ELECTRIC FLEET

There's plenty of support available to help with the transition to electric vehicles

INSIDE

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HELP IS ON HAND TO HELP Transition to

Fleet decision-makers feeling swamped by adding the challenge of electrification to their already demanding jobs can find plenty of support within the industry. *Andrew Ryan* looks at the key questions to consider

A successful fleet decision-maker has always needed a diverse skillset, with responsibilities including being an expert in safety, driver management, procurement, cost and data analysis to name just a few.

These demands have only increased with the growing electrification of fleets: nearly two-thirds (66%) of Fleet200 businesses earlier this year pinpointed it as one of their major focuses.

Widespread unfamiliarity with the technology means fleet decision-makers have often become the in-house electric vehicle (EV) expert within their organisation, putting them on a steep learning curve.

At the same time they have also had to learn about – and deal with – many new challenges, such as identifying how EVs can be included on their fleet, as well as ensuring there is sufficient charging infrastructure to keep them running.

"Behind any smooth and efficient transition is a well-trained and resourced fleet manager," says Alfonso Martinez, managing director of LeasePlan UK. "They are the backbone of the company fleet, and in most workplaces are considered the go-to person for all matters related to EVs.

"This means they are the first port of call whenever anyone has any questions or issues.

"The trouble is that while they may be EV champions, many fleet managers feel like they lack the sufficient expertise to advise their team with confidence."

A recent LeasePlan survey of 200 fleets found nine out of 10 respondents said they were expected to be the EV expert within their business, but almost one-in-three did not feel they have the knowledge to fully advise their drivers on EVs.

One-in-four (24%) said they would benefit from further training around EVs. When asked what kind of training they would most benefit from, the most common answers were 'how to maximise a battery range' (53%) and 'how to carry out vehicle checks' (53%).

This was followed by 'EV charging' (51%), 'key differences between EV and ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles' (40%) and 'health and safety' (30%).

"Our research reveals a significant knowledge gap around EVs within fleet teams," adds Martinez.

"This is something that businesses urgently

FLEETS MANAGE EVs

need to address, as a successful transition towards a zero-emission fleet requires the right expertise and support to be in place."

Fortunately for fleet decision-makers, plenty of support, information and advice is available from multiple sources.

Many leasing companies offer EV consultancy services, while there is also a number of new entries in the fleet sector with energy companies including E.On, Scottish Power and Drax offering similar solutions.

Independent organisations such as the Energy Saving Trust and Cenex can also be useful sources of expertise and advice, while industry body the Association for Fleet Professionals (AFP) has launched training courses designed at helping businesses transition to EVs.

Its first one, 'Making the switch to EVs', is a four-hour long online course. "As far as we are aware, this is the first training course designed to help businesses make the transition in a structured and informed fashion," says AFP chair Paul Hollick.

"The content taps into experience from right across the AFP and, we are sure, will help anyone planning on adding EVs to their fleet soon which means, in our experience, just about everyone."

AFP has followed this up by developing a course aimed at organisations transitioning to electric light commercial vehicle fleets.

Comprehensive information on fleet electrification is also available through articles in *Fleet News* and on fleetnews.co.uk, particularly in its dedicated Electric Fleet section, as well as through a number of *Fleet News* events.

These include regular round tables which give fleets the opportunity to share best practice and experiences with their peers, webinars and the Fleet 200 Executive Club.

This is a group of the most influential fleets operating in the UK and produces research on key fleet trends.

It also organises events which bring together fleet decision-makers to debate the issues of importance to their businesses, such as electric vehicles, share ideas on new initiatives and industry developments, as well as hear from expert speakers.

As part of our ambition to help support fleets make the transition to EVs, over the next 28 pages we talk to a number of decision-makers with fleets of varying sizes and vehicle mixes at differing stages of their electrification journeys.

These provide real-life examples of how fleets have faced and overcome any challenges, as well as their successes.

Later on in the section, we also look at the key electric vehicles which are being launched in the coming months.

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SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Dan Joyce, fleet director, Kwik Fit (GB) Ltd

Mass-adoption of EVs among our customers' fleets is here and will only increase as we approach 2030.

With attention focused primarily on battery range, charging infrastructure and taxation, the tyre requirements of EVs have flown somewhat under the radar. In addition, many fleet managers are looking forward to significant changes in the wider maintenance requirements for EVs, with fewer replacement parts at the point of service and other factors such as regenerative braking systems delaying brake part replacement. However, not every garage will be ready to work on EVs to a safe and accredited industry standard. It is important that fleets look at these factors when selecting a partner for tyres and SMR.

Kwik Fit has been working with our partners to plan for tyre replacement by ensuring that the correct and specific tyre stock is available in advance in our distribution network and across our centres. While not all EVs require specific tyres, for some popular marques the availability is currently limited to the OE specification. Homologated tyre requirements for electric vehicles represent one of the biggest changes to the tyre replacement market in over a decade. Having the right tyre, in the right place at the right time has never been so important.

Forward planning for demand is key in order to maximise fleet performance and reduce costs. We will continue to utilise the strength of our network, our market leading tyre availability, distribution, and knowledge to help support fleets, and their drivers, seamlessly transition to electric vehicles.

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Sureserve transitions to an ELECTRIC FLEET

Waiting for the right vehicles and technology is a cornerstone of the company's approach to adopting EVs. *Andrew Ryan* reports

Reducing its impact on the environment has long been a focus of Sureserve Group, with a variety of actions having been undertaken in the past including the installation of solar panels at offices, replacing office lighting with energy-efficient LEDs and working to eliminate single-use plastics.

Its fleet operation has a key part to play in this ambition. Part of this has been to use the smallest, most efficient commercial vehicles which are suitable to perform their jobs.

Over the past few years, Sureserve Group has continued to replace its existing fleet with Euro 6-compliant vehicles, with 93% of its vans currently meeting those emission standards.

It has now begun its electrification journey by taking delivery of its first 30 battery electric Citroën e-Dispatch vans in June, along with more than 20 electric cars.

"We have always sought to manage our fleet of commercial and company vehicles to the most efficient standards available, and the addition of the e-Dispatch vans will start the next stage in our journey towards a greener and more economical fleet," says Dean Williams, group fleet manager at Sureserve Group, which has more than 1,700 vehicles.

"As well as the environmental value in using zero-emissions vehicles, we are encouraged by the potential cost savings, and, with fewer moving parts, there's less requirement for servicing, maintenance and repairs."

Sureserve Group has been looking at EVs since the first commercial electric vehicle became available on the market, says Williams.

"The range then was around 50 to 60 miles and we had to look at whether it really suited our purpose," he adds.

"We crunched all the numbers, we looked at the cost of the vehicle, and just felt it wasn't the right time and wouldn't meet our operational requirements."

TRAINING IS VITAL

To help smooth the transition to EVs, Sureserve Group has introduced an online driver training course focusing on the technology through its internal Sureserve Group Academy, which holds internal training on topics such as manual handling and health and safety. The new course gives employees an overview of the technology, best practice advice on areas such as efficient driving, charging and the Electric Juice Network. It also outlines the difference between driving an ICE vehicle and an EV, such as the automatic gearbox, different instrument panels and charging infrastructure.

Since then, the capabilities of electric vans have improved massively with greater range and payloads, and this has allowed Sureserve Group to take on its first batch of fully-electric vehicles.

The drivers who are operating them were selected following analysis of telematics data, looking at how far its vans were driven. Across the group, the average daily mileage is 70 miles.

"In addition to this, as part of our weekly vehicle checks through our FleetCheck mobile app, we've been asking who has access to private parking overnight," says Williams – a key point given Sureserve Group drivers take their vehicles home at night.

"By cross-referencing those two pieces of information, we have been able to build a picture as to what our quick wins were. Who can we get into EVs first?

"I remember hearing a conversation with somebody on a webinar saying 'don't try to tackle the whole project in one go, just do it in bite-sized chunks', and I thought that was very good advice."

MIX OF DRIVING STYLES

The initial 30 EVs are being operated by a mix of engineers and supervisory staff to spread the understanding of the technology, while Williams says the drivers selected also offer a blend of different driving styles – "some are more urban, some are more motorway driving".

This variety will allow Sureserve Group to gain data which it can use as it adds more EVs to its fleet; it already has more on order and expects to take delivery of these at the beginning of next year.

To help its employees charge their vehicles, Sureserve Group has partnered with Octopus Energy to supply drivers with Ohme intelligent home chargers and smart energy tariffs as part of a three-year agreement, which would see it transition 600 vehicles to electric over that period.

"Installations are now well under way at people's homes and we also now have installed chargers at some of our work premises as well," says Williams.

"As part of the package, all the drivers have been given a card for Octopus's Electric Juice public charging network, and that gives them access to multiple suppliers across the UK. That number is growing as well.

"But the emphasis really is on charging the vehicles at home overnight because not only is it the most efficient way, but it avoids any downtime for the engineers throughout the working day as well."

Through the partnership, Octopus is offering Sureserve Group's drivers a bespoke domestic tariff which they can switch to if they choose.

"This will massively reduce not only the cost of charging the EV overnight, but all of their own electricity costs as well," adds Williams.

"The device we're installing allows the driver to plug in when they get home in the evening and set how much charge they need in that vehicle so they are ready for the next day.

"The device automatically identifies the cheapest or best time to pull that energy from the grid."

> "THE FEEDBACK FROM THE DRIVERS ON THE CARS AND COMMERCIALS HAS BEEN POSITIVE"
>
> **DEAN WILLIAMS, SURESERVE**

DRIVERS NOT OUT OF POCKET

Octopus's fleet dashboard platform consolidates the cost of charging on workplace, home and public chargers, and the cost of charging is billed directly back to Sureserve Group.

"The line-by-line transactions mean, through the dashboard, we can monitor our savings, usage and efficiencies, while we are also able to compare what the journeys would cost in ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles so you can compare the savings and the efficiencies of running EVs."

Sureserve Group has also created an EV feedback form for the drivers through its FleetCheck app to allow them to give insight into what their experience of the charger installation was like and their experience of driving an EV.

"The feedback we receive from the drivers is sent back to Octopus and to myself to review and any actions are dealt with," says Williams.

"So far, the feedback from the drivers both on the cars and commercials has been really positive," he adds.

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ELECTRIC FLEET CASE STUDY:
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Hull heads for ZERO EMISSIONS

The city council is accelerating its electrification plans as it aims to be carbon-neutral by 2030. *Jonathan Manning* reports

Tucked into the region with the highest greenhouse gas emissions in the UK, Hull City Council (HCC) doesn't have to look far for reminders of the urgent need to cut carbon emissions.

On its doorstep are the docks and heavy industry of Grimsby, Goole, Immingham and Hull, the giant steelworks of Scunthorpe, plus two oil refineries.

While most of these heavy emitters lie outside the council's area, it is looking forensically at its own environmental performance.

HCC declared a climate emergency in 2019, produced a climate change strategy in 2020 and has set itself the goal of being carbon-neutral by 2030, an aim that puts its fleet in the crosshairs.

The majority of its vehicles are diesel-powered, but the topography of the local authority makes it an ideal location for electrification, says Adam Fowler, senior decarbonisation management officer (transport) at HCC.

The authority covers about 25 square miles and the average annual mileage of its vehicles is less than 7,000 miles.

"Geographically, we almost resemble a London borough – we're virtually all inner city, we have a very small footprint, and from one end of the area to the other measures only eight miles," says Fowler.

Add into the mix the fact the city is flat and has a speed limit of just 30mph on all roads, apart from two which rise to 40mph, and all the ingredients are present for battery efficiency.

"We believe we have a duty to show how straightforward it is to decarbonise for certain scenarios and applications," says Fowler.

The council has a fleet of about 330 cars, vans, buses and trucks supporting a range of services across the city including refuse collection, parks, parking, adult and children services as well as bereavement services and public transport.

It has already replaced about 10% of its fleet with electric vehicles (EVs), and every time a diesel model in the sub-three tonnes sector comes up for replacement, an EV replaces it; typically, a Renault Kangoo ZE, Peugeot e-Expert or Nissan Leaf.

But there is no early termination of diesel models, and no automatic replacement of vehicles – part of the council's fleet environmental agenda is to assess whether its service users still require a vehicle and, if so, whether one which is under-utilised could be redeployed as a replacement, avoiding the cost and carbon footprint of a new one.

50 EVs BY END OF FINANCIAL YEAR

Nevertheless, HCC is planning for all its light vehicles to be electric by 2025, and expects to have 50 EVs on its fleet by the end of this financial year.

To support its requirements, it is installing charge points at two locations in the city – the fleet depot and a council-owned city centre multi-storey car park – as well as a handful of satellite sites.

"We've installed 7kW chargers; our vehicles go back to the depot at 5pm and an overnight charge works well for our users," says Fowler. "We've analysed how the fleet is used and very few vehicles will even need charging each day."

These lower kilowatt chargers have avoided costly

grid upgrades and HCC is paying detailed attention to future-proofing both its sites and its investment in chargers.

"We have experts going in to measure if there will be any power restraints, not just in the next 12 months, but through to 2030," says Fowler.

"We are also recabling some sites even if we're not putting a charge point in yet, so we won't have to dig up the car park again. We're also looking at our asset management strategy – are vehicles based at sites that might not be there in three or four years' time, and, if so, where will they be used and where do we need to install cabling or connectors?

"We don't want to make investment cases that we will regret in five or 10 years' time."

The council currently has 30 chargers, maintained on a service agreement with Swarco, and accessed by drivers via vehicle-specific fobs that allow the council to track where vehicles are being charged and how much power is being drawn.

This data will be vital for decisions about where to site future charge points.

Its next challenge is to develop a policy for HCC staff to use workplace chargers for their own privately-owned EVs, particularly employees who do not have off-street parking where they could install a domestic charger.

HCC leases its vehicles from Kingstown Works Ltd (KWL), a company that is owned by the council, but operates at arm's length. Monthly lease rentals for EVs are higher than for diesel equivalents, due to higher capital costs, but lower service and maintenance costs and cheaper fuelling make them a cost-neutral swap in terms of wholelife costs, says Gary Middleton, fleet manager, KWL.

ROBUST RELIABILITY

Middleton runs the KWL workshop and laughed when asked if sourcing components for the EVs ever poses a problem.

"They never go wrong," he says. "Our EVs have been so reliable. We only bring them in once per year to check them over and I've yet to come across a failure."

This maintenance schedule and robust reliability saves costs associated with vehicle downtime, and helps to offset the EVs' higher lease rentals. The council also intends to keep its battery-powered vehicles for longer than the internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles they replace.

KWL leases EVs to the council for a minimum eight-year contract – with an expectation to extend it – whereas its ICE vehicles are typically replaced at six or seven years.

"We bought our oldest Nissan Leaf in 2010 and it's still out there working. The user says there are no problems with it," says Middleton.

He is deliberately recommending the 75kWh battery variant of the e-Expert, rather than the 50kWh, on the grounds that there will be fewer charge and discharge episodes in its working life.

An overnight charge of the larger battery pack on a 7kW charger is more than enough to fill the batteries and most users are only plugging the vehicles in once a fortnight.

Daren Hale, leader of Hull City Council, with Rosie Nicola, portfolio holder for Environmental Services at Hull City Council

Vinci Construction builds an ALL-ELECTRIC FLEET

Members of the senior team with the first EVs on fleet, the Polestar 2

Vinci Construction UK leapfrogs PHEV to go straight to full electric as it plans to transition one-fifth of its 1,000 cars by the end of the year. *Andrew Ryan* reports

Vinci Construction UK expects more than 20% of its 1,000 car fleet to be fully electric by the end of the year, despite only beginning its electrification journey with its first deliveries in October 2020.

That was when its international parent company Vinci Group published an environmental ambition to reduce Scope 1 and 2 CO_2 emissions 40% by 2030 from a 2018 baseline.

This has implications for company vehicles and site machinery. The pledge saw Vinci commit to the accelerated replacement of light and utility vehicle fleets by electric or less carbon-intensive vehicles and promotion of eco-driving practices.

"That was the green light for us to start really thinking about electric vehicles (EVs) and it coincided with us wanting to revisit our company car policy and the car choices on our fleet," says Andrew Thomsett, plant and fleet director at Vinci Fleet Services.

These reviews also presented an opportunity to reduce emissions from its petrol and diesel cars as they coincided with the introduction of the tougher WLTP emissions test.

"Generally, the WLTP CO_2 figures were around 20% greater for the same car than the existing NEDC (New European Driving Cycle) rules, but we didn't add 20% on and then publish the same choice list," says Thomsett.

"We took the NEDC figures and either stayed neutral or bettered them with the WLTP figures: that was our first real bite at reducing the emissions of our company cars. At the same time, we started on our mission to find company electric cars we could have."

Vinci Fleet Services buys its company cars and light commercial vehicles and they are managed in-house by Thomsett, fleet operations manager Rob Fellows, fleet procurement coordinator Wendy Howarth and commercial vehicle coordinator Clive Bacon.

The business has eight grades of company car driver and their choice lists are compiled using a wholelife cost model, looking at factors such as capital purchase price, fuel, service and maintenance, vehicle excise duty and residual values.

"Although the capital purchase cost of a battery electric vehicle (BEV) can be £5,000 or £6,000 more than the equivalent internal combustion engine (ICE) car in the grade, when you get to the last column of the spreadsheet, the cost can be less than for a traditional ICE car in whole vehicle life cost terms," says Thomsett.

"It was key for all grades to have the option of having a BEV as their company car, and these are offered alongside a good RDE2 (Real Driving Emissions Step 2) diesel and a petrol option.

"That was one of the early challenges, particularly with the smaller cars and the prestige cars, but this has changed as more models have become available.

"We did consider offering a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) option, but the message we got was that Vinci really wanted to miss that stage out and go straight to full BEV with all the tailpipe environment benefits.

"Plug-in hybrids have a place for those that do a short commute into the office and then back home. But, for us, with company car drivers who may be doing 20,000 miles a year, we didn't think PHEVs would work in terms of true carbon emissions."

Thomsett says the frequent launch of new

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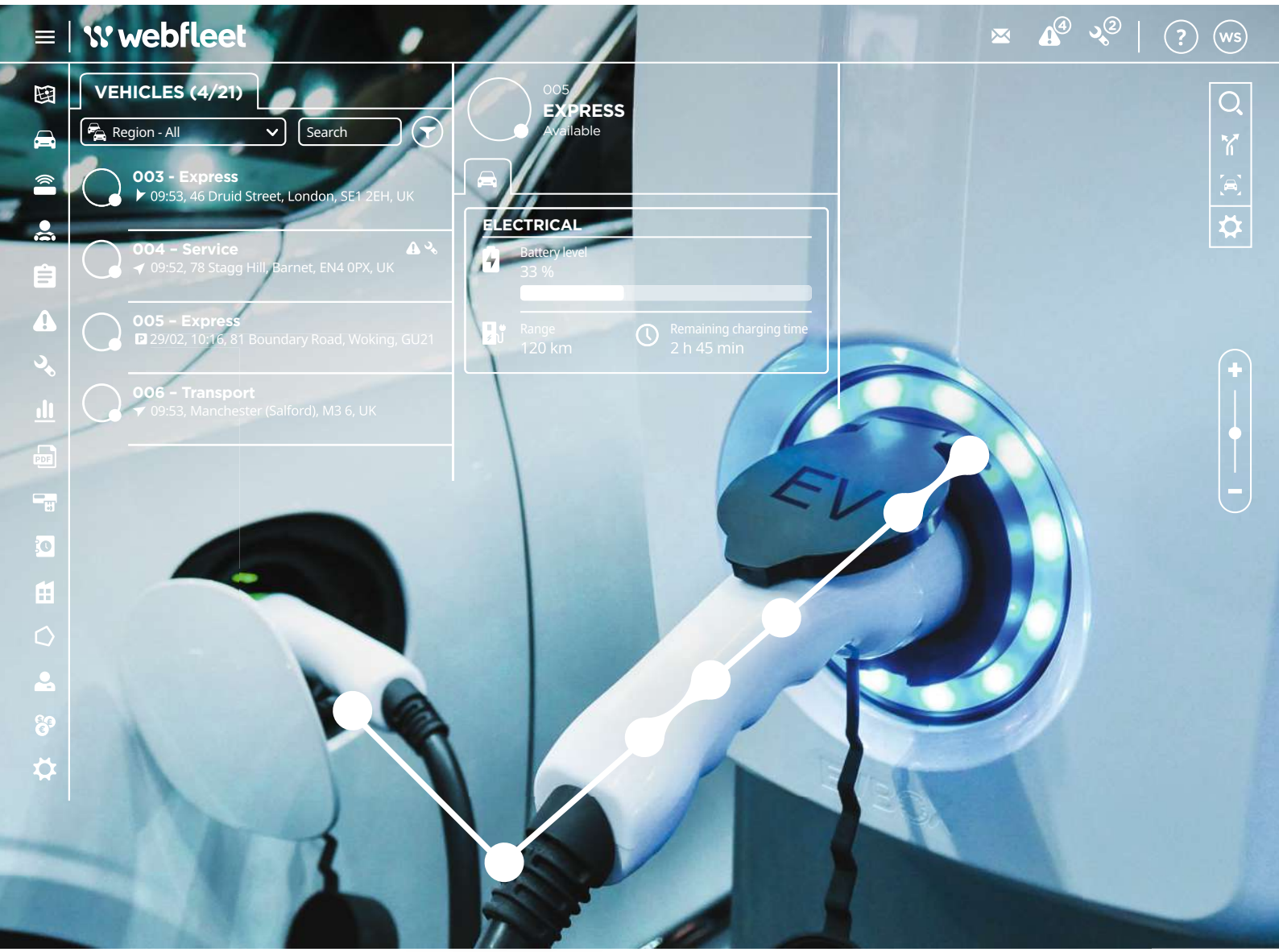

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As the journey towards electrification continues for light commercial vehicles, it would be fair to say that it is opening up a host of considerations for fleet operators.

The current shortages in vehicle supply seen across the automotive industry may mean reconsidering the pace at which you plan to introduce change to your fleet, but advance planning is more important than ever.

We see a period of transition ahead where ICE and EV vehicles will be needed and with each having its part to play depending on the solutions needed by modern fleets. Here at Northgate, we can offer both – and we can offer you the widest choice of vehicles tailored to your fleet needs.

Throughout the last year, Northgate has continued its transformation into a specialist B2B customer-centric LCV mobility provider, and as part of this we have been building the foundations for our own electrification journey, alongside those of our customers.

From the very beginning of the journey, we've worked with EV industry experts to ensure that we can support you in the right way. Adding EVs to your fleet should form part of a wider mobility solution.

The evolution in technology means it is important when operating EVs that whole life costs are considered, from initial capital outlay through to running costs versus ICE and residual values. Being able to change up to the latest models as technology improves is an important consideration.

Ownership or contract hire will commit fleets to years in vehicles that will have been superseded by newer more capable and cost-effective models. Northgate flexible hire packages provide the opportunity to change vehicles as technology evolves.

Working closely with OEMs, we're continually adding to our EV range to meet customer needs across all Electric LCV vans, conversions and electric cars. They're available on flexible and minimum term hires so that you can make the right choice for your fleet. Servicing and maintenance is a key consideration for running EVs, so we have invested heavily in our fully equipped workshops with trained EV technicians in each.

We have also invested in bringing EV infrastructure solutions to our customers – for site and home locations. With ChargedEV recently joining the Group, and over 20,000 installations under their belts, we're able to offer a turnkey solution that is also hardware and energy agnostic to suit your needs.

We also have a solution to meet on-the-go charging needs – with a combined fuel and electric charge card available that is accepted at over 1,000 rapid chargers and 3,000 fast chargers.

Our proposition is designed to let customers focus on their business whilst we focus on running their fleets. Northgate customers benefit from services and agility not possible to those who buy, or contract hire their fleets.

We're here to help with the transition to EVs by explaining what is needed in areas such as charging infrastructure, energy, billing and how these elements can work with our flexible rental packages.

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Neil McCrossan,
Sales & Marketing Director, Northgate

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C BEVs has made the sector a "moving target", with Vinci Fleet Services reviewing its choice list every three months to incorporate new models.

"Traditionally, you may review company car lists once a year, but BEV is such a flexing, changing market at the minute, with so many exciting new models, that we regularly revisit the list."

Vinci Fleet Services took delivery of its first six Polestar 2s going to senior directors of Vinci Facilities, Vinci Building and Taylor Woodrow, showing they were leading by example.

"It didn't take long for everybody else to realise that not only are BEVs a good idea for carbon emissions, but there are tax advantages to driving one," says Thomsett.

"It's taken off and we've never looked back. I've had conversations with other companies who have asked about our experience of taking on BEVs and I tell them we can't stop our employees, they can't get enough of them.

"They've all seen the benefits and, because of the wholelife costs, they can get access to the latest EV cars within their grades.

"We haven't had to promote them, our employees just know they're the right solution."

Vinci Fleet Services has now taken delivery of more than 100 fully-electric cars, with another 90 on order.

"By the end of the year, 20% of the fleet will be full EVs, which is an excellent number for us," says Thomsett.

Key to the Vinci Fleet Services approach is to make the BEV switch as easy as possible.

"Rob and Wendy have been helping employees on this journey by providing step-by-step guides to help them make the right choice for their working life and driving behaviours," says Thomsett.

The fleet team also launched an EV forum on the company's intranet, where drivers can discuss the technology.

"We'll talk to them and guide them through the choices and the different battery sizes, high speed charging, and how to get a wall-mounted charging point at home," he adds.

"We have a step-by-step guide taking them through all the forms, how to decide where you want it and the measurements they need.

"We expect the employees to buy their own wallbox, but we've made it as easy as we can and we've had some excellent feedback."

Vinci Fleet Services has also encouraged the take-up of electric vehicles by widening the criteria of employees who can choose one.

When the EV policy was launched, BEVs were available only to those who could park their new car off the road at their home address for ease of charging, and undertook fewer than 25,000 miles each year. These have since been relaxed.

In the early days, the company was conscious that the infrastructure wasn't as good as it is today and "we wanted our guys to be able to start off in the morning with a full charge", says Thomsett.

"As part of the criteria, we created an EV suitability guide in which we asked questions such as: Can you charge at home? Have you got Wi-Fi? Are your journeys less than 150 miles? Can you charge your car at work? Do you need to rely on public charging points and what is the impact on only using faster charging?"

Thomsett adds: "Initially, we said you could only have an EV if you could charge it at home, but we've now opened it up to everybody. What they must be able to do is demonstrate how they can charge their vehicle.

"It might by that for someone who lives in a flat complex, there are chargers being installed in the flats, or somebody may live local to a charging station that they can use.

"No one is precluded now from opting in."

Vinci Fleet Services operates its cars on four-year cycles, but Thomsett says if the figures stack up, ICE cars could be switched for BEVs slightly ahead of time.

"We will look at each employee case individually, their circumstances and their car to help with the carbon reduction," he adds.

The company also operates 367 vans – all around Ford Transit Custom size – and has begun transitioning these to electric as well. It has its first 30 BEVs on order, with some mild hybrid vehicle on the way too.

"All our vans have telematics fitted and we are using this to look at their mileages to see which vans are suitable to switch," says Thomsett.

"We don't really want to buy any more ICE vans, so when we have older vans that are ready for replacement, but are not suitable for a straight move to EV, we'll probably switch that vehicle from one area to another where an EV can be used. It's about having a fluid van fleet."

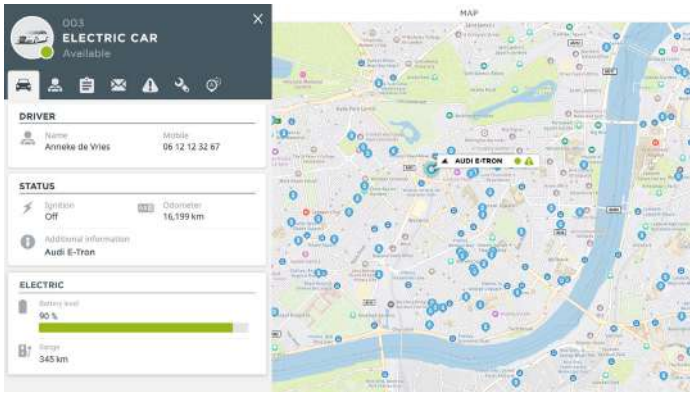
Employees are guided through the EV process step-by-step

> "WE HAVEN'T HAD TO PROMOTE THEM, OUR EMPLOYEES KNOW THEY'RE THE RIGHT SOLUTION"
>
> **ANDREW THOMSETT, VINCI**

Employees are able to familiarise themselves with the new technology in EVs

Is telematics data the silver bullet to optimising fleet charging?

Beverley Wise, Webfleet Solutions sales director UK & Ireland, explains how electric vehicle data can unlock the door to maximising a fleet's electric miles



Are your fleet drivers plugging into off-peak energy to charge their vehicles? Are their vehicles fully charged when they need to be? Are they driving their new high-tech vehicles in the most efficient way to harness braking energy? Are you, as a fleet manager, using the most appropriate charging infrastructure and utilising vehicles in the most energy-efficient way?

The answers to all these critical questions, can best be answered using telematics data.

Furthermore, only by acting on such insights can vehicle range and business productivity be maximised, and downtime and a fleet's TCO (total cost of ownership) be minimised.

Electric vehicle (EV) software solutions are fast evolving and, as they do so, they're rapidly becoming indispensable to operators making the EV transition. It is easy to see why.

The all-seeing EV eye

From the outset, telematics can help paint a detailed picture of driver working patterns and enable businesses to determine where vehicles spend most time, their typical mileage and dwell time.

Such intelligence ensures informed decisions are made about whether vehicles need to use home, office or public charging infrastructure – or a combination of all three.

As a rule, even the cheapest public chargers will be significantly more expensive than home chargers, but charging availability at employees' homes may, in some cases, be limited.

Where charging stations are needed at business premises, telematics reports will help determine how many are required, and whether standard or more expensive rapid chargers are more appropriate. In some cases, a single charger might serve multiple vehicles and rapid chargers may only be needed as back-up.

Charging in action

Telematics data is also pivotal to fleets' day-to-day performance and operation.

Having made the switch to electric cars, functionality such as the Webfleet Charger Connection Report can offer complete visibility over vehicles' charging statuses and remaining charging times to ensure drivers operate the most cost-effective charging practises.

Demands on the electricity grid will normally peak in the early evening, for instance, when drivers are most likely to plug in their vehicle on their return from work. Consequently, charging overnight, when electricity prices are lower, can have a notable cost impact.

The report will also help ensure that charge levels are maintained between the optimal 20% and 80% to minimise battery degradation.

Elsewhere, EV software solutions should also allow businesses to monitor battery levels and remaining driving ranges of every car in real time, while mapped coverage of charging points, accessible to drivers via their connected sat -nav devices, can help signpost the closest charging stations.

Electrifying innovations

Webfleet Solutions' most recent innovation – the Energy Consumption Report – raises the bar even higher, providing an analysis of energy usage in kWh per vehicle, per day. With this information at their fingertips, fleet managers can compare vehicles' energy performance and identify and address cases of inefficient operation.

The report includes a breakdown of the energy used for driving and other purposes, such as the powering of auxiliary equipment.

What's more, it details the kinetic energy recovered through regenerative braking, helping fleets measure and improve driving performance to optimise vehicle kWh.

The UK's electric journey may just be starting, but with such smart data intelligence already available to fleets at the touch of a button, the future of net zero transport appears more exciting than ever.

Blue light service

AIMING TO TURN GREEN

Planning a fleet strategy to go fully electric can be complex enough – but throw some unusual vehicles into the mix and the hurdles to overcome can seem much higher. *Mike Roberts* reports

Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) has committed to becoming carbon-neutral by 2030 and the role of fleet manager Brian Harwood to help it achieve that goal is no easy task.

His dream is to have a fully electric fleet by then but, in reality, that probably won't be the case despite his best efforts.

AF&RS operates 69 front-line fire appliance vehicles and 70 ancillary/support vehicles (as well as four boats and a hovercraft) across more than 20 stations around Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Harwood joined the service in 2019 when it already operated two electric vehicles (EVs) for community work. He was keen to grow the number of EVs on the fleet and started trials of Nissan Leaf, the Renault Zoe and Kia Niro to get feedback from personnel who would ultimately use them. Initial concerns centred around range anxiety and load size.

"The officers which these vehicles have to support carry around an awful lot of equipment," Harwood says. "If they go to a protracted event, they may have to take their own fire boots, safety helmets, overalls etc., and these take up an enormous amount of space."

The Kia e-Niro's 450-litre boot satisfies most requirements, and telematics data showed that the average vehicle this model is replacing travelled no more than 10 miles a day, assuaging range concerns.

The service has bought four of the cars outright. Two are for use as bluelight station vehicles (duties include ferrying a relief crew to an incident where an appliance is already being used) and, while the remaining two were originally earmarked to replace pool cars, Harwood decided he wanted them to undergo proper testing, so officers are now using them as response vehicles.

The service has also trialled a bluelight-enabled Tesla but has no current plans to bring any onto the fleet despite its huge popularity among staff.

Over the next year three years, Harwood needs to replace about 30 vehicles, a mix of cars and ➲

Brian Harwood with some of the 69 frontline vehicles currently used by Avon Fire & Rescue Service

vans, which are coming up to around 10 years' service with the organisation.

"My ambition would be to make them all electric," he says. "But some replacements might be hydrogen, depending on the type of vehicle."

He has concerns over the use of hydrogen, including how safe it would be to refuel an appliance at the scene of a major fire.

Biomethane is another alternative fuel Harwood will investigate for larger vehicles.

Where an EV or PHEV replacement is available, Harwood would always opt for fully-electric over hybrid as he believes this will force a change in behaviour.

"I wanted to see people make a step change in how they use their vehicles. With a hybrid you can fill it with fuel and forget about charging it," he says.

Another challenge is that many of the vehicles need to have four-wheel drive to cope in severe, wintry conditions. Options currently available in electric form are too expensive for the service to consider. "We're spending taxpayers' money," Harwood points out.

He's also nervous about "buying into a technology that tomorrow could be different again", a dilemma faced by many fleets.

"Over the next two years we'll see more vehicles coming on to the market that have been designed as electric vehicles, so with a better level of technology – and I would hate to be behind the curve when they arrive," he says.

Products for his sub-3.5-tonne vehicles are already available, but the biggest barrier to going fully electric comes with the larger vehicles.

"My strategy is to consider electric or zero as my first choice for every vehicle," Harwood says. "Even if I'm buying a £700,000-£800,000 turntable ladder, I'll ask if that can be a zero-emission vehicle, which, of course, the chances are, it can't be."

> "I WANTED TO SEE PEOPLE MAKE A STEP CHANGE IN HOW THEY USE THEIR VEHICLES"
>
> **BRIAN HARWOOD, AF&RS**

Harwood may perform a juggling act over which vehicles are replaced, holding on to some for longer where there is no suitable replacement and bringing others further forward into the schedule where there is.

However, every decision he makes must centre around safety and ensuring the vehicles are suitable for their role.

AF&RS's fire appliances have an operational life of about 15 years and other specialist appliances, such as the turntable ladder, about 20 years.

Some specialist-build manufacturers are developing greener and, in some cases, electric appliances. Harwood says he is looking forward to appraising these as they come to market.

However, he's realistic that achieving carbon neutrality will come from putting back into the grid rather than having an all-electric fleet. But new vehicles will play a major part in helping the organisation to reach its target.

As stated in the organisation's Environmental Strategy 2020, fleet transport and business travel account for almost 50% of its carbon footprint, with 70% of this from frontline appliances and specialised vehicles, 14% from ancillary fleet vans and cars, and 16% from grey fleet (lease, essential and casual car

users). It adds that the shift towards more sustainable travel options and low carbon transport will play a significant role towards meeting its net zero carbon ambition and its support and commitment to clean air zone (CAZ) requirements – from next year it will come under Bath and Bristol. It will also provide cost savings and greater resilience against fuel price increases.

Having vehicles that cover between 6,000-10,000 miles a year means it's more cost-effective to own them rather than lease them, Harwood believes.

"Also, the one thing we don't have to think about if we own, is whether we're going to have the funding from Government in the next year. If there's a shortfall, there'll be pressure on us to cut costs and minimise expenditure. If that happens then we won't also have a huge leasing bill to pay," he adds.

Harwood is quick to praise the work of AF&RS's property services team for installing electric vehicle charging points at all 'critical sites', meaning at least two vehicles can charge at any one time.

Such infrastructure gives the department the confidence to trial EVs and has allowed them to get where they are today, he says.

Around 50% of its sites have charging points installed and the remainder will have charging capabilities by early next year.

Currently, employees who choose an EV through a staff salary sacrifice scheme are able to use these points.

The service also has its own workshops with technicians currently undergoing training to work on electric vehicles.

Harwood is keen to have dialogue with peers on other forces across the country as the sharing of information, best practice and past experiences could help with a smooth transition.

"I think we're early adopters as a service but I'm looking for others who are on the same journey, as we can learn so much from each other," he adds.

As for the hovercraft, well, that's unlikely to be electric any time soon, but the service's current model is being replaced after 13 years of service, so will benefit from cleaner engines, as will the truck used to transport it from fire station to beach.

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

Beverley Wise, sales director UK & Ireland, Webfleet Solutions

"There's a way to do it better; find it," Thomas Edison famously challenged his staff.

This attitude neatly sums up the fleet automotive industry's relentless search for new, innovative ways to usher in cleaner, faster, cheaper and more efficient transport.

E-mobility is already gaining traction, but we're only at the start of the journey. There's an onus on all stakeholders, from Government and industry to business leaders, to come up with solutions to drive change.

The telematics industry is at the heart of this crusade, with Webfleet Solutions' commitment to innovation writ large.

The development of its electric vehicle (EV) solution is a great illustration of how technology can offer businesses a "better way" to fleet electrification.

With telematics data, making the electric transition, developing fleet charging strategies, optimising EV operations and realising the lower total cost of ownership potential suddenly become opportunities, rather than challenges.

Elsewhere, other vital ingredients of transport decarbonisation are seeing similar game-changing advances.

Energy-efficient tyres are being developed with increasingly sophisticated engineering to minimise rolling resistance.

In developing tyres for the world's first long-range solar electric vehicle, for example, Bridgestone combined its revolutionary lightweight ENLITEN and ologic technologies to reduce weight using fewer raw materials, and rolling resistance through innovative tread, larger diameters, high inflation pressures and slim design.

These are exciting times. And, as the industry continues to innovate, fleets that respond in kind by introducing "better ways" to operate will not only realise significant financial and environmental benefits, they will also help secure a more sustainable transport future for all.

webfleet solutions a Bridgestone company

Skills, scale and service

Kwik Fit sets out its stall to become garage of choice for EV adopters

As with any new or rapidly developing market, there are many myths and misconceptions regarding electric vehicle (EV) maintenance requirements. It's therefore crucial to identify the key factors fleets need to consider to ensure their EVs continue to perform in line with driver expectations post-maintenance events.

Choosing the right SMR partner has long been a vital decision for fleet managers, with many hours of analysis spent on it. Paradoxically, a more complex national car parc and varied fleet composition may make the selection of the correct garage for repair a more straightforward choice for EV operators.

Put simply, only a garage with an appropriate automotive accreditation will do; with the IMI recently assessing that only one in 15 members of the automotive workforce are qualified to work on EVs, fleet managers may find their choice constrained by the available skills.

The second but equally important consideration is choosing the best solution for tyres. Tyres for electric vehicles must fulfil their promise of delivering low rolling resistance – making them energy-efficient to maximise battery range – and to support low road noise, all while maintaining optimum levels of grip in the wet and dry – a tall order.

Over the past 18 months, tyre availability, much like vehicle availability and the supply chain across many sectors, has been impacted by a range of macro-economic factors. With movement of goods and labour and extraction and availability of raw materials all affected, simply having the right tyre for every scenario has become a huge challenge in an era of vastly changing customer requirements. It is therefore vital that fleets are able to call on support from partners who can rise to this challenge.

Becoming the garage of choice for EV adopters has been a key objective for Kwik Fit over recent years. Kwik Fit has strategically invested to achieve this objective and become the EV aftermarket leader. Areas of strength include its in-house IMI-approved technical training academies to drive accredited training of technicians, as a result of which it has approaching 600 EV Level 2 qualified technicians, the largest figure in the UK aftermarket.

Unique partnerships with OE tyre manufacturers and stock holding across a network of 11 distribution hubs and 700 centres enable it to cater for pre-booked and on-demand tyre change events. This is complemented by its tyre management support, which ensures it offers the best driver support services, authorisation and management information solutions for partners.

Dan Joyce, Kwik Fit fleet director, says: "We know our customers need the largest skills base and the widest tyre availability. However, our market leadership is not just based on offering scale, we can provide insight, data and flexibility to deliver the best possible all-round service to our customers and ensure they drive away happy every time. We don't rest on our laurels but look to add value every single day; our ability to react quickly to a fast-changing marketplace and commitment to continued tactical investment in our infrastructure underlines our ambition to become EV aftermarket leaders."

Kwik Fit

www.kwik-fit.com/fleet

DPD: delivering A GREEN AGENDA

DPD's fleet of electric vehicles encompasses many forms of transport

Parcel company takes on 1,700 fully-electric vehicles as part of its commitment to be the sector sustainability leader. *Andrew Ryan* reports

DPD was one of the first major UK fleets to commit to transitioning to battery electric vehicles (BEVs), and its progress has been rapid.

"As of January 2020, we had only 149 electric vehicles (EVs)," says Tim Jones, director of marketing, communications and sustainability at DPD Group UK, which operates 10,000 vehicles from 84 locations.

"We have been able to move that forward by working with manufacturers and different companies, and by November this year we will have 1,700 EVs out there delivering up and down the UK," he adds.

"That will take us to around 15% of our total fleet operations being all-electric and clean vehicles.

"For us, this isn't just taking a specific city or a small area and putting EVs in, it's a mass change."

Being a leader in the move to BEVs is now a central focus for the business. The ambition to be the UK's most sustainable delivery company has become the fourth pillar in its company strategy.

Last year, this joined DPD's three-point strategy, which had been in place for more than a decade, of delivering the best service money can buy, using the best technology available and retaining and developing the most customer-centric people in the industry.

It is supporting its sustainability ambition through its Vision 25 commitment, under which it has pledged to 'deliver green' to 25 major towns and cities covering 25% of the UK by 2025 (see panel, page 40). It is backed by a £111 million investment in EVs.

"We've been working with EVs for the past three years and we have learned a lot in that time," says Olly Craughan, head of CSR (corporate social responsibility) at DPD.

The company has trialled and operates a range of EVs, from e-cargo bikes and the Paxster light powered vehicle, to small vans such as the Nissan e-NV200 and Peugeot ePartner.

Three-and-a-half-tonne vans – "the workhorses in any parcel delivery firm", says Craughan – have proved tougher due to a lack of suitable vehicles.

"They are the largest part of our fleet and provide flexibility," he adds. "We don't want to be getting more smaller vans to cope with the amount of parcels we deal with: that just isn't sensible, so we really need access to more 3.5-tonne vehicles."

DPD took delivery of 100 MAN eTGE vans last year, but Craughan says they had to be converted to right-hand drive by MAN because of issues with the availability of 3.5-tonne vans in right-hand drive.

The availability of this size of electric van is increasing, however, and in June DPD ordered 750 fully-electric commercial vehicles from Maxus. This consisted of 500 E Deliver 9s and 250 E Deliver 3s.

"To get our hands on an EV with this kind of capacity and range is a real game changer for us," adds Craughan.

"We've got EVs in every DPD depot already, but they are largely focused on quite compact routes, usually in city centres, where range isn't an issue.

"But this opens up the possibility of clean, green deliveries on a much larger scale."

Jones says the main obstacles DPD has faced so far in its transition to EVs are the cost and availability of suitable vehicles, and charging.

"All-electric vans are, roughly speaking, probably twice the cost of a diesel van and clearly that's

Larger vans have been the biggest issue for DPD on its electric journey

a barrier, but, once you have overcome the initial outlay, it becomes cheaper to run EVs than diesel vehicles," he adds.

"It's about looking at the longer term where you get to the point where you are spending less running these vehicles, and as you start to increase fleet size, that saving may allow companies to fund the initial outlay for the extra vehicles.

"We would also hope that due to the demand, there will be better supply and that manufacturers will move quicker as they do in any market when there's competition. And competition leads to innovation, which leads to a reduction in prices."

DPD prioritises its charging regime as home charge first, then public charging and depot charging as a last resort.

To facilitate this, the company has entered into a partnership with Pod Point, which sees DPD help drivers complete the paperwork to apply for the £350 home charge grant.

It also contributes a further £350 towards the chargers, meaning the drivers do not typically have to pay anything towards them.

> "TO GET OUR HANDS ON AN EV WITH THIS CAPACITY AND RANGE IS A GAME CHANGER"
>
> **OLLY CRAUGHAN, DPD**

While DPD has settled on its charging strategy, Jones says collaboration between companies could help other organisations to make the move to EVs.

"For example, what could help the fleet managers overcome any barriers caused by charging could be big companies and energy providers working together to create an association that people can join which is agnostic, so that their fleet can charge at these points," he says.

"We need one in every city and then one in every town, and then on more or less every industrial estate up and down the country so that we can help organisations move to electric and reduce the need for vans, HGVs and other sorts of vehicles to use diesel."

OXFORD LEADS THE WAY AS DPD'S FIRST 'GREEN CITY'

Oxford has become DPD's first 'green city' with all parcel deliveries now made by fully-electric vehicles. All deliveries will be made from the company's new Bicester eco-depot, which is its first 'net zero carbon in construction' building, as regulated by the UK Green Building Council.

The depot has a fleet of 40 EVs and they will deliver more than 15,000 parcels a week.

"For us to say we can now deliver to a city the size of Oxford using only electric vehicles is a huge leap forward not only for us, but for the sector as a whole," says Olly Craughan. "We are on track to repeat this in nine more cities this year."

The other 24 towns and cities covered by DPD's plan are Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Coventry, Derby, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kingston-upon-Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton and Stoke-on-Trent.

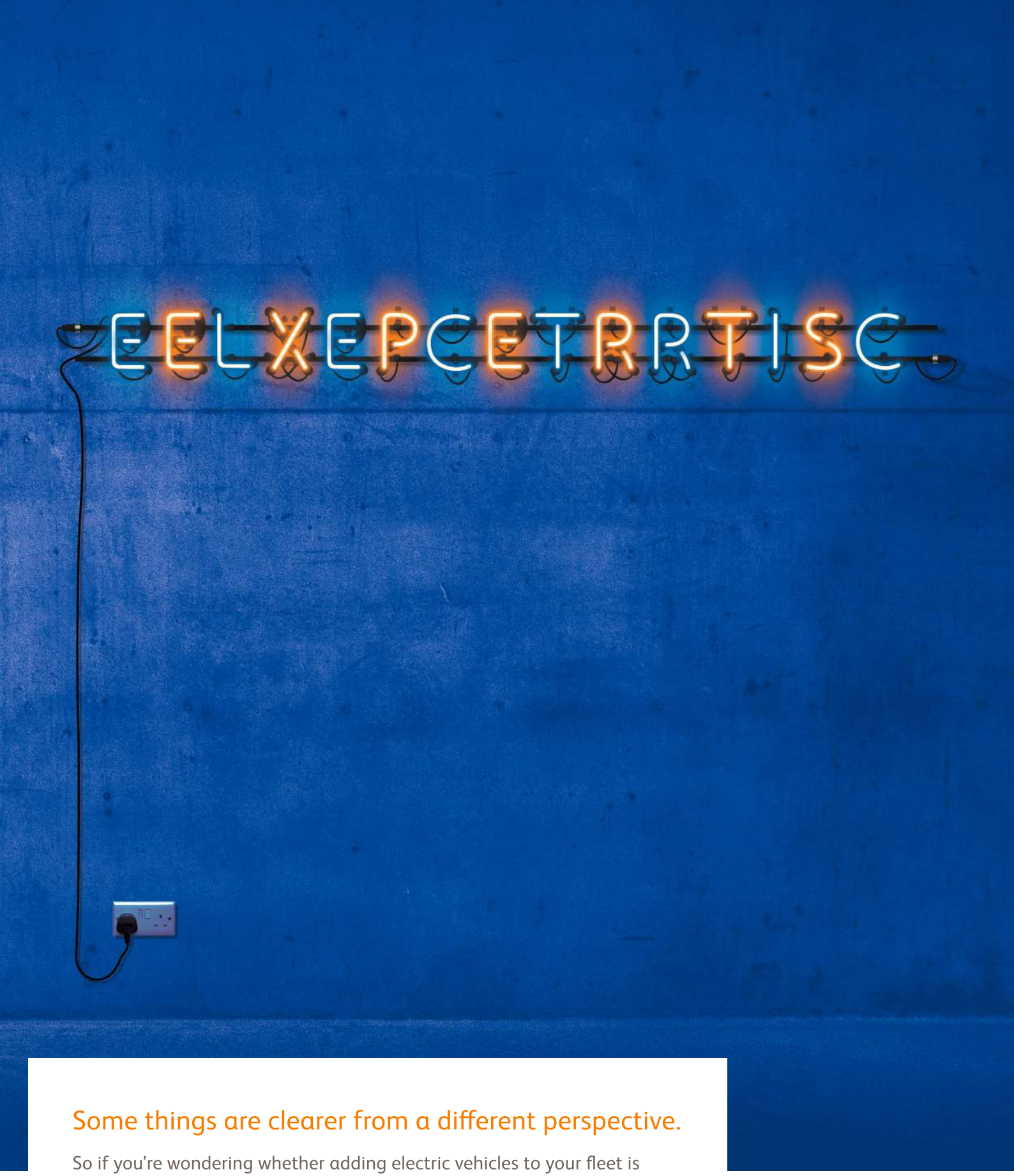
Another key strand of DPD's green delivery strategy is the development of a network of all-electric micro-depots so EVs are located close to customers.

The first of these opened in Westminster in 2018. From here, final mile deliveries are made on all-electric vehicles, while inbound parcels from its London City depot are delivered on fully-electric Fuso eCanter 7.5-tonne vehicles.

It now has four all-electric micro-depots and plans to open seven as soon as the sites become available.

Its first outside London was in Kingston-upon-Hull. Previously, the depot that delivered to Hull was located close to Goole and was more than 28 miles away, which meant BEVs would be on the edge of their mileage range after completing a normal delivery day.

As a result of the change, DPD has reduced the number of diesel vans operating in the city and the unproductive mileage travelling between the Goole depot and Hull by 896 miles per day.



Some things are clearer from a different perspective.

So if you're wondering whether adding electric vehicles to your fleet is the way ahead, why not book your AlphaElectric consultation today?

As the experts in electric, we can help you with everything from policy changing and fleet analysis, to vehicle ordering and finance. We can even help you sort your charging infrastructure. So get in touch today and make your road to zero stress free.

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Figures were obtained after the battery had been fully charged. Figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare fuel consumption, CO2 emissions and electric range figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend on multiple factors, including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles, vehicle load and the starting charge of the battery. The Audi Q4 e-tron is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Zero emissions while driving. Information correct at time of print 20 October 2021. Please consult your Audi Centre for further information. Image for illustrative purposes. Model shown is not UK specification and features optional equipment. ^2021/2022 tax year. BIK tax to increase to 2% from April 2022.

Food for thought from FRUIT 4 LONDON

Fruit 4 London's vans are converted to have a cargo volume of eight cu m

Vehicle-to-grid pioneer has added to the five-a-day goodness of its fruit and veg boxes by undertaking healthier zero emission deliveries. *Jonathan Manning* reports

London-based fruit and vegetable delivery company Fruit 4 London has been at the vanguard of electric vehicle (EV) fleets for almost a decade.

The company bought its first two EVs, a pair of Renault Kangoo ZE vans, back in 2012, long before fleet electrification and public recharging infrastructure had entered common vocabulary.

And now, as private companies and public sector organisations take their first tentative steps towards transitioning from internal combustion engines to battery power, Fruit 4 London has continued its pioneering approach, recently installing five vehicle-to-grid (V2G) charge points at its east London warehouse.

The firm's managing director, Laszlo Mulato, has only one regret about his business's electrification process – he wishes he had started even earlier.

The Kangoo vans have been replaced by Nissan eNVQ200 XL light commercial vehicles, converted by Slovakia-based Voltia to have a cargo volume of eight cubic metres, and Fruit 4 London's deliveries to offices and homes are now undertaken by the company's small fleet of seven electric vans (it also has runs one diesel-powered Ford Transit).

The switch to zero tailpipe emissions has saved thousands of pounds in fuel bills and helped it to avoid paying London's daily congestion and Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) charges.

The EVs save Fruit 4 London £2,625 per year in congestion charge fees alone.

The vehicles also feature prominently in the company's marketing and were one of the reasons Fruit 4 London secured its largest client.

"We do not win customers just because we are green, but businesses are trying to make sure their whole supply chains share the same mentality towards the need to reduce greenhouse gases and combat climate change. Everyone has to start thinking differently," says Mulato.

This applies to Fruit 4 London's drivers, too, who appreciate the opportunity to be part of a positive initiative as much as they appreciate how much quieter and easier the eNVQ200s are to drive than the diesel-powered vans they replaced.

"In London, the average speed is only 9mph or 10mph and the number of times you have to depress the clutch and change gears turns driving into physical exercise," says Mulato.

"I remember we used to have a new Toyota Hi-Lux and at the end of the day my knees hurt. I wasn't an old man, but it had such a heavy clutch."

The 'one-pedal' driving style for battery-powered vehicles, lifting off the accelerator to brake, has also saved huge sums in service and maintenance budgets, with the EVs proving exceptionally reliable, and requiring very few replacement parts.

"Not once since 2012 has an EV let me down, apart from the 12V battery which features in diesel and petrol engines as well," says Mulato.

"We kept the two Kangoos for six years and when we sold them the brake pads were still at 60%, and we had used the vans fully loaded in

No missing the colourful Fruit 4 London vans or the sustainabilty messages they carry

London. I don't think we have ever had to change brake pads on any of the Nissans, and one is six years old.

"With the Ford Transits that we used to run, we had to change the brake pads every year - £700 I remember.

"The service and maintenance costs are next to nothing for electric vehicles – virtually nothing can go wrong."

This reliability supports Fruit 4 London's decision to buy its vehicles outright, a strategy that paid off, says Mulato, when Covid-19 struck and the company saw 750 accounts suspended in a day when the country went into lockdown.

Having to pay monthly lease rentals with no revenue coming in would have proved exceptionally challenging.

The company plans to keep its electric vehicles for 10 years.

The high-risk approach of being an early adopter of new technology has not been without its difficulties, however, with Fruit 4 London having to overcome issues to make electric vehicles work for the business.

It incurred re-tooling costs when it commissioned its box supplier to produce boxes that optimised the available space in the cargo area of the eNVQ200, and it has had to be creative and diplomatic to secure the power supply it needs to recharge its vehicles on low-cost electricity overnight at its warehouse.

"We moved into our new warehouse last year and realised that the power supply cables were not strong enough to support V2G chargers," says Mulato. "So we had to go through UK Power Networks, our DNO [distribution network operator] to find a solution and they were coming up with figures of about £60,000 to upgrade the cables and local substation.

> "IT'S AN AMAZING FEELING, NOT JUST SAVING COSTS, BUT KNOWING YOU ARE DOING SOMETHING GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT"
>
> **LASZLO MULATO, FRUIT 4 LONDON**

"A serious amount of work needs to be done to support businesses with cabling. There is enough power to support charging, but the cables and substations are seriously out of date.

"Luckily, we realised that one of our neighbours had a lot of power going into his unit and his business was only using a fraction of it, so we managed to swap electricity supply with the neighbour; we gave him our supply and he gave us his.

"We were very lucky to have such a helpful neighbour; if he wasn't cooperative, you are talking serious money."

The exchange was more complicated than it sounds, with complex, technical forms to complete, and a frustratingly slow pace of change from the energy companies involved.

"It took weeks of hard work by my business partner; it's not easy to work with electricity companies and get them to work together," says Mulato.

The good news is that the five V2G chargers have been largely funded by Innovate UK as part of the E-Flex demonstration project, leaving Fruit 4 London with an installation bill of about £7,000 when each charger would normally cost about £10,000.

"We are doing something good for the environment, storing renewable energy in our vehicle batteries while they are parked, and then supporting the grid when it needs the power. It's a good concept and we are very proud of taking part in it," says Mulato.

The overnight charge is sufficient to fill the EV batteries and range is no longer an issue – their daily deliveries cover 60-to-90 miles, and when fully charged, the vans are comfortably capable of 120 miles.

"Even if it's very cold and you have to have the heating on and do a longer drive, rapid public charging is widely available and reasonably reliable now," says Mulato.

"Drivers stop for a break where the charger is, and with big names like BP and Shell joining the charging game – they are not cheap, but you can charge for 15 minutes and that's enough to get them back."

A wholehearted EV advocate – he also has a Tesla Model S and BMW i3, both charged whenever possible by solar panels on his home – Mulato can't imagine buying another vehicle with an internal combustion engine.

"It's an amazing feeling, not just saving costs, but knowing you are doing something good for the environment," he says.

The vehicle leasing market is changing… and so are we

Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions to rebrand as Novuna Vehicle Solutions

The motor industry is experiencing a seismic shift, increasingly transitioning away from petrol and diesel to electric fleets, with drivers taking advantage of the cost and environmental benefits of electric vehicles (EVs).

But it's not just the wider automotive sector that is repositioning itself to address climate change.

Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions – one of the UK's largest vehicle leasing companies and Leasing Company of the Year, announced that it is embarking on a major rebrand, accelerating its market-leading fleet decarbonisation solutions.

The rebrand to Novuna Vehicle Solutions, which will be fully implemented by March 2022, follows the merger of the business's parent company with Mitsubishi UFJ Lease and Finance Company Limited earlier this year.

This was a significant move for the business, making it part of one of the world's largest and most diversified financial groups.

Jon Lawes, MD of Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions, explained the thinking behind the rebrand. "The vehicle leasing market is rapidly changing and so are we. Novuna comes from the Latin words – novo (new) and una (together) – which captures the essence of our business and how we work with fleets, creating innovative solutions together and supporting our customers through rapid change."

> "Our new brand name is readily aligned to our market-leading decarbonisation strategy which is delivering cost and environmental benefits for our customers. Novuna perfectly captures the proposition of our business and how we work together and with our customers to become market leaders in electric vehicles"
>
> **Jon Lawes, MD, Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions**

Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions is a recognised electrification leader, offering an end-to-end decarbonisation solution, accelerating the transition to an electric vehicle fleet. This model helps fleets reduce their carbon emissions and transition to cleaner vehicles, by assessing fleet challenges, providing funding, building solutions and managing charging infrastructure, as well as the the back-office management needed to support a widespread adoption of electric vehicles.

"As one of the UK's largest vehicle leasing companies, working with OEMs right across the spectrum to supply and service fleets of all complexities, the Novuna brand provides our business with a clear point of differentiation in the motor industry. Our new brand name is readily aligned to our decarbonisation strategy which is delivering cost and environmental benefits for our customers. Novuna perfectly captures the proposition of our business and how we work together and with our customers to become market leaders in electric vehicles," says Lawes.

From company cars and salary sacrifice through to specialist and modified vehicles, Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions is already transforming UK fleets with absolute confidence to achieve decarbonisation targets.

The size and expertise of its new parent company following the rebrand will provide a springboard for the next phase of growth for the business, built on an ethos of consistently exceeding customer expectations.

Novuna Vehicle Solutions will offer competitive funding, fleet management, consultative policy design, EV transition planning and installation of electric infrastructure to get green fleets on the road and fully charged.

From October, customers can expect to see the Novuna brand being introduced on marketing channels, though the full rebrand will happen in March 2022.

The products and services currently offered will remain the same, alongside their account management teams. But, in the longer term, this is far more than a change of name.

"The rebrand marks the start of an exciting new era for our business and our customers," says Lawes. ■

FIND OUT MORE