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FleetNews iQ

Quarter 1 • 2026

Exclusive interview

JUDY O'KEEFE OPENREACH

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Measures are a 'turning point'

New Government strategy will underscore fleet's role in road safety

Impact of AI on management

Why artificial intelligence should be welcomed as a fleet aid, not a threat

The road to electrification

How home chargers play a vital role in the fleet transition to electric

Spotlight on Kelly Group

Understanding the core principles behind the UK's best fleet safety policy

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Welcome

To quote Hannibal Smith, the cigar-chomping leader of the A-Team: I love it when a plan comes together.

Although, in this case, it was as much happy coincidence as it was painstaking scheming.

At the start of the year, the Government announced the first Road Safety Strategy for more than a decade. We pick apart the plans, and the resulting consultations, in our opening feature, and it sets the tone for this edition of *Fleet News iQ*, almost like it was planned from the beginning.

Safety, risk management and compliance was already to be a recurring theme throughout the magazine, most prominent in our interview with the Fleet News Award-winning Kelly Group.

MD Larry McGrane and fleet director Dermot Coughlan take us through their two-decade journey to create the UK's most comprehensive and effective safety policy – and why the continuous improvements never stop. Read their incredible story on page 36.

Another brilliant leader, Judy O'Keefe, fleet director at Openreach, reveals her own safety mandate and how she is using data to transform engagement and culture at the BT subsidiary.

But it's far from management by spreadsheet for O'Keefe: her commitment to staff wellbeing and mental health is heart-warming, summed up in the simple line "kindness in leadership – something that is underrated" where she provides a thought-provoking anecdote. Head to page 16 for more.

Elsewhere we put the spotlight on gamification, looking at five ways fleets can implement a robust programme to improve driver performance and behaviour by tapping into their competitive spirit.

Meanwhile, the vital role that tyres play in safety is examined in detail, with six considerations for effective management. Take this advice from DTM's Jason Chamberlain, for example: "Tyre condition often provides early warning of wider mechanical or operational issues, such as alignment, overloading or aggressive driving."

There is much more in this edition, including how Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles is looking to follow the telematics and connectivity route of rival Ford with its own vehicle health and downtime management product.

Enjoy the issue.

Stephen Briers, group editor, *Fleet News*

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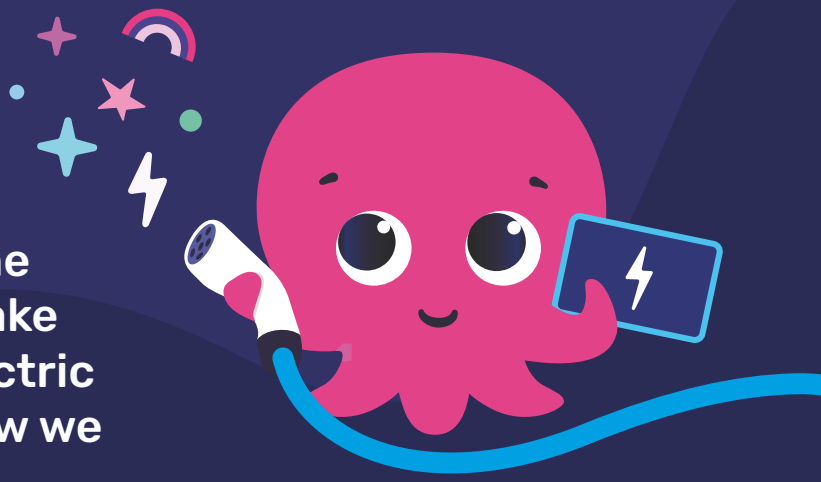

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Contents

New strategy underscores road safety role for fleets

Government pledges 65% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on UK roads by 2035. *Gareth Roberts* reports

Fleets are being urged to have their say on new road safety rules which will significantly impact how vehicles are managed and roads are policed for years to come.

Aimed at cutting the number of people killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads, the Government's road safety strategy – the first in more than a decade – was unveiled in January.

At the time, transport secretary Heidi Alexander said that "for too long, progress on road safety had stalled" and the strategy marked a "turning point".

She claims the measures the Government is proposing will save "thousands of lives" over the next decade. It has even set itself a target for the first time, aiming for a 65% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on UK roads by 2035.

The introduction of targets is something the fleet sector has been calling for since 2015, when *Fleet News*, the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA) and the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), which was then ACFO, joined forces to launch the Fleet Manifesto.

More than a decade later, road death figures continue to stagnate.

SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Four people are killed, on average, every day on Great Britain's roads, with more than 70 seriously injured, according to figures from the Department for Transport (DfT).

There were 1,602 fatalities in 2024, with an estimated one-in-three road traffic fatalities involving someone driving or riding for work.

Fleet decision-makers will therefore welcome the focus on road safety, but with the level and scope of the changes being proposed, they are being encouraged to seize the opportunity to help shape

> "Driving for work is being treated explicitly as a workplace risk"
>
> **CHARLOTTE LE MAIRE, LMP LEGAL**

the new rules. Proposals in the road safety strategy include a national standard for employers who require employees to drive for work, lowering the legal alcohol limit for drivers and mandating minimum safety tech on new vehicles.

In fact, the scope of the strategy is so wide that the Government has launched five separate consultations, covering motoring offences, minimum learning period, mandatory eyesight tests for older drivers, mandating new vehicle technology and improved moped and motorcycle testing.

Paul Hollick, chair of the AFP, said: "In terms of on-road behaviour, the two areas probably most likely to affect company car and van drivers are stricter drink-drive limits... and tougher fines and penalties for the most dangerous road users."

The Government wants to lower the drink-drive limit and introduce a lower limit for novice drivers in England and Wales.

Currently, there is a lower limit in Scotland compared with England and Wales, while Northern Ireland is planning to lower limits in the near future.

In Scotland, the limits are almost half that of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

However, Northern Ireland plans to reduce its limits to the same level as Scotland and introduce even lower limits for professional and novice drivers.

The DfT says that estimates suggest lowering the drink-drive limit in England and Wales could reduce fatalities by between 25 and 100 annually.

This is despite Scottish Government data suggesting that, since limits were lowered in Scotland, it did not see a significant reduction in casualties.

For drug-driving offences, the Government is considering alternative forensic procedures, such as testing oral fluid, saliva or sweat.

