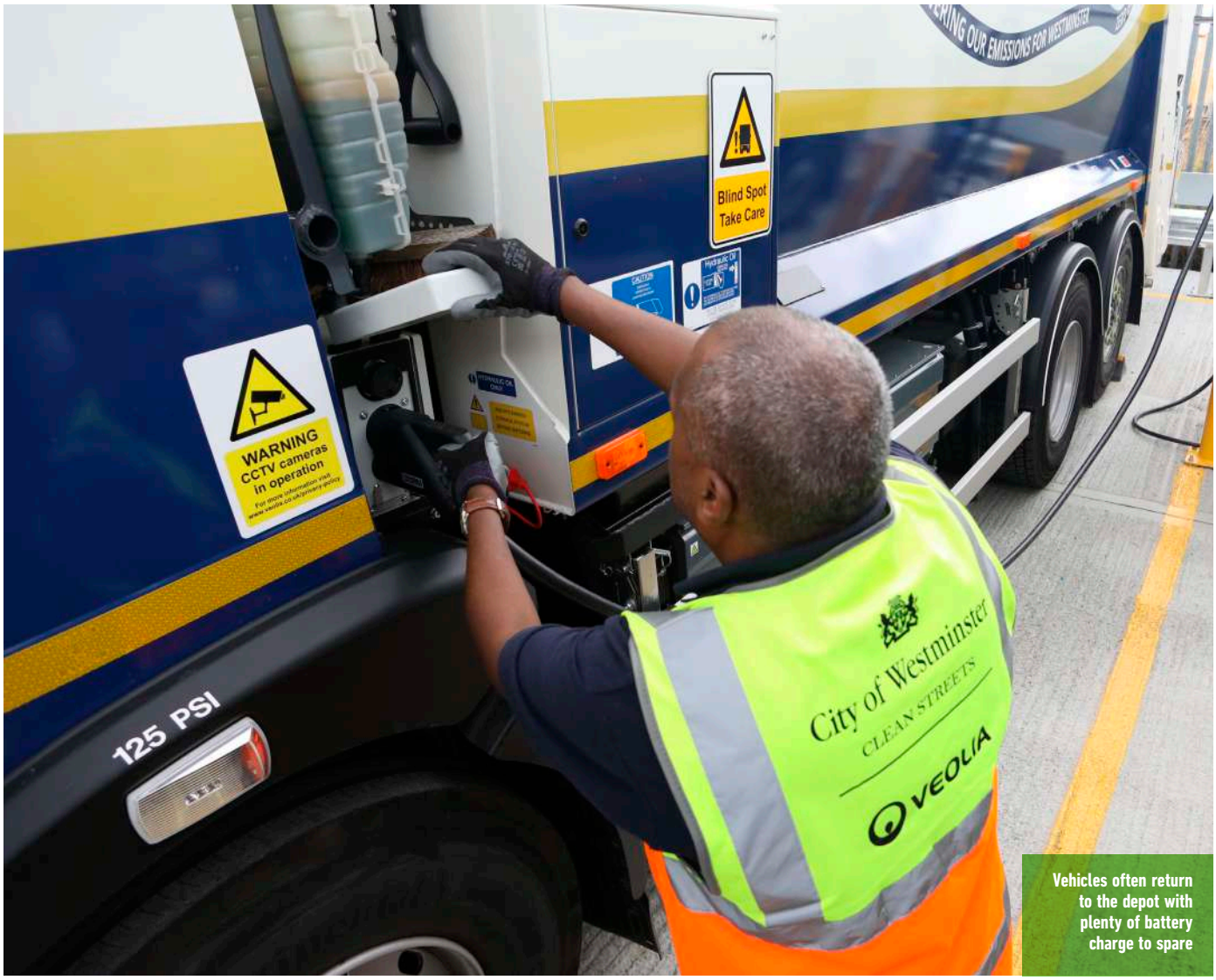
Our proposition is designed to let fleets focus on their business, whilst Northgate focuses on running their vehicles. Rental services offer a flexible approach not available to those who choose traditional contract hire finance.

Northgate's focus is very much on a customers' transition to EVs, working with the support of a team of proven experts to assess every customer's needs including infrastructure, energy and billing and combining these with the most suitable flexible rental package available. With these plans in place, Northgate customers know they can rely on its dependability and flexibility, to ensure that it can support more companies deliver their own Drive to Zero emissions.

FleetNews READER RECOMMENDED 2023

Find out more at www.northgatevehiclehire.co.uk/drive-to-zero or call us on 0330 042 0903

NORTHGATE Vehicle Hire



Vehicles often return to the depot with plenty of battery charge to spare

that was already here, and the black bag waste it takes would otherwise have gone to landfill, so we're just maximising the efficiency of it.

"It also meant we didn't have to do some of the more costly work of connecting to the grid."

The smart charging software used at the depot means the charging load can be balanced with other demands on the electricity grid.

"We're not necessarily charging all the vehicles at once. We're sort of drip feeding them charge sporadically throughout the night, and that means we can draw down on less electricity taken from the plant itself, so it's an efficient solution."

The roots of the electrification initiative began in 2019 when Westminster City Council, in partnership with Veolia, introduced the UK's first fully eRCV in 2019 when it retrofitted an existing vehicle to become zero-emission.

The following year the local authority stepped up its testing by operating the vehicle with heavier cargo loads, evaluating charging capacity, extending driving distances and conducting double shifts: these entailed collections from 6am to 2pm, a brief recharge at the depot for two-to-three hours, and then another eight-hour shift.

In 2021, the council initiated trials of two e-cargo bikes adapted for on-street waste collection. Their electric powertrain helps the rider to manage the added weight of the tipping body and its load.

Their compact size meant they could access pedestrian zones and confined spaces which were not accessible by vans or trucks, while they cab also accommodated a load of up to 150kg. The conventional barrow which was traditionally used in these areas has a 20kg capacity.

Westminster City Council announced it plans to electrify its RCV fleet in 2021.

VALUE OF TRIALS

"We needed the trials to prove an electric fleet would work before allowing a project of this scale to go ahead," adds Bendle.

The transition meant extra care had to be taken to plan the depot so it could house all the infrastructure and vehicles without compromising operations.

"With the infrastructure, you probably need a bit more space for the electric fleet than our diesel one," she says.

"That's why it's taken a while to design the depot to make sure we did it properly and we got the chargers in the right place, with the right cable lengths to get to the vehicles."

The trials also allowed Veolia to become familiar with the vehicles as well as developing a close working relationship the eRCV manufacturer Dennis Eagle, as improvements were made along the way to ensure they were fit for purpose.

The trucks have a range of about 80 miles, while their daily duty cycles are typically between 50 and 60 miles.

"They are coming back with quite a bit of battery left, so they more than cover what is needed. Part of the efficiency of the initiative is that the depot is right next door to where they tip, so they don't have far to travel after that," says Bendle.

"From an operational perspective, the eRCVs have been only really beneficial. The waste they collect is exactly the same and the drivers have been very positive about the new vehicles."

Dimoldenberg adds: "It's real win-win. Our drivers used to experience really noisy cabs, but I was in one of the vehicles earlier and the noisiest thing is the sound of the air conditioning, not the engine.

"Now they can go home having done a day's work, not with a headache, enjoying the rest of their day.

"Outside, the vehicles are also much quieter than the diesel ones, if not silent, and are working either early morning or sometimes late at night, typically in the West End, so residents aren't woken up early or kept awake late at night. It's a really beneficial move right across the board."

Breaking down silos to provide seamless mobility solutions

Changing fleet demand is challenging the operating models and product ranges of rental and leasing companies, and creating demand for one-stop-shop IT platforms

The fleet sector is on the cusp of seismic change as businesses seek greater flexibility in the ways they move their employees and goods. To meet this demand, the products and services available from rental and leasing companies are converging. Leasing companies are developing car subscriptions and shorter-term products more akin to rental, while rental companies are offering flexible lease solutions, alongside self-service car clubs.

This structural shift in mobility from vehicle ownership to vehicle-as-a-service is underpinned by a powerful sustainability philosophy that a switch to electric powertrains cannot satisfy. Switching to battery power neither combats congestion nor protects irreplaceable natural resources if vehicle numbers and traffic volumes remain the same.


Biswajit Kundu Roy, CEO, Coastr

"Our vision is to help the sector to decarbonise," said Biswajit Kundu Roy, Chief Executive Officer, Coastr, a technology company that specialises in mobility and travel.

"There are 2.4 billion cars in the world, yet only 6% are fully utilised. If we can increase the utilisation of existing assets, we will be in a much better position to shrink carbon footprints and tackle climate change. There is a pressing need for shared mobility solutions to become mainstream, which will not only benefit the environment, but also result in a net reduction of CO_2 emissions. A single shared car can remove 11 private vehicles and 13.2 metric tons of CO_2 annually."

This is easier said than done, with operational structures and fragmented, legacy IT systems preventing leasing and rental fleets from exploiting the full potential of the vehicles on their books. OEMs, too, are failing to exploit the abundant mobility opportunities presented by their dealership networks.

As a result, businesses have pools of cars, vans and trucks sitting in silos dedicated to rental, subscription, sharing or flexi-lease, without the capacity to reallocate vehicles from one sector to another to meet shifting customer demand.

"Rental companies, typically, run car clubs as a separate business with its own fleet, so there is no seamless sharing of vehicles between the two offerings. This leads to a loss of utilisation and also means that customers have to sign up to two different companies to use these services," said Biswajit.

"And leasing companies normally operate three-to-five-year leases, plus most also have a rental business as well as a flexi-lease fleet, but they never share their leasing fleet even if it becomes available through, for example, early terminations or new stock that they cannot place, because their business processes and technologies are very siloed."

Vehicle manufacturers are already investing in new distribution channels that offer customers a 'vehicle-as-a-service', but are missing the essential link required to capitalise on the geographic and fleet strengths of their dealerships in order to create a nationwide offering.

To overcome these artificial internal barriers, Coastr has developed a shared mobility platform capable of joining up all the different rental, leasing and OEM distribution models, so companies can seamlessly re-use vehicles from one part of their business in another. This turnkey solution recognises that rental, subscription and leasing are all fundamentally similar forms of asset sharing that require similar underlying processes.

"Our technology helps to remove the silos

A software ecosystem powering the fleet of the future

in their operating model for greater sharing of fleet and resources to enable faster access to a 'shared vehicle' on demand by their customers," said Biswajit. "This provides an integrated way for the mobility provider to offer a vehicle as a service, while simultaneously maximising utilisation of existing assets."

Coastr's platform deploys connected mobility solutions and artificial intelligence (AI) to digitise end-to-end mobility and fleet operations. This ensures that every booking is based on the real-time availability of a vehicle. Biswajit calls this 'smart scheduling', with Coastr able to auto-allocate vehicles as bookings are made.

The digitising of the entire ecosystem also provides a fast and convenient way for end user customers to access a vehicle via Coastr's online booking solutions and keyless entry.

The company's connected vehicle capabilities mean it can track and unlock vehicles from 34 OEMs without the need to install black box telematics devices.

This same keyless functionality is finding a ready audience among organisations that run pool cars, enabling internal departments to reserve vehicles and drivers to access them without the administrative headache of managing keys and booking forms.

"We are also working on a pilot on an industrial estate, where a few businesses use rental vehicles, exploring how can we release capacity so that when those vehicles are not in use, a closed user group could share them," said Biswajit.

Importantly, Coastr's solutions extend beyond immediate booking and fleet management, with its software integrating with other key third party services and solutions, such as Stripe for payments, Sage and Xero for accountancy, EPYX for service and maintenance connectivity, the Embedded DVLA and Credas for customer KYC for vehicle records and licence checking, and Willis Towers Watson for usage-based insurance and enhanced risk management.

"Our full stack technology platform is designed to provide all core operational capabilities under one roof, streamlining fleet operations and driving automation and efficiency," said Biswajit.

Moreover, the data collected by the platform gives rental and leasing companies, as well as OEMs, insight into the demand trends that are impacting their businesses, allowing them to make meaningful interventions, which would be much more difficult if their products and fleets were constrained by corporate structures stuck in silos.

And while the introduction of new IT infrastructure might encounter corporate inertia in some businesses, Biswajit insists that many more appreciate the pace of change and agility that Coastr brings to new integrations. He described the systems as intuitive and easy to use, immediately familiar to anyone who has worked in the rental and leasing industries, and added that Coastr provides full training and support, during and beyond installation. Case studies report that rental fleets of about 100 vehicles have implemented a full Coastr solution in a week, and a fleet of 500-to-1,000 vehicles should achieve the transition in four-to-six weeks.

Biswajit emphasised that clients are partners, rather than customers, helping to determine the roadmap for new releases, and he highlighted the marketing support, social media advice and SEO consultancy that accompanies a Coastr integration to help businesses maximise the opportunities of a fully digitised one-stop-shop platform.

"Our goal is to create an integrated mobility ecosystem, powered by cutting-edge technology, to make shared mobility more accessible to the masses, ultimately driving towards a greener and sustainable mobility industry," he said.

Zenith
Intelligent Vehicle Solutions

THE FUTURE OF e-LCVS

ZENITH'S BLUEPRINT FOR SUSTAINABLE FLEET TRANSITION

The shift towards electric light commercial vehicles (e-LCVs) isn't just a trend; it's the future. As the world leans into a greener tomorrow, businesses face a clear choice: adapt swiftly or risk falling behind. Zenith stands at the forefront of this revolution, offering unparalleled expertise and solutions for businesses ready to embrace the electric shift.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Transitioning to e-LCVs offers businesses a dual advantage: environmental responsibility and significant economic opportunity. Zenith's holistic approach ensures that businesses don't just adapt to this change but thrive. From in-depth vehicle and journey assessments to infrastructure planning and energy solutions, we craft a tailored, cost-effective plan that aligns with your ambitions.

EXPERT CONSULTANCY: BEYOND JUST VEHICLES

The future of fleet management extends beyond just choosing the right vehicles. Zenith's team of specialists delve deep, advising on everything from funding options and policy design to alternative fuel strategies and optimised energy solutions. Our expertise ensures that you're not just adapting to the future; you're shaping it.

INNOVATION TAILORED FOR COMMERCIAL NEEDS

Zenith's commitment goes beyond traditional leasing. We're at the cutting edge, ensuring our clients have access to the newest, cleanest, and safest e-LCV technologies. Whether it's exploring alternative fuels, partnering with emerging vehicle manufacturers, or devising efficient charging solutions, Zenith ensures businesses are always ahead of the curve.

A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Our accredited net zero plans to 2050 ensure that as we support the decarbonisation of your fleet, we're also reducing our own carbon footprint. Our green financing and carbon financing solutions further underscore our commitment to a sustainable future.

DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY FOR E-LCV TRANSITION

Utilising market-leading analytics, we provide a comprehensive review of your fleet's needs, from driver behaviour to energy consumption. This meticulous, data-driven approach ensures our e-LCV transition plans, spanning 3 to 10 years, are perfectly aligned with your business objectives.

MAXIMISING GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES

Navigating the landscape of government incentives can be complex. Zenith simplifies this, ensuring businesses can make the most of schemes like workplace charging and understand the evolving tax landscape. Our active participation in influential groups like the BVRLA and Logistics UK ensures we're not just keeping up with industry changes; we're helping to drive them.

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Fleet News in partnership with Zenith | **18 October 2023**

Many car makes are now capable of meeting SBS's range goal of 250 miles

SBS cuts emissions and collisions with its transition to an electric fleet

Smith Brothers Stores has made dramatic progress over the past three years in electrifying its vehicles. *Jonathan Manning* reports

The official published environmental policy of Smith Brothers Stores (SBS) leaves no room for misunderstanding in its declaration that "the business is committed to protecting the climate by reducing our energy usage and CO_2 emissions wherever possible".

The fast-growing supplier of heating, ventilation and air conditioning products has its transport operations in its climate-focused crosshairs, alongside a whole business focus on its offices, warehouses and 19 branches, which range in location from Dundee to Southampton.

Operating cars, light commercial vehicles (LCVs) and heavy-duty trucks, the company is exploring all opportunities to decarbonise, while investing heavily in its second generation of workplace charge points for its electric vehicles (EVs).

"Our customers tend to be tradesmen so we do a lot of same day and next day deliveries, as well as a distribution centre from where we move items to all of our branches around the country," says Andrew Teer, national transport operations manager at SBS.

He joined the business just before Covid-19 delayed SBS's initial plan to start transitioning its diesel car fleet to plug-in hybrid models.

The postponement presented Teer with the opportunity to secure board-level backing for a complete electrification programme, and the project started in September 2020, offering company car drivers the choice of either a battery electric vehicle (BEV) or a hybrid (PHEV) with CO_2 emissions below a 50g/km threshold.

SBS views the recruitment and retention value of company cars as a priority to attract "the best employees in the industry", says Teer, so the initial choice of entry level, low emission vehicles was impressive – the Tesla Model 3 or BMW 330e.

WIDER CHOICE

"Originally, we set a minimum WLTP range of 250 miles and the Tesla was the only car to do that, with the additional advantage of the Tesla Supercharger network," adds Teer.

"But now, while 250 miles is still stipulated in our fleet policy, most of the electric car market is capable of this range so the choice is quite open. However, drivers still seem to be trying to go for the best range they can possibly get."

Step up a grade, and drivers can have a Tesla Model Y or BMW i4, the appeal of these benchmark cars designed to exceed more standard models at the same level.

"Drivers can choose a higher valuation vehicle above their car level entitlement if it's all-electric, because it's supporting our electrification and environmental programme," says Teer.

SBS's 125-strong car fleet is growing and, with a brisk three-year holding period, its emissions have dropped rapidly.

The company no longer operates any all-petrol or diesel cars – BEVs account for about two-thirds of its fleet, with PHEVs making up the remainder.

BMWs feature prominently on the SBS choice list

And the balance will tip further in favour of battery power this month when a further 25 cars will be replaced, virtually all of them by pure-electric models.

This investment in the electrification programme is substantial (SBS leases its vehicles from an internal group leasing company), but proving cost-effective.

National insurance contributions (NICs) for the fleet have fallen by about £80,000 per year, residual values have outperformed those of internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, and the company's road risk exposure has improved dramatically.

"Our accident rates have plummeted, which we think may be due to the additional ADAS (advanced driver assistance system) technologies that EVs have on them," says Teer.

"This has brought cheaper premiums as well as bursaries to support us continuing to specify these technologies."

CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE

Establishing a charging eco-system for the SBS fleet has demanded a significant investment and, after little more than three years, SBS is already upgrading its workplace chargers from 'dumb' hardware to ChargedEV's easee 22kW AC smart chargers.

The chargers have actually been downrated to 11kW both because few cars can AC charge at 22kW, as well as to manage the electricity load.

"All of our new chargers have to have back office capabilities. We have a portal that lets me do things remotely, like soft and hard resets or the release of cables," says Teer.

"The new chargers are also installed on a fully-maintained basis, including annual inspections that our insurers require, and, if there's a physical problem, an engineer will attend. There's been much better uptime."

For electric mileage reimbursement, SBS offers its drivers two alternatives.

The company will either pay for all workplace and public charging, or contribute £850 towards the cost of installing a home charger, although drivers cannot then claim mileage.

The company also stipulates drivers must leave home with at least 60% charge in their car batteries, to avoid charging time eating into productivity.

Asked what he has learned over the past three years that would have been useful to know at the outset of SBS's electrification journey, Teer immediately refers to securing sufficient power supply to its premises to support EV charging.

"It would have been good to understand more about DNOs (Distribution Network Operators), power capacity and getting electricity to buildings," he says.

"And we would not have chosen 22kW chargers because we are never drawing power at that capacity."

COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

Confident that SBS's car fleet is well on course to transition to battery electric before the Government's original 2030 deadline (for the sales of new ICE vehicles to stop), his attention is now turning to the company's light and heavy commercial vehicles.

"All of our light commercial vehicles are chassis cabs, rather than off-the-shelf panel vans, and not many manufacturers are making electric chassis cabs," says Teer.

"But Ford has a long wheelbase Transit genuinely capable of doing 150-180 miles, which we can start introducing on local routes where journeys are more about time than distance.

"We want to be in a position where our whole LCV fleet has transitioned to non-diesel by 2035.

"We couldn't do it now because the vehicles are not there, but if ranges get a lot better, or hydrogen arrives, we will see what we can do."

The HGV fleet will follow, with a target of 2040, although even trials of battery-powered heavy-duty trucks are proving to be expensive due to the tens of thousands of pounds required to install a high-capacity charger.

As a FORS Gold operator, SBS is committed to improve its sustainability and reach net zero emissions by 2050, but Teer believes progress could be much quicker.

"After all, five or six years ago I would never have said we would be looking at an all-electric car fleet by now," he says.

EVs are a whole new world, but with many of the same considerations

Jason Chamberlain, Commercial Director at ATS Euromaster, unveils how his company was quick to appreciate the need for specialist EV servicing training

The amount of service, maintenance and repair (SMR) work that electric vehicles (EVs) require is not fully understood yet. There are certainly far fewer moving parts on EVs and no requirement to change oil either, for example. So that all suggests much cheaper SMR.

From what we see going through our ATS Euromaster workshops, we would certainly agree. What we have found, though, is that there's an upward cost on tyre replacements and a whole host of things for a busy fleet manager to consider.

The feeling is that more EVs in the future will start life with specific EV tyres fitted as original equipment and, although it's always recommended to change tyres like-for-like where possible, as this will offer the best vehicle performance, this isn't mandatory.

Tyres built specifically for battery-powered vehicles will vary by manufacturer. Some will have a special structure to support the additional weight of the battery, lower rolling resistance to increase battery range and reduced decibel ratings to match the quietness of electric travel. What is important when it comes to replacement is that the correct tyre size and load ratings for the vehicle are used, no matter which product is selected.

Getting the maintenance booked in

While the difference in costs might be debatable, access to qualified workshops to fulfil work on EVs is not: there are fewer outlets available and even fewer that are qualified to work on EVs.

There are a combination of factors at work here. From workshops closing to a lack of trained staff putting additional pressure on workshop availability.

Jason Chamberlain, Commercial Director at ATS Euromaster

> We're seeing increased demand for servicing in our workshops, especially as fleets start to crank up the mileage again now lockdown is in the past

For instance, we're seeing increased demand for servicing in our workshops, especially as fleets start to crank up the mileage again now lockdown is in the past.

But what's also important to consider is whether staff are qualified to work on electric vehicles, because not every workshop has fully qualified staff – and this can add to waiting times.

At ATS we identified this early on and created an internal training programme called Safe Systems of Work, which all starters attend which is also accompanied by level 1 EV and hybrid training. It provides the groundwork for technicians to carry out the majority of tasks that fleets require before they progress to level 2 standard.

Many of our centres can now carry out more advanced tasks from steering and suspension work, servicing and brake work on top of MOTs and replacing tyres.

It's vital for fleet managers with electric cars on fleet to start thinking in advance about how to ensure vehicles are kept mobile.

Using fleet management software to predict, in advance, when EVs are going to need servicing and get the vehicles booked in ahead of schedule can be one way of doing this. This way, fleets can keep vehicles on the road rather than waiting for a centre slot to become available.

We're all still learning about EVs and how it is changing fleet management, but what we do know is that workshop time is under ever increasing pressure. So, plan in advance – and don't let your fleet become a VOR (vehicle off road) casualty.

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business.atseuromaster.co.uk/car-van/lp

dealerauction
Remarketing Services

Understanding Digital Remarketing: Speed, Efficiency, and Control.

Digital remarketing is revolutionising the way fleets are disposing of vehicles they no longer want to retain. This modern approach to remarketing offers speed, efficiency and control. In this Q&A article, we delve into the world of digital remarketing with Damien Smith, OEM and Fleet Account Director from Dealer Auction, to understand what makes it different and how it's benefiting fleets.

Why is remarketing an important consideration for fleets?

Remarketing is the main way fleets dispose of vehicles they no longer want to retain and is an important generator of revenue. Although some fleets market their disposal vehicles directly, the majority of vehicles are sold to the trade via physical, online or digital auction. Many fleets opt to outsource this task together with the associated vehicle processing and admin jobs. With competition for retail stock amongst both franchised and independent dealers strong, auctions tend to perform well for sellers. The key is striking the right balance between cost, time and the sale value achieved.

How do online and digital auctions differ?

We define online as being where a physical sale is open to remote buyers via a computer or mobile device. The format of these sales vary but, in most cases, online auctions simply offer remote access into a physical world. This means the experience for the online buyer is invariably compromised. Digital is where the auction is specifically designed for the user experience. In our case, that means a slick and enjoyable interface, smart filters and instant alerts that make finding suitable vehicles a doddle, and real-time data that buyers can use to guide their decisions. It also means access to more vehicles from multiple sources 24/7, and rather than waiting for a sale event, vehicles are on sale the moment they're ready. This all combines to bring a great, engaged buyer base to the platform which in turn creates a buoyant marketplace that supports the sellers by increasing speed of sale and performance.

"Digital is where the auction is specifically designed for the user experience."

Doesn't digital mean more work for the seller?

Historically, digital auctions saw the seller retain responsibility for preparing their vehicles for sale, uploading them to the platform and dealing with the buyer post-sale. But that's changed. Sellers can now handover these tasks to Dealer Auction, exactly as they would with a physical auction partner. We introduced this service because vendors told us their only barrier to switching to a digital platform is their ability to self-serve the physical elements. They know that going digital makes commercial sense but their size, volume of sales and operational models typically stop them making the change. So, we now offer the option to outsource these tasks to Dealer Auction Remarketing Services. It gives sellers the best of both worlds: all the benefits of a high-performing digital marketplace but with the convenience of a complete collection and processing service.

How does Dealer Auction Remarketing Services work?

We have partnered with a respected and established specialist with a nationwide network for the physical elements. Stock is collected and taken to a secure site where it's photographed, appraised and listed on the platform. Our system and API feeds eliminate the need for manual processing, and where needed, we can aggregate stock from multiple locations into a single listing process. Listings can be ready to go live the moment they're available or at a specific time, and can be placed on a same day, 'buy it now' or timed auction basis. We also analyse thousands of similar vehicles previously sold, to recommend the best reserve and start price, optimising the listing to attract maximum bids. Once sold, the buyer either collects or can arrange delivery.

Does going digital improve performance?

Yes, in several ways. Firstly, stock sells quickly on Dealer Auction – it takes 2.9 days on average. The option to have stock on sale the moment it's processed, instead of waiting for the 'next sale' as you would traditionally, means faster

"Stock sells quickly on Dealer Auction – it takes 2.9 days on average."

returns. That minimises depreciation impact and supports cashflow. In some cases, it can also mean beating a book drop and retaining precious margin. Next, we put vehicles in front of not just more buyers, but the right buyers: we know the vehicles our 5,000 buyers want and those that will sell well in their locality. The 25,000 stock alerts we send out every day means they're always informed. Alternatively, we can set up closed networks that prioritise selected buyers. We also add Auto Trader Retail Rating data to every listing. Combined, this means that buyers not only know the moment a vehicle that fits their profile is available, but they also have all the data they need to make quick decisions and confident bids. This translates into consistently strong CAP performance.

You mention closed networks. What are they and why might I consider one?

Within Dealer Auction, we can set up invitation-only networks that allow sellers to promote their stock to an exclusive group of buyers either instead of, or ahead of, the open market. We call these 'closed networks'. These were originally created for OEMs and their captive finance houses as a way of giving their franchised networks first refusal on their stock. Many have subsequently evolved to add in stock from third party fleets. This is a win-win for all sides; the vendor is assured of fast and profitable sales; the manufacturer gets to feed their network retailers more quality stock; and the buyer gets access to the stock they most want ahead of the competition. With API feeds, they're straightforward to set up. We are also helping fleet operators with established customer bases reward their loyalty while providing a better, more efficient and fairer means of viewing and bidding on stock. We also work with several defleet and auction service providers to aggregate stock in one central place for buyers to purchase.

This all sounds interesting. Let's sum up.

Sure thing! There're just three things to remember:

1. Digital remarketing reduces the time taken to process and sell a vehicle. The average vehicle on Dealer Auction sells in just 2.9 days.
2. Thanks to the always-on nature, rich data insights and stock alerts, it also offers superior price performance to traditional auction formats.
3. It's no longer just for those who are able to self-serve. With Dealer Auction Remarketing Services, that barrier is no longer there. Digital remarketing can be enjoyed by any vendor, whatever their size, volume of sales or operational model.

Damien Smith
OEM and Fleet Account Director

To learn more, visit **dealerauction.co.uk/remarketing-services**

AWARDS 2024 TIMELINE

AWARDS DEADLINE:	JUDGING DAYS...	SUPPLIER:	CARS/VANS:	TRUCKS:	FLEET INTERVIEWS:	FINALISTS REVEALED:	AWARDS NIGHT:
November 24, 2023		January 23	January 24	January 25	February 1-2	mid-February 2024 on www.fleetnews.co.uk	March 13, 2024 Grosvenor House Hotel

FleetNews AWARDS 2024

BOOST YOUR BUSINESS PROFILE AND ELEVATE YOUR OWN REPUTATION

Enter the Fleet News Awards 2024 to promote all that's great about your fleet, vehicles or services

The Fleet News Awards is back with new categories and new opportunities for fleets, manufacturers and suppliers to enjoy the huge benefits that go with winning and being shortlisted.

Entries for the 2024 awards are now open. This is your chance to enjoy the "indescribable" moment of being named as a winner, according to Matt Hammond, fleet director at Altrad Services and the fleet & transport manager 2023.

"Winning fleet & transport manager of the year was by far the biggest and most prestigious achievement of my career," Hammond said.

"Receiving it in front of so many of my peers, friends and colleagues and enjoying the celebrations with the other award winners on the night is an experience I will remember and cherish for many years."

Like Hammond, you can boost your business and personal profile and credibility, as well improve team motivation. All it takes is half an hour of your time!

Among the new categories are converter of the year and EV breakthrough of the year for vans. In addition, the fleet categories now incorporate a section focusing on staff wellbeing which last year was a separate award.

Judges will be looking for examples of quality, innovation and evidence of improvements in each of the fleet, manufacturer, supplier and headline categories.

Audited by Brian Cooper of EY and chaired by Christopher Macgowan OBE, the Fleet News Awards has the outstanding credentials and credibility to make entering worthwhile.

"Getting the recognition of all the hard work that you put in to run your fleet day-to-day from people that really understand the industry is an amazing feeling and gives the team a brilliant and well-deserved boost. And getting an insight into the amazing work that other industry-leading fleets are doing differently really encourages you to keep pushing for better."

Denise Hawkins, fleet manager, Stannah Management Services

7 BENEFITS OF ENTERING AWARDS

1. CREDIBILITY AND RECOGNITION OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE
2. PERSONAL RECOGNITION; CAREER-ENHANCING
3. BENCHMARKING VERSUS COMPETITORS
4. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION
5. FREE MARKETING FROM POSITIVE PRESS COVERAGE
6. INCREASED CUSTOMER AWARENESS
7. ATTRACT TALENT TO THE BUSINESS

THE CATEGORIES

FLEET AWARDS

Excellence in Fleet Safety and Compliance
2023 winner: M Group Services Plant & Fleet Solutions

Environmental Fleet of the Year
2023 winner: Ovo Energy

Most Improved Fleet Operator
sponsored by Fleet Operations
2023 winner: Miele Company

Fleet of the Year – up to 250 vehicles
2023 winner: Univar Solutions UK
sponsored by Herd Group

Fleet of the Year – 251-1,000 vehicles
sponsored by Northgate
2023 winner: Stannah Management Services

Fleet of the Year – more than 1,000 vehicles
sponsored by Kinto
2023 winner: Mitie

SUPPLIER AWARDS

Leasing Company of the Year – up to 20,000 vehicles
sponsored by Aston Barclay
2023 winner: SG Fleet UK

Leasing Company of the Year – more than 20,000 vehicles
sponsored by Jaama
2023 winner: Zenith Vehicles

Rental Company of the Year
sponsored by Grosvenor Group
2023 winner: Enterprise

Outstanding New Product of the Year
2023 winner: EV ChargeSafe Data subscription
sponsored by System Edström

Fleet Dealer of the Year
2023 winner: Johnsons Fleet Services

EV Charge Point Operator of the Year
2023 winner: Gridserve

Converter of the Year NEW

MANUFACTURER AWARDS

Vans
Best Small Van
2023 winner: Toyota Proace City

Best Medium Van
2023 winner: Toyota Proace

Best Large Van
2023 winner: Mercedes-Benz Sprinter

Best All-terrain Workhorse
2023 winner: Isuzu D-Max

Trucks
Best Rigid Truck – up to 12 tonnes
2023 winner: Daf LF

Best Rigid Truck – more than 12 tonnes
2023 winner: Daf XD

Cars *sponsored by Ogilvie Fleet*
Best Lower Medium Car
2023 winner: Kia Niro

Best Compact SUV
2023 winner: Peugeot 2008

Best Mid-size SUV
2023 winner: BMW X1/iX1

Best Premium Car
2023 winner: BMW i4

Best Executive Car
2023 winner: Genesis GV70

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

sponsored by Zenith

Electric Car Breakthrough of the Year NEW

Electric Van Breakthrough of the Year NEW

Ultra-low Emission Truck of the Year
2023 winner: Scana P Series CNG/LNG

Most Improved Fleet Manufacturer of the Year
2023 winner: Genesis Motor UK

HEADLINE AWARDS

Fleet Supplier of the Year
2023 winner: Kwik Fit (GB)

Fleet Manufacturer of the Year – Car
Reader Voted
2023 winner: BMW UK

Fleet Manufacturer of the Year – Van
Reader Voted
2023 winner: Ford Pro

Fleet Manufacturer of the Year – Truck
Reader Voted
2023 winner: Daf Trucks UK

Fleet/Transport Manager of the Year
sponsored by Reflex Vehicle Hire
2023 winner: Matt Hammond, Altrad Services

Fleet News Hall of Fame
2023 winner: Steve Winter

To enter the awards, head to the website now: fleetnewsawards.com

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for all vankind

EVs coming soon

Key electric models that will be coming to fleet choice lists in the coming months

AUDI Q6 E-TRON

Available: **to be confirmed**
Range: **to be confirmed**

The Audi Q6 e-tron is the first model to use the newly developed Premium Platform Electric (PPE). This technology platform, which is jointly developed by Audi and Porsche, is designed exclusively for electric vehicles.

It will underpin a wide range of new models in the mid-size and luxury segments, including the A4, A6 and A8. The battery size and wheelbase of PPE vehicles are also scalable.

Audi will unveil a production version of the Q6 e-tron, which will sit between its current Q4 and Q8 models, before the end of the year. It is expected to go on sale in early 2024.

The car features a new interior layout for the brand, utilising three screens and new infotainment software.

BMW i5

Available: **Winter**
Range: **362 miles**

The electric BMW 5 Series will become a reality this year, filling the gap between the i4 and i7 models.

Sales are set to start in October, when company car drivers will be able to order the eDrive40 variant and a range-topping M60 model. An estate version will follow in 2024.

BMW has kept the i5's finer details a secret, for now, but it's anticipated that the eDrive40 will use the same powertrain and battery as the same derivative in the i4 line-up. So, expect an 83.9kWh battery pack and a 340PS motor driving the rear wheels. The car is said to have a 362-mile range and the ability to charge from 10% to 80% in less than 30 minutes.

A new Highway Assistant feature, borrowed from the new 7 Series, will provide hands-off assisted motorway driving and automated lane changing. Rear-wheel steering will enhance driveability.

Prices are expected to start at around £70,000.

BYD SEAL

Available: **November**
Range: **354 miles**

The Seal is a Tesla Model 3 rival that joins BYD's existing Atto 3 and Dolphin models in the UK.

There is choice of two powertrains. The single-motor car has 313PS and a range of 354 miles (WLTP). The twin-motor car has 530PS and a range of 323 miles. It is equipped with an 82.5kWh battery.

Charging speeds of 11kW AC and 150kW DC are possible.

A 15.6-inch rotating infotainment screen sits in the centre of the dashboard and incorporates voice control and 4G connectivity.

BYD says the Seal will comfortably seat five adults and offers a 400-litre boot capacity.

Plugging into an electric future

David Bushnell, Director of Consultancy and Strategy, Fleet Operations, examines some of the key areas businesses must get right on their road to zero.

The electrification of transport is fast gathering pace. Little wonder with an impending ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans; with manufacturers set to be mandated on the percentage of electric vehicles (EVs) they sell in the UK; and a nationwide roll-out of clean air zones.

But for fleets, regulation isn't the only call to action. Faced with a cost of business squeeze, EVs can mean lower running, operational and maintenance outlay.

The transition, however, has to be viewed as an exercise in change management.

Careful planning is needed to ensure cost-savings are maximised and business disruption is minimised. Where businesses lack the requisite knowledge and expertise in-house, the services of a fleet management specialist can prove invaluable.

The cost dilemma

Although the market is starting to see new entrants providing EVs at lower entry price points, purchase and lease costs for EVs remain significantly higher than for their petrol or diesel counterparts.

By calculating the vehicle's total cost of ownership (TCO) however – taking all areas of spend into account – a more

persuasive business case for electrification can be made. EVs have a lower cost per mile and, because they have fewer moving parts, maintenance bills also tend to be lower.

Favourable benefit-in-kind (BIK) rates for EVs – currently just 2% rising to 5% by tax year 2027/28 – have also significantly reduced the cost of EVs for both employees and employers alike. Employees save money on their income tax and for the employer, Corporation Tax and NIC savings are made.

To help make EVs even more accessible, fleets should consider categorising them on choice lists by their TCO, rather than their lease costs, which allows the higher lease costs to be offset by lower NIC, Corporation Tax savings and energy costs.

Powering up

Charging infrastructure and availability should be integral to any cost-benefit analysis. This includes the scale of local public provision, the potential for charging stations to be installed at drivers' homes, whether chargers are needed at business premises, how many and the extent to which they can be accommodated.

Remember that the Government offers grants up to 75% of the purchase and installation of charge points under its Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS).

Charging strategies should also be established to minimise energy costs, while optimising day-to-day performance and productivity.

An EV charging policy should encourage cost-effective charging practices, such as charging when energy tariffs are most favourable and when stops for other purposes have already been planned into the working day.

Furthermore, drivers should be made aware of on-site charging procedures, along with the company's processes for reimbursing charging expenses.

Automated systems can help here, reducing the administrative burden of dealing with multiple fuel types.

Fleets should bear in mind that although a switch to EVs is unlikely to call for complete fleet policy rewrites, revisions will need to be made where required.

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CUPRA TAVASCAN

Available: Early 2024
Range: 321 or 341 miles

The Tavascan will be Cupra's second fully electric model, joining the Born in its line-up.

Its sharp looks mirror those of the concept model, first revealed in 2019. The production version carries over the coupé silhouette and aggressive front end design.

The interior architecture is also new for the brand, with a large T-shaped central console giving a wraparound cockpit-style feel to the driver.

Based on the Volkswagen Group's MEB platform, the Tavascan will be available with two power outputs. A single motor variant, using VW Group's newest electric powertrain, delivers 286PS, while a dual motor all-wheel drive version – known as VZ – produces 340PS.

Cupra says the Tavascan VZ can reach 31mph in just 2.4 seconds and 62mph in 5.6 seconds.

All variants use a 77kWh battery, providing a range of around 341 miles for the single motor and 321 miles for the dual motor variant. An additional 62 miles of range can be added in as little as seven minutes, using a rapid charger. The battery can be charged from 10% to 80% in just less than half an hour using a 135kW charging point.

FORD EXPLORER

Available: Summer 2024
Range: 218, 305 or 335 miles

The Explorer will join Ford's growing electric line-up as part of its partnership with VW Group, using the same underpinnings as the VW ID4.

Ford has started taking pre-orders for the car, with first deliveries commencing in the middle of next year. Prices will start at around £40,000.

The Explorer will offer three powertrain options, closely mirroring those offered in the ID4. The entry-level single motor rear-wheel drive model produces 170PS and has a range of 218 miles from its 55kWh (52kWh useable) battery.

A larger 82kWh (77kWh useable) battery extends the range to 335 miles and boosts power to 286PS.

At the top of the range, a twin motor set-up is available with the larger battery. It produces 340PS and has a range of 305 miles.

Ford has given the Explorer its own body and interior, setting it apart visually from the VW. The Explorer is shorter and lower than its counterpart, with a slightly smaller 450-litre boot.

On the inside, a large portrait infotainment screen runs Ford's SYNCMove software. The digital instrument display and gear selector appear to be a carry over from the VW.

DACIA SPRING

Available: Early 2024
Range: 136-143 or 190 miles

Dacia will introduce the Spring to the UK market next year. It is expected to be the cheapest electric car available, with prices set to start at less than £20,000.

As a budget-friendly model, the Spring features plastic body cladding and a simplistic interior.

The car has been on sale in Europe since 2021, but will be given an overhaul before it hits the UK.

Currently offered with a 45PS or a 65PS electric motor powertrain and a 26.8kWh battery, the Spring has a range of 136-143 miles (WLTP) and up to 190 miles of city driving.

It has not been confirmed whether the same powertrain options will be offered in the UK.

HONDA E:NY1

Available: January 2024
Range: 256 miles

Honda will start taking orders for the all-new e:Ny1 electric SUV in late October. The car will be priced from £44,995.

It's the first car to be built on Honda's all-new front-wheel drive e:N Architecture F platform.

The e:Ny1 is a visual twin to the current Honda HR-V and will compete in the same segment.

It has a range of 256 miles (WLTP) from its 68.8kWh battery. The electric motor in the e:Ny1 develops 204PS and 310Nm, enabling a 0-62mph acceleration time of 7.6 seconds.

The car will come with a complimentary five-year Care Package, which includes servicing, warranty and Europe-wide roadside assistance.

The journey to zero

Switching a fleet from petrol and diesel vehicles to low- and zero-emissions models may tick the sustainability box, but how can businesses make that switch when cashflow and supply chains are so unstable?

There are many priorities fighting for space at the top of the list today and some of them conflict: cut costs, but also replace the existing fleet with expensive, newer models, for example.

Europcar research recently showed that the introduction of low- and zero-emissions vehicles is on the minds of more than half of the businesses surveyed.

As published in a report, '*Switching sustainability from buzzword to business benefit*', 52% already have some fully electric vehicles (EVs) on fleet; 54% have hybrids. However, very few can afford to make a wholesale switch to electric right now. Instead, many are employing a transitional strategy of reducing emissions through cutting journeys and utilising alternative transport methods, alongside testing new powertrains.

This approach will become ever more important as current fleet vehicles age. More than half of respondents to the Europcar study stated that the average age of vehicles on their fleet is three-four years. This is potentially hampering their ability to meet emissions targets, as well as presenting a very real cost concern when it comes to complying with the growing number of Clean Air Zones (CAZs) emerging in UK cities.

"Rental really does make sense to test electric motoring in real world conditions"

Mark Newberry, Europcar UK Commercial Director

Removing roadblocks

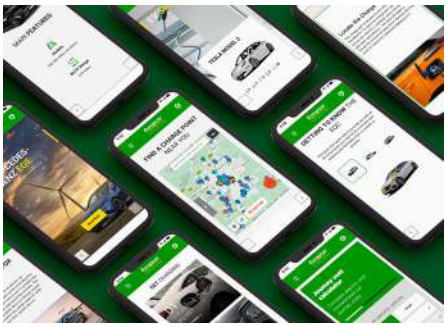
As well as the initial cost to purchase new hybrid or EVs, the study found multiple stumbling blocks holding organisations back from making the switch.

Challenges include a lack of understanding around the maintenance and running costs of EVs, concerns around the charging infrastructure, a lack of finance to purchase or lease low- or zero-emissions vehicles and resistance from individual employees and the wider business. A try-before-you-buy solution could help remove many of these barriers and open the way for greener fleets to become a reality in more businesses.

Gaining the knowledge

To support motorists on the journey, Europcar has launched a new digital guide to electric motoring.

The free Europcar EV Guide comprises a digital showroom outlining the features and benefits of each electric vehicle on the Europcar fleet.



Also, as the first major rental provider to partner with Zapmap, an EV charging and journey cost calculator tool enables customers to find more than 40,000 charge points across the UK & Ireland to suit their charging needs. From rapid and destination charging to overnight charging, this will deliver extremely valuable support to reduce range and charger anxiety for new as well as experienced EV drivers.

Rental, for a few days, weeks or months, really does make sense to test electric motoring in real world conditions.

And the easily digestible information and interactive digital tools in the new Europcar EV Guide will help motorists get familiar with accessing, personalising and driving their rental vehicle beyond the personal handover at the start of the journey.

The Europcar EV Guide is available at electric.europcar.co.uk

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FIAT 600E

Available: **Q1 2024**
Range: **250 miles**

The 600e replaces Fiat's existing 500X compact SUV, offering similar proportions and practicality, but with an electric powertrain.

A 54kWh battery gives the car a 250-mile range, while rapid charging capability (100kW) enables a top-up to 80% in less than half an hour.

Distinctive styling links the model to the smaller 500e, while both feature similar interior architecture. The 600e's powertrain develops 156PS.

It's priced from £32,995, with ordering to start in October. The first models will arrive in the UK in early 2024.

MINI COOPER ELECTRIC

Available: **Spring 2024**
Range: **190 or 250 miles**

Mini will start deliveries of the all-new Cooper Electric in spring 2024. The car will replace the existing Mini Hatch.

Prices start from £30,000 and the Mini has a range of up to 250 miles.

It retains an iconic shape, but integrates new flush-fit door handles and a new, wider tailgate that incorporates the rear lights.

There's a new central infotainment screen that incorporates the instrument cluster and climate controls

Two variants will be offered, E and SE. The Cooper E is equipped with a 40.7kWh battery, which provides up to 190 miles of range. It uses a 184PS electric motor and can accelerate from zero to 62mph in 7.3 seconds.

The Cooper SE has a larger 54.2kWh battery, which gives a 250-mile range. It also features a more powerful electric motor, developing 218PS/330Nm, and can hit 62mph from rest in 6.7 seconds.

KIA EV9

Available: **late 2023**
Range: **336 miles**

The Kia EV9 will go on sale towards the end of the year and will join the EV6 as Kia's second electric car to use a dedicated platform.

It will use a 100kW battery, giving a range of up 336 miles and the ability to add almost 150 miles worth of range in 15 minutes.

There will be a single motor variant that produces 204PS and a twin motor model with 385PS.

The car has a bold, boxy design that puts the focus on maximising interior space and passenger comfort. Its long wheelbase, low beltline and completely flat floor facilitates the creation of generous space for occupants in all three rows of seats. It is offered in six- and seven-seat formats.

OMODA 5

Available: **Mid-2024**
Range: **280 miles (est)**

Omoda, a subsidiary of China's largest car manufacturer Chery Group, has confirmed that it will launch the 5 SUV in the UK next year.

The Omoda 5 blends styling cues from the Cupra Formentor, MG 4 and Nissan Ariya. Its dashboard appears to be heavily influenced by the Kia EV6, with a pair of conjoined 10.25-inch screens and a row of touch-sensitive quick keys.

No official specification for the UK-bound EV has been released, but Omoda did present the car at the Shanghai motor show in May.

The brand outlined a 61kWh battery pack with a 280-mile range, a 224PS power output and a 10%-80% charging time of around 35 minutes.

ORA SALOON

Available: **Q1 2024**
Range: **300 miles (est)**

Ora's yet-to-be-named electric saloon car will be the Chinese brand's second model to launch in the UK.

The newcomer is expected to go on sale in Q1 2024, with specifications, pricing and name due to be announced in the coming months. In other markets it's known as the 'Lightning Cat'.

Pricing and specification are said be "competitive" with brands such as Tesla, Hyundai and Kia.

GWM Ora said the vehicle will have an electric range of around 300 miles (WLTP) and offer two-wheel drive and all-wheel drive powertrain options. In China it uses an 82kWh battery.

A potent model with 400PS with 680Nm of torque, resulting in a 0-62mph time of just more than 4.4 seconds, is also on the cards.

It shares the same retro styling as GWM Ora's first model to launch in the UK, the Funky Cat.

RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH

Available: **Spring 2024**
Range: **260 or 379 miles**

Renault will revive the Scenic will next year as an electric SUV. The new Scenic E-Tech shares its underpinnings with the Mégane E-Tech and promises a range of almost 380 miles.

Based on Renault's latest CMF-EV platform, it promises a spacious interior, agile handling and a Google-powered infotainment system.

Two powertrain configurations are available. The Standard Range uses a 170PS motor and 60kWh battery pack, giving a range of around 260 miles (pending WLTP verification). The Long Range model features an 87kWh battery, paired with a 220PS motor. It gives a estimated range of 379 miles.

The Scenic E-Tech doesn't bear a drastic resemblance to its Mégane stable-mate, with a more angular design and distinctive front-end treatment.

The boot offers 545 litres of space, which is about the same as a VW ID4.

TESLA MODEL 3 FACELIFT

Available: **Early 2024**
Range: **318 or 391 miles**

The updated Model 3 is due to arrive in the UK next year. It benefits from a sharper look, longer range and improved refinement. A refreshed front-end is the most noticeable change, with the sleeker profile to improve aerodynamics.

The car retains its uncluttered cabin layout and glass roof. Tesla has removed the indicator and wiper stalks from the steering column and integrated them into the steering wheel controls. Higher-grade materials are now used inside, giving a more premium feel to the car. Tesla has also introduced ventilated front seats and customisable ambient lighting.

The powertrains from the Model 3 have been carried over to the new model. Initially, there will be choice of rear-wheel drive and long-range AWD variants.

Both now offer longer ranges than before. The rear-wheel drive can cover 318 miles (WLTP) between charges, while the long-range AWD manages 391.

VOLVO EX30

Available: **Early 2024**
Range: **298 miles**

The new EX30 is the smallest Volvo available and is expected to become one of its best-selling models. Prices start at £33,795. Orders are being accepted now and first deliveries are expected in Q1 2024.

The car is based on a new platform from Volvo's parent company Geely, which is shared with the new Smart #1.

The EX30 has seating for five and a boot volume of 318 litres. There's also a small storage compartment under the bonnet for the charging cables.

A minimalist interior sees all the car's functions controlled via a central touchscreen. Volvo has also integrated the car's instruments into the display.

The EX30 will come with three different powertrain options: a Single Motor version with 272PS and a 51kWh battery; a Single Motor Extended Range with 272PS and a 69kWh battery; and a Twin Motor Performance with 428PS and a 69kWh battery. Ranges of 212, 298 and 268 respectively apply.

VW ID7

Available: **Early 2024**
Range: **382 or 438 miles**

VW will expand its ID line-up this autumn with the launch of the ID7, a large fastback that maximises space and range.

At more than five metres long the ID7 will be similar in size to the BMW i5 and sit above the Arteon in VW's range.

The car will be offered with a 77kWh battery, providing a range of 382 miles, and an 86kWh unit that gives a claimed range of 438 miles.

A new electric motor will power the ID7's rear wheels, providing 286PS. A more potent all-wheel drive GTX variant is also on the cards.

The ID7 has a plusher interior than other VW ID models, although the dashboard is still largely centred around a touchscreen display with no physical switchgear.

Prices are expected to start at around £50,000 when the new model opens for ordering later this year.


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