This is down to what the DfT describes as a "notable increase" in the number of forensic blood samples that are needed to investigate drug-driving offences, which has created significant challenges both in terms of cost and forensic capacity.

It also wants to restrict offenders at the earliest opportunity. Under the current system, those arrested on suspicion of drug- or drink-driving are free to continue to drive until convicted.

Given the seriousness of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the Government is proposing the introduction of a temporary licence suspension until attendance at court or a guilty plea, or bail pending forensic analysis being undertaken.

However, fleet decision-makers at a recent Fleet200 meeting raised concerns, with one stating: "Some court cases could be months, or even a year away – what do we do with our company drivers until that point?".

The Government is also considering creating a power to seize the vehicles of those arrested for drug- and drink-driving, and is keen to know whether current sentencing guideline are appropriate.

EMPLOYER'S ROAD RISK RESPONSIBILITIES

While the strategy does not introduce immediate changes to legislation, LMP Legal believes it hardens the Government's position that road risk is an employer responsibility and should be managed as an occupational safety issue, in line with existing health and safety legislation.

Charlotte Le Maire, founder and partner at LMP Legal, said we are seeing a "much firmer line from Government".

"Driving for work is being treated explicitly as a workplace risk, not just a transport issue," she explained. "For fleets, that means collisions are increasingly likely to trigger scrutiny not just of the driver, but of the business systems behind them."

It is reflected in the Government's intention to launch a national work-related road safety charter pilot, which will run for two years.

NATIONAL STANDARD FOR FLEETS

It aims to establish a national standard for employers requiring people to drive or ride for work, covering HGVs, vans, company cars, motorcycles, e-bikes and cycles.

DfT said it will help businesses in both the public and private sectors reduce work-related road risk by promoting good practice, accountability and compliance with existing legislation.

The charter will be developed in collaboration with business and will be informed by existing schemes such as National Highways' Driving for Better Business programme, which *Fleet News* has since revealed is facing a 50% cut in funding for the next financial year.

It will also take a lead from the Transport for London (TfL) meal and grocery delivery motorcycle road safety charter, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's 'Earned Recognition' scheme and the TyreSafe programme.

Hollick said the establishment of a national standard could be an "important strategic move" and help support fleet managers get "the resources they need to implement safety measures".

VOLUNTARY NATURE DEPENDS ON ENGAGEMENT

DfT says its success will be measured initially on engagement, safety impacts and cultural change.

Regulatory measures, it added, will be considered if voluntary engagement is insufficient in reducing work-related road risk.

"That wording is important," said Le Maire. "In our experience, voluntary schemes often become the benchmark against which businesses are judged after a serious incident. Operators who ignore this (scheme) risk being seen as falling below expected standards, even before any formal regulation is introduced."

Fleets will hope for more details about the pilot scheme, but the focus on at-work drivers was welcomed by Lorna McAtear, head of fleet at National Grid.

"To have something come in that is work-related is really good," she told the January Fleet News at 10 webinar. "It provides a consistent approach and accountability – it's making sure that the companies are responsible for what they do."

ROAD COLLISIONS TO BE INVESTIGATED

To help learn from collisions and further understand how to prevent them in the future, the Government is also aiming to establish a new road safety investigation branch.

It will take a strategic, thematic approach, focusing on patterns of collisions, injury trends and systemic safety issues.

Unlike air and rail branches, the sheer volume of road traffic collisions would make it impractical to investigate every case in depth.

Instead, it will adopt a 'test-and-learn' approach, using real-world evidence to inform targeted safety interventions, data-driven policies, and proactive prevention and enforcement strategies.

Actionable safety recommendations are expected to cover road design, vehicle safety, driver behaviour, enforcement and infrastructure.

Appearing alongside McAtear on Fleet News at 10, Sam Biggs, roadside fleet manager at The AA, said a key requirement for her would be it having a "clear and independent remit focused on learning, not blame", much like air and rail incident investigations.

She explained: "Road collisions are rarely down to a single factor, so the value lies in understanding the wider system – the vehicle, the road,

Road safety strategy at a glance

- Targets for reduction in road deaths and serious injuries
- National standard for employers where staff drive for work
- Lowering of the legal alcohol limit in England and Wales
- Tougher penalties for drink and drug drivers
- Mandating new road safety technologies in vehicles
- New data-led road safety investigation branch
- Minimum learning period for learner drivers
- Mandatory eyesight tests for drivers over 70

For drug-driving offences, the Government is considering alternative forensic procedures, such as testing oral fluid, saliva or sweat

The Department for Transport says that estimates suggest lowering the drink-drive limit in England and Wales could reduce fatalities by between 25 and 100 annually

environment, enforcement, employee practices and human behaviour – from a fleet perspective.

"We hold a rich amount of data that can help identify patterns and risks, but only if there's trust and clear governance, and a common data framework," she added.

ROLE OF VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY

Advancements in technology, data analytics and innovation are transforming the landscape of road safety and post-collision response.

From intelligent vehicle systems designed to prevent collisions before they occur, to real-time data-sharing that enhances emergency response, the Government recognises these tools offer unprecedented opportunities to protect lives.

As such, it is consulting on mandating the fitting of 18 new vehicle safety technologies, including emergency braking and lane-keeping.

The move would bring Britain into line with the EU, where they have been mandatory since 2024.

A study commissioned by the DfT which evaluated the costs and benefits of the safety technologies, found that they had the potential to prevent more than 758,000 collisions and 65,000 casualties over a 15-year period.

Aaron Jarvis, vice-president EMEA at Geotab, says that mandating new safety features is a 'solid step'. "Automatic emergency braking, intelligent speed assistance and driver monitoring systems can reduce both the frequency and severity of collisions," he added.

"The UK's decision to align with the EU's General Safety Regulation 2 (GSR2), requiring a new baseline of in-vehicle safety technologies, reflects that direction of travel. But fleets know that technology left unused, misunderstood or overridden delivers limited value.

"There's some work to do by OEMs and fleets as advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) only have value when drivers trust them, understand them and use them as intended. In practice, that trust is uneven."

Geotab sees a wide variation in how drivers interact with the same systems, even within identical vehicles.

"Some rely on them correctly," explained Jarvis. "Others disable alerts, misread interventions, or compensate in ways that increase risk."

OVER-RELIANCE ON SAFETY SYSTEMS

Vehicle safety tech can also lead to a problematic "lazy" style of driving and an over-reliance on the technology by drivers, according to the AFP.

It has been urging fleets to ensure drivers receive guidance to correctly use ADAS – including automatic emergency braking, lane-keeping assist and adaptive cruise control – or risk the technology being counterproductive.

Jarvis said: "If technology and data are to deliver on their promise, fleets must be part of the system, not subject to it.

"The opportunity is there to turn everyday driving data into safer roads, better policy and fewer families affected by preventable collisions.

"Road safety progress stalled when the system stopped learning fast enough. Technology gives us the chance to fix that and fleets can lead the way."

The DfT consultations on the road safety strategy have been extended until May 11.

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MAZDA

Transition to electric from the driving seat

By Vicky Edmonds, CEO of Electric Vehicle Association (EVA) England

Drivers matter. To the businesses operating logistics, fleets, rental and leasing companies, and above all to the success of the electric vehicle (EV) transition.

For a sustainable and healthy EV sector, drivers' needs and choices, whether it is which vehicle is bought, or how they use and run that vehicle, must be central to decisions being made around development of, and use of, EVs whether that is within Government or within a company.

We are seeing continuing growth in the EV sector in the UK, despite a background of mixed messages from Governments in the UK and Europe – around sales targets, more grants and support for consumers, but also added taxes for drivers in the form of pay-per-mile.

December 2025 saw full battery EVs accounting for a third of new car sales. And the UK public charging network is one of the largest in the world, with nearly 88,000 chargers in the ground.

But we are getting to a challenging point in the market, and the last month's EV sales figures, which dipped a little, may be a reflection of that. The sustainability of EV market relies on whether drivers choose to use these vehicles, and if we can make sure it is genuinely serving drivers' needs, then we can ensure its long-term success.

And what are those needs? We know that 95% of EV drivers would recommend their vehicles to family and friends – a powerful indication of how good consumers find these vehicles once they transition to them.

EVs can save households up to £1,400 a year in running costs and are clean and efficient. They bring wider cost saving opportunities from being a reliable and resilient form of energy storage.

And these benefits are multiplied for businesses supporting the roll-out of EVs or running electric fleets.

However, we also know that the majority of EV drivers are from high income households, and that more than nine in 10 EV drivers have a driveway. For households on low and middle incomes, for smaller businesses and for those operating without driveways, the picture is more difficult – whether their vehicle is for personal use, or for business.

Persuading these drivers and businesses that electric can work for them and supporting them in switching from internal combustion engines (ICEs) to a new technology, is essential to unlocking the benefits of the EV transition for all involved in promoting, selling, leasing and operating EVs.

And that comes down to cost and experience.

Upfront purchase and leasing costs are still too high for many, even with Government grants. Much more could be done to lower these costs, for example through lower cost loans and leasing bundles that bring together vehicle and charging costs, and extension of these packages to the used EV market.

High public charging costs, and a network that isn't yet as reliable or as easy to use as consumers need it to be, are also putting off many from making the switch to electric.

> Upfront purchase and leasing costs are still too high for many, even with Government grants

With Government support, significant strides have been taken in making sure charge points are going in the ground in volume. However, our EVA England constituency map, which allows drivers and businesses themselves to look at the number of charge points in their area, and compare that with levels of EV uptake, shows that even where local authorities have invested in significant numbers of charge points, people still aren't choosing to go electric – they still cannot access the EV charging network in the way that they want or need to.

We must make sure that public charge points are affordable, accessible and reliable. The launch of the Government's Public Charging Review at the Budget 2025 is a great opportunity to take urgent action that brings down those costs and makes the driver's charging experience as seamless as possible. And let us be absolutely clear. It is essential that this happens, even more so if a new pay-per-mile charge is to be introduced and we are to avoid it adding extra burdens to drivers.

Drivers deserve to be at the forefront of decisions on the EV transition. They deserve an easy and affordable experience, and they are the key to unlocking the cost saving and wider opportunities that driving electric can bring to us all.

At EVA England we have launched a driver-focused survey designed to make sure that drivers views are properly taken into account as Government considers the new pay-per-mile scheme; and as it looks at how to bring down public charging cost.

With more action from industry and Government putting drivers' interests at its heart, we can deliver an affordable, sustainable and accessible transition to electric.

Senior management changes at Zenith

Zenith has restructured its senior management team and announced that CEO of the vehicle leasing company's corporate and consumer divisions, Ian Hughes, has stepped down.

He had joined what was then Zenith Provecta as commercial director in November 2010 and is credited, alongside former CEO Tim Buchan, with driving much of the company's success over the past 16 years.

Andy Wolff (pictured below), who joined Zenith as a graduate in 2007, becomes managing director of corporate, retaining his existing responsibilities of corporate customer services, customer relationship management and sales, while also adding new business.

Tom Brewer, who joined as commercial director for rental in 2024, will take on the new role of managing director of rental, consumer and corporate operations.

Richard Jones, Zenith CEO, said: "Showing a deep understanding of our business, and a strong track record of delivering commercial success, these promotions are testament to our internal career progression opportunities."

Jones also thanked Hughes for his "committed service", having played an "instrumental part" in the growth of Zenith for 16 years.

BYD names new head of UK fleet sales

BYD has appointed Claudio de Freitas (above) to head of fleet sales in the UK, as part of a larger restructure of its management team.

The former national contract hire & leasing manager joined BYD in 2023, after a six-year stint at Tesla. He has also worked at Sytner Group.

De Freitas takes fleet sales responsibility from Malcolm Fryer, who moves into a new role as UK head of remarketing and fleet operations.

To strengthen the retail side of the business, Marcus Hazelwood joins BYD as head of retail sales, while Thomas Brady becomes BYD UK's network lead.

Steve Beattie, deputy country manager at BYD UK, thanked Fryer for his "outstanding work" in setting up its fleet team.

He added: "I'm very confident that we have the right people in the right places to ensure BYD continues its strong growth in the UK throughout 2026."

Stellantis UK group MD takes on Vauxhall role

Stellantis UK group managing director Eurig Druce has taken the helm at Vauxhall after the sudden departure of Steve Catlin.

Druce will combine the Vauxhall MD role with his current responsibilities as group MD.

Catlin, who has left for personal reasons, started his career at Vauxhall more than two decades earlier as a performance analyst and worked up to retail sales director in 2012.

Following his departure in 2015, he held leadership roles at Saab, Seat, Audi and Volvo Car Financial Services UK as MD before returning to the brand.

Vauxhall has also announced the appointment of Michael Auliar as commercial director. Prior to joining Stellantis in April 2025, Auliar was UK sales director at Nissan.

New fleet director joins Nissan GB

Former sales director at Santander Leasing, Russell Forbes, has been named as the new fleet director at Nissan GB, replacing Bryan Curtis who has retired.

His career includes senior retail leadership roles at dealer principal level, in addition to regional and national roles at Nissan GB and Audi UK, covering new and used cars and fleet.

Nissan says his breadth of experience gives him a deep understanding of dealer operations, OEM fleet strategy and fleet funding partnerships.

Forbes is tasked with working closely with the manufacturer's dealer partners and FN50 funders to drive growth and unlock further fleet success.

Fraikin appoints Craig Douglas as UK chief executive

Commercial fleet services provider Fraikin has appointed Craig Douglas as its new UK chief executive.

Douglas steps into the role from his current position as Fraikin's chief financial and transformation officer, where he has supported the strengthening of the business's operational and financial performance.

He replaces Peter Backhouse, who will move into a new role as senior advisor to support a smooth transition.

Before joining Fraikin in 2025, Douglas held senior roles at PwC and KPMG UK. He most recently served as BMI Group's transformation director and later as its group finance director.

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ENQUIRE NOW

Events coming soon

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

Event	Date	From	Where	More details
Fleet News Awards	18 Mar	*Fleet News*	Grosvenor House Hotel, London	Don't miss the opportunity to network with more than 1,000 fleet industry professionals in this celebration of achievements across the fleet sector. Learn more at www.awards.fleetnews.co.uk
Fleet News at 10	27 Mar	*Fleet News*	Online	A guest panel of knowledgeable fleet decision-makers joins *Fleet News* to dissect the biggest news announcements and industry topics. Viewers can get involved in the chat and offer their own topics for discussion in this much valued and highly popular webinar series. Learn more and register here https://www.fleetnews.co.uk/leadership/fleet-news-at-10-webinars/fleet-news-at-10-march-27th-2026
Commercial Vehicle Show	21-23 Apr	Nineteen Group / RHA	NEC	UK trade show for the truck and van sector.
AFP Annual Conference	13 May	AFP	British Motor Museum	Save the date for the annual AFP Conference at www.theafp.co.uk/events/afp-annual-conference-2026/
Innovation Week	11-15 May	*Fleet News*	Online	Innovation Week from *Fleet News* offers the latest in news and insights on the innovations making their way into the fleet sector. Visit the *Fleet News* website to benefit from exclusive editorial opinion pieces, video interviews and webinar discussions.
Advisory Fuel and Electricity Rates	1 Jun	HMRC	n/a	HMRC revises advisory fuel rates (AFRs) and advisory electricity rates (AER) quarterly. These rates are used to reimburse employees for business travel in company vehicles.

‘ONE OPENREACH, ONE BT IS CRITICAL: WE WORK AS A TEAM’

Judy O’Keefe reveals her guiding principles and why the engineers come first as she transforms the Openreach fleet. *Stephen Briers* reports

Judy O’Keefe encapsulates the essence of a contemporary fleet professional: the strategic thinker bringing leadership skills, data-led decision-making and an eye for detail to an essential business operation.

A 25-year doyenne at BT Group, working in senior operational, finance and commercial director roles, she was appointed fleet director at subsidiary Openreach in late 2024 and immediately sought to modernise the function, putting to good use the knowledge accumulated during her time at BT.

Cost management, supply chain performance, electrification, stakeholder engagement, data management and building a fleet and a central fleet team fit to meet the evolving needs of the parent company packed her list of priorities.

O’Keefe’s initial involvement in Openreach came seven years ago in capacity planning and resourcing, where she was taken under the wing of Kim Mears OBE, managing director of infrastructure delivery.

“She is still my mentor. And a wonderful person,” O’Keefe tells *Fleet News* from the impressive boardroom at BT’s contemporary HQ in Aldgate, London, which enjoys fine views over the capital.

“I’ve been lucky to work with amazing people who have helped me in my career and gave me opportunities to take on additional roles. I think everyone needs some help and support.”

Within 24 months, she was promoted to operational and innovation director, which she describes as overseeing “the team that builds everything complex and challenging” reporting to “inspirational” chief engineer Andy Whale.

This was at the inception of the mammoth, all-consuming full fibre roll-out, which aims to connect 25 million homes across the UK by the end of the year and 30 million by the end of this decade. It required a complete transformation of the van fleet.

> “I am quite forthright and I get into detail. When I go into a meeting, I know my facts”

RIGHT INNOVATIONS

“My role was to make sure we had the right innovations, tools and kit; everything to enable the team of 15,000 people, mostly engineers, to do their jobs,” O’Keefe says. “I was accountable for build policy, and engineering solutions, cables, stores, tools etc. for all of Openreach and any partners who worked on our network.”

Every day started with an 8 o’clock team call; heading the agenda was safety. “It’s first and foremost what we do,” says O’Keefe.

This unerring spotlight on safety and meeting the needs of the workforce provided the ideal foundation for her current role, where the precedence is ensuring the engineers have the right vans and equipment, and stay safe while on the road.

“My passion is making sure the engineers come first; it’s always been the basis of what I do,” she says. “We need to listen to them because, at the end of the day, they’re the ones in the frontline, doing the role.”

When the fleet director position became available, she felt she couldn’t say ‘no’.

“In all my career, it was always about making other teams successful. And making sure everyone else delivered. And my boss, Andy Whale, said to me, ‘this is something for you, Judy – you’re going to shine, or you’re going to fail. And I said, ‘I’m not going to fail!’.”

TRIAL NEW PROJECTS

With a mandate encompassing data, safety, supplier management and innovation, O’Keefe encourages her relatively small team to trial new projects while winning the hearts and minds of key stakeholders, from board-level directors to drivers, line managers to unions.

Openreach, a legally separate, but wholly owned, subsidiary of BT Group, operates the UK’s largest fleet of racked vans, with 23,000 vehicles, including 1,000 specialist light commercials loaded with a variety of hoists, earthworks equipment and trailers.

Her rapport with BT fleet account director Nigel Allsop – also a relative newcomer to fleet, but a long-time colleague – is vital to the smooth and effective operation of the business.

“One Openreach, one BT is critical; we work as a team to make sure everyone is successful,” O’Keefe says. “Working collaboratively has been my foundation.”

Initially, the relationship between BT, which owns the budget and the commercial liaison with suppliers, and Openreach, which has the operational responsibility and accountability, presented some challenges.

“What was happening was, commercial was leading the delivery and not operations,” O’Keefe explains. “I’ve turned it on its head. Now operations lead the decisions; we’ve taken control of the performance and the direct relationship with suppliers.”

This arrangement comes naturally to her: throughout her career, O’Keefe has always operated an outsource policy. A cornerstone of her philosophy is to treat the contractor like they are part of the internal team.

“They’re your partner, not a supplier,” she says. “It’s key that you proactively work with them, to be clear what you want from them. Nine times out of 10, when partners fail, it’s because we haven’t been clear enough. And we haven’t worked collaboratively with them.

“We do monthly operational reviews with our suppliers where we ask what they are doing for us, what’s working for them, what’s not working for them and explore what’s not working for us.”

Woe betide any supplier that hasn’t done their homework. O’Keefe ➲

says: "I am quite forthright and I get into detail. When I go into a meeting, I know my facts."

She adds: "Choosing the right partner is critical – people you can work with who want to be part of your journey and can bring innovation to the table."

Owning the contract relationships has given O'Keefe a much tighter grip on the fleet, particularly expenditure and cost management, which she describes as now being "ahead of budget". Insight and data have also been a key enabler of better planning.

Previously fleet costs would sit at group level to be allocated to each business unit. However, there was no unit breakdown. O'Keefe introduced this level of detail, covering cost per van, innovation costs, tools, fitment and racking, as well as fines, pre-use inspections compliance and incident data.

"What I've developed with my team is monthly reporting for each of the operation units showing how they are performing, although a lot of the data is now also accessible live," she says.

"Now they have this suite of data that they are operationally responsible for. It enables me to hold them to account but, also, it empowers them to make the right decisions."

TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC

One of those decisions, underpinned by the data, feeds into Openreach's electrification strategy, as its transition gathers pace.

At the end of 2025, Openreach had deployed 6,500 electric vehicles, with a target of hitting 7,000 by the end of the financial year (March 2026). "We will be around 7,300 – I like to beat targets," O'Keefe says.

She adds: "I can see who can have an EV and who can't, based on their location, based on what they carry, based on the geography. Also, I can see when they're charging, how often they charge and are they regularly charging when they're already close to 100%. We now have the data to inform decisions, and work with them, to swap out the right vehicles at the right time."

At the same time, O'Keefe is working on a review of charge point operators (CPOs) with Allstar. Openreach engineers currently have a choice of 40 CPOs they can use, but to the "shock" of O'Keefe, they are paying consumer rates.

The list of partners will be cut substantially this year, following trials, resulting in much more competitive commercial rates that reflect Openreach's position as the UK's second largest fleet.

Openreach recently signed an agreement with Myenergi to supply thousands of smart 'zappi' EV home chargers to engineers, providing them with a simple way to charge vehicles at home.

The chargers offer fast and flexible charging at up to 22kW and smart modes that make the most of solar and off-peak tariffs. The installations will be carried out by OVO Energy.

"Everything we do is around being a little bit more innovative, looking at what we're doing different in terms of sustainability, making sure our engineers can still do the job," O'Keefe says.

FLEET MANAGER EVENT

At the end of last year, O'Keefe hosted the first Openreach fleet manager event which brought the data to life for the regional teams. That was, she says, the day when "the light bulb went on for a lot of them".

They were enthused by the level of insight offered by the data and were eager for more, which is giving O'Keefe confidence to press ahead with even more change.

She explains: "We need to control our costs. We need to make sure that teams own those decisions, that they feel accountable for the decisions, and that this is a team effort. It's their role to maintain and control their fleet and make sure that they manage the engineers."

A little more than a year into her role O'Keefe believes she finally has "proper hands-on management" of the fleet.

Among the successes is the improvement on PUIs (pre-use inspections) compliance, something she calls "one of the biggest transformations", with levels rising from 76% when she started to 92% now.

"We had an issue with MOT failures. And it was largely driver observable defects, such as the light bulbs or an issue with tyres," O'Keefe says.

"But because we're now working collaboratively with the operations and we report on compliance, we have seen a 35% reduction on MOT failures.

> "We need culture change: no matter what role you are in. If you're driving a van, you need to be educated on the rules"

That also means we've got an improvement on VOR (vehicles off-road)."

She has introduced league tables to exploit the natural competitiveness among the business units by highlighting the best and worst teams. But the intention is to offer support not a stick.

"If they're not in green, I say, 'how do we help you get to green? What is the problem? What do we need to do? Is it something in fleet?'. Never assume it's just them," she says.

Sometimes, though, the direct, no-nonsense approach yields the best results.

"We had an issue with engineers not checking their tyres. I do a quarterly fleet live and I told them, 'do you know, if you get stopped and your tyres are bald, it's you that gets the points on your licence; it's you that gets fined, not Openreach'. A lot of the engineers didn't realise that.

"We need culture change: no matter what role you are in, if you're driving a van, you need to be educated on the rules."

Innovation flows through the Openreach fleet operation with O'Keefe acting as the catalyst. She demands it of her suppliers, and she is

constantly challenging her team to find more sustainable and effective ways of running the fleet.

The latest internal project is to look at sustainable racking, with modular, lightweight systems which extend the range of the electric vans and can also be reused. Meanwhile, key partner Clayton Power is developing battery charging solutions for tools and equipment to reduce engine idling and eliminate noise from nighttime working, as well as emissions.

MODEST TEAM FOR THE FLEET SIZE

A commitment to outsourcing means Openreach has a modest team of five for the size of fleet – O'Keefe calls it "small but smart" – and it was another area of the business that she transformed following her appointment.

"The structure was wrong. I'm big on governance and controls. It was obvious there was no way that one person could do everything that we were expecting of them: lead the fleet, lead the innovations, lead what we're doing with vehicles and deal with fleet issues," she says.

"So I brought in Paul (O'Brien, senior leader). Paul is responsible for governance – data, auditing the fleet, any vehicle issues – and this is now separate to the operations lead" (previously Chris Mullings who recently moved to SGN).

She is committed to skills and continuous learning – the entire team is to undertake training with the Association of Fleet Professionals – and is on a crusade to boost awareness and the appeal of fleet as a professional career to the next generation.

"This summer, I'm starting a week of work experience within our organisations for young people in schools," O'Keefe says.

"And my own team will be going out to local schools to talk about fleet, especially some of the young girls to let them see they can be an engineer."

She adds: "It's an area that I never knew about it, but I love it. I genuinely think this is one of the best jobs I've ever had. I love the fact that, with the others, I help people make a difference. I can help people do the right thing. And I can support the delivery of innovation and transforming what we do in terms of electrification of the fleet."

As Openreach begins to evolve from the installation of full fibre to repair and maintenance of the network, its fleet requirements will also change.

Vans will need to be equipped to handle both full fibre and traditional copper, resulting in more kit and a bias towards larger vehicles.

However, at the same time, the fleet is expected to shrink to below 20,000 as the surge of work created by the full fibre project subsides.

O'Keefe is also changing the de-fleet process – no mean feat when as many as 4,000 vans could be returning at any one time.

Historically, the vans would be de-kitted while out in the field before being taken to a site to be readied for sale or re-kitted for continued use. It wasn't efficient or effective. Often engineers wouldn't remove all the kit, while the operations were not geared up to handle hazardous waste or sustainably dispose of cones and barriers.

Instead, O'Keefe is bundling up the service and will outsource it on a sustainable, outcomes-based model.

"We don't have to worry about the labour, and it keeps our engineers productive," she says. Productivity was also behind another new initiative: mobile servicing.

"When our vehicles go into the garage, they get stuck in a long queue and sometimes it's just for minor things," O'Keefe explains.

"So, we've trialled mobile clinics in Birmingham, where engineers book in locally, for tyres, light bulbs, wing mirrors, engine checks, all of that kind of thing, and then they are on their way. It has proven really successful."

> "I love the fact that, with the others, I help people make a difference. I can help people do the right thing"

DAY SAVED ON VOR

It has helped to bring VOR down from five days on average to four days, with the mobile service completing work in hours rather than days at a fixed site. It has also reduced the number of hires, saving more money.

AI-powered data is playing an increasingly important role in downtime management, and one that has created a new need within the fleet team – data scientist.

Analysis of the causes of breakdowns is building trends data which Openreach can use to predict the likelihood of a mechanical failure enabling it to take preventative action.

"We're at the early start of the journey. But we've got a special data AI team building that for us," O'Keefe says. "They are also comparing the in-life cost of electric vans, which are new to our fleet, versus an equivalent ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicle that we have been running for years and have lots of data on."

She already uses Microsoft Copilot for checking and comparing contract terms, something that previously would've taken hours to review.

"You still have to sanity check, but I can now do it in minutes," she adds.

O'Keefe is a force of nature who knows what she wants and how best to get it. But she is generous in the recognition she gives her team, highlighting their achievements at board meetings and ensuring their voice is heard when making in key decisions.

She describes her management approach as "kindness in leadership – something that is underrated".

And it extends beyond her immediate team, as one anecdote clearly illustrates.

"I was doing a gate check with the team in Birmingham a couple of months ago. The engineers cannot put the wrong kit in the vans. But this engineer had a big office chair in the back of his," she says.

"Now, my guy was saying, it's a compliance issue, and I said, no, let's understand why he's doing that. There might be a reason that we're not aware of. It turns out he had a type of diabetes, and when he was splicing (cables) or anything, he needed to sit down.

"We went over to his manager, and there was a team of guys there who thought he was in trouble. I said, we need to get his van specially fitted with a chair so that he could sit safely.

"So, like I say to my team, let's make sure, let's be kind."

COMPANY: Openreach
FLEET DIRECTOR: Judy O'Keefe
TIME IN ROLE: 16 months
FLEET TEAM SIZE: five people
FLEET SIZE: 23,000 vans
FUNDING METHOD: contract hire/operating lease
OPERATING CYCLE: five years

Home charger for work vans

A shared charging pioneer, Openreach has agreements with First Group and Arnold Clark to use their work-based chargers and is also in negotiations with national supermarket groups to use their public units at preferred rates.

For those drivers able to have home chargers, Openreach pays for the installation and maintenance – more than 2,500 have been fitted. However, some engineers are using them to charge their personal cars, rather than their vans.

"We're clear in the contract that the primary use of the chargers that we install has to be for your work van," Judy O'Keefe says.

She is looking to incentivise consistent usage while recognising those engineers who already prioritise their vans when charging at home.

"Not only does this initiative have a positive environmental impact, it allows engineers to use the chargers for their personal EVs, saving them the cost associated with installing a home charger and ultimately resulting in more EVs on the road," O'Keefe says.

"By promoting compliant home-charging behaviours, we reduce downtime, ensure the vehicle is charged and ready for work in the morning and keep more engineers on the road serving our customers."

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How AI is changing fleet management

From speeding up admin to preventing drivers having collisions, artificial intelligence is already having a significant impact. *Andrew Ryan* reports

The hype and buzz that surrounds artificial intelligence (AI) is often dizzying and bewildering, with the suggested impact and applications of the technology seemingly growing every day.

But beyond the hyperbole, the technology's ability to process, analyse and interpret huge amounts of data is already proving useful to many fleet decision-makers.

"I do hear news almost every day about fleet managers achieving better results through the adoption of AI and this is where we, as an industry, have the opportunity to influence its future course," says Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP).

"Examples include creating a workflow that looks set to dramatically reduce administration for managing parking and other fines, generating dashboards that allow almost everything relevant about a driver to be seen on one screen, and grading administrative fleet job applications to draw up candidate shortlists.

"These are all worthwhile uses and perhaps point towards the most obvious direction for fleets and AI – greater productivity especially in areas where many of our members are experiencing large and growing administrative and managerial logjams."

Hollick says he has become aware of more and more AFP members working with their IT departments, their suppliers and on an individual basis to make this happen.

"One prominent fleet manager commented to me that AI's best use would be to help fleet departments handle all the additional work they've been handed in recent years and, while expressed with a roll of the eyes, this underlines that point – rather than the technology proving a threat to jobs, it could free fleets from ever-growing inboxes and give them time to bring about new improvements through strategic thinking," he adds.

It is this ability to minimise the impact of the more menial jobs which is proving appealing to many fleet decision-makers.

"If we can stop people doing very repetitive administration tasks, not only will we make their job satisfaction higher, but also we can get them to focus on things such as customer experience and safety," says Sarah Armitage, decarbonisation and vehicle strategy manager at Network Rail.

"These are the things that are really key but sometimes get lost in administration tasks that can take hours."

THREAT TO JOBS

One widespread concern around AI is the suggestion that it will replace many people's jobs. Research last year from online CV company LiveCareer UK suggested nearly a million jobs in London could be changed by AI, affecting more than 200,000 telemarketers, 150 bookkeepers and more than 95,000 data entry specialists.

Other jobs identified at risk include fast food and warehouse workers, retail cashiers, paralegals and proofreaders.

However, while the impact on fleet management roles will not be known for many years, organisations should embrace the technology as an aid to fleet decision-makers and not as a replacement.

Neil Cawse, founder and CEO of Geotab, says one of the questions an employee asked him at a company town hall was 'will my job be replaced by AI?'.

"I said I don't think your job is going to be replaced by AI, I think your job is going to be replaced by people who use AI, and I stand by that," he says.

"I think AI is the ultimate problem solver that can help you be better at your job.

"Imagine that you, at the snap of your finger, could have 10 or 20 interns working for you right now on any task they want.

"And all they need is your guidance. This brilliant intern can sift through mountains of data and construct patterns.

"It's probably more knowledgeable than any one of us, but it needs your experience, your wisdom and your strategic oversight to be able to turn the outcomes into real-world action that can generate meaningful change."

Cawse says fleet managers should ensure they become familiar with the technology as soon as possible, and begin by subscribing to an AI assistant such as ChatGPT or Microsoft Co-Pilot.

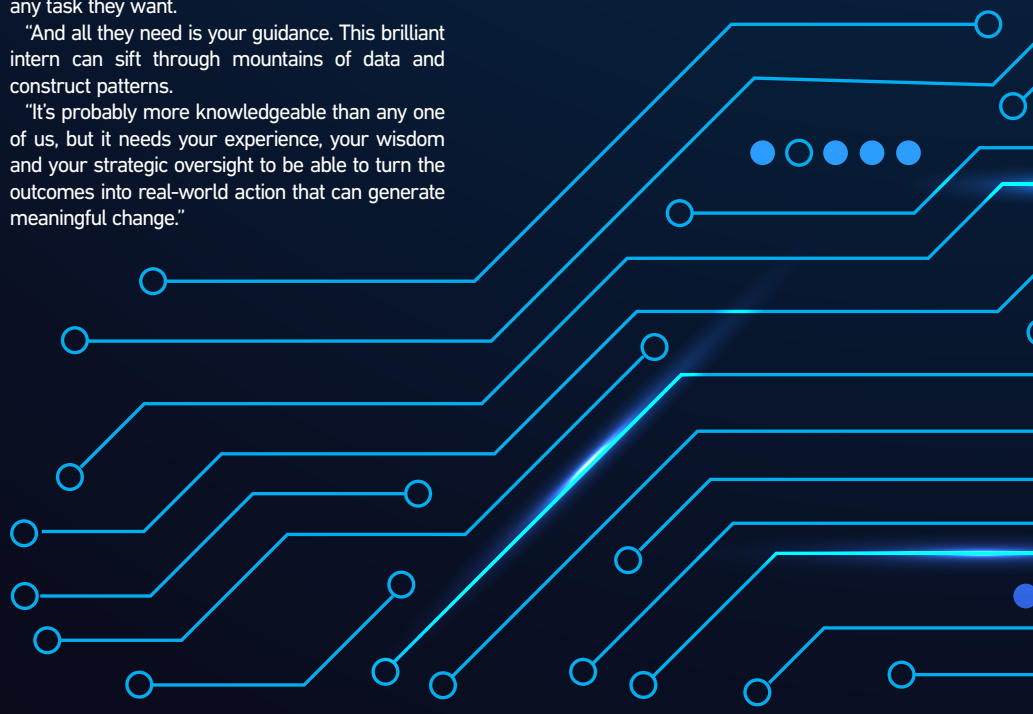
"Learn prompting skills," he says. "One of the things I hear is that AI didn't work for me or I'm not hearing good answers.

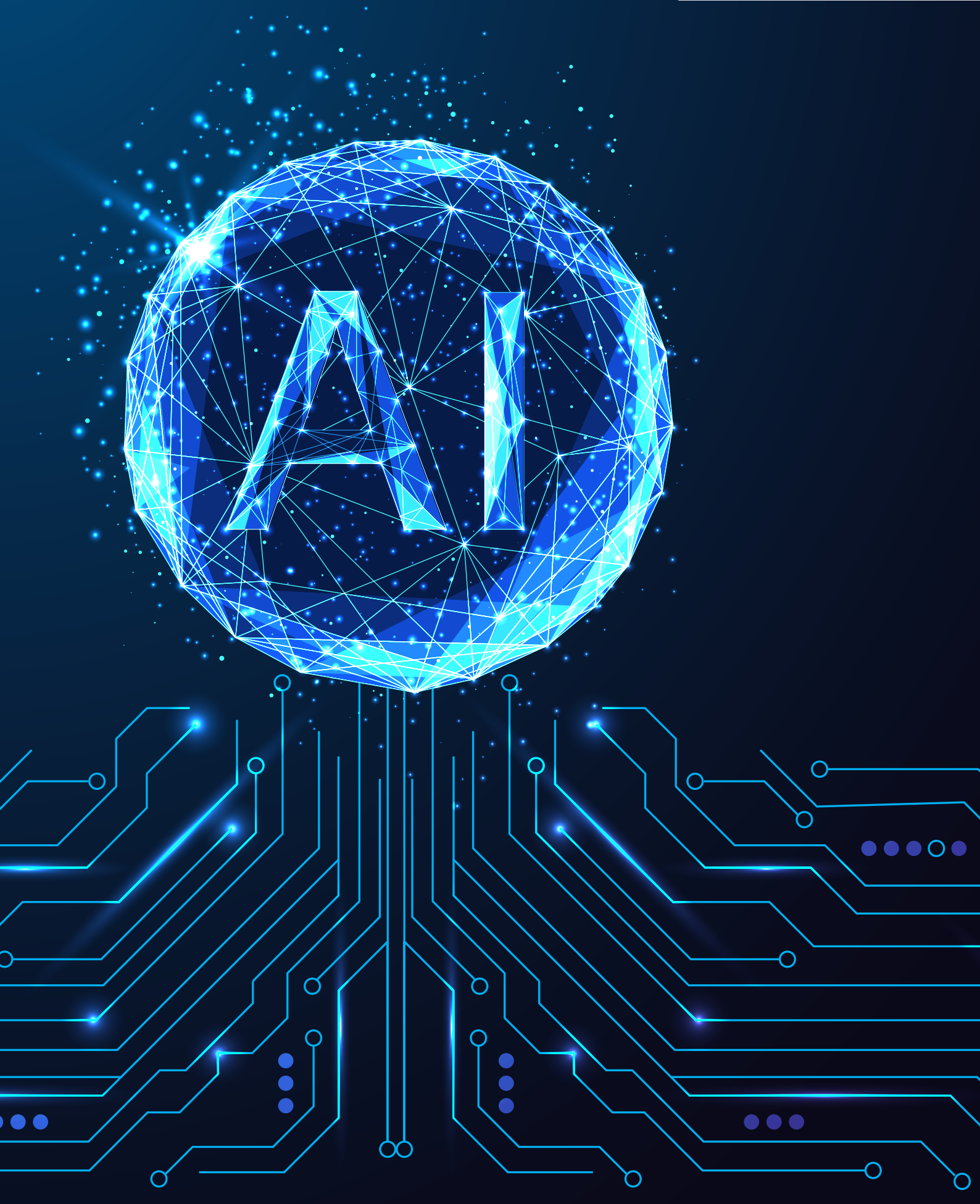
"It is a case of prompting – the more you put into the tool the more you get out."

Hollick agrees individual fleet managers should be proactive about embracing the technology, becoming aware of its possibilities and making visible and worthwhile improvements within their corporate environment.

"By integrating it successfully into our job roles, we can build a narrative that mounts a successful case for how AI should be used to drive efficiency across the whole fleet sector – and that is a responsibility that arguably falls to all of us," he adds.

Here we outline five major ways fleets are already using AI to drive improvements.




AI

DRIVER BEHAVIOUR

Perhaps the most significant role AI plays in fleet operations is in improving driver safety.

Research carried out by Samsara based on an analysis of aggregated and anonymised data from more than 2,600 organisations worldwide found fleets using its full AI suite – including dual-facing AI dashcams, in-cab alerts and driver coaching – achieved a 73% reduction in crash rates over 30 months, compared with a 37% reduction for other Samsara customers.

"Back to the early 2000s, when people were talking about fleet safety, they had a driver scorecard and broadly that can be relatively simple technology; how fast the vehicle was going, how hard it was braking, for example," says Johan Land, SVP of product and engineering at Samsara.

"We can now use machine learning and AI to do a vast analysis that would be very difficult for humans to do. We can take in much more.

"Your driver may be perfect according to their old-school scorecard, but now we can consider the things they are not in control of.

"What's the weather like? Are we sending them on a road that's dangerous? We now have the technology that can consider all those factors and come out with the probability of what's going to happen."

At its most basic level, AI will use data from telematics systems to identify trends among drivers, but the technology is also becoming widespread in in-cab cameras, both external- and driver-facing.

While traditional cameras provide event recording and can alert fleet managers to any incidents – providing footage in real-time – AI-based systems can also detect if the driver is distracted, for example is using a phone, or identify potential hazards outside the vehicle.

"AI can become the second set of eyes that fleet drivers and managers never knew they needed, and the benefits are hard to ignore," says Barney Goffer, UK product manager at Teletrac Navman.

"By going beyond simple video recording and leveraging machine learning and computer vision, AI-powered dashcams transform fleet safety."

AI is also being used to provide feedback to drivers, whether that is in real-time or after they have finished driving.

In a recent pilot, Geotab says the voice coaching functionality in its dual-facing AI dashcam Go Focus Plus helped reduce tailgating by 90% and phone use by 95%.

AI-powered systems can also mean that the need for coaching is automatically triggered by driver behaviour. Training can then be carried out by the fleet decision-maker or by AI itself.

For example, Land says the Samsara Avatar system, delivered directly through its driver app, enables organisations to create human-centred training content by incorporating real team members into digital coaching workflows.

"You can record yourself or anyone else in your team and their digital copy will coach all of your drivers fully automatically," he adds.

AI solutions can also recognise positive driving actions as well as risky behaviours, enabling fleets to implement driver recognition programmes that reward safe driving habits, helping to create a balanced feedback system that motivates drivers rather than just penalising mistakes, says Land.

ROUTE OPTIMISATION

Optimising routes in real time with AI can help fleets to increase vehicle efficiency, improve driver productivity, cut journey times and reduce the risk of collisions. Using data and analysis from AI-enhanced telematics, together with traffic information, weather and road condition information, systems can plan journeys based on individual circumstances.

"People in the transport sector are recognising that you can actually use optimisation algorithms to do other things with, not just routes," says Colin Ferguson, CEO of route optimisation and decarbonisation solution provider Optimize.

"The actual outcome may be a route, but if you come at it from a different approach, there are multiple benefits."

Data from telematics and cameras can be used to understand the behaviour and profile of a driver, and can help allocate the right routes to the right drivers: if a driver is better, on average, in rural driving than urban driving, or vice versa, then the optimisation software can allocate jobs that match their skillset the best.

The algorithms can also help a fleet decision-maker integrate electric vehicles into their operations seamlessly, as well as get the most out of that vehicle, says Ferguson.

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Fleet management isn't just about vehicles; it's also about people. LCVs are versatile - behind the wheel could be a plumber, a tree surgeon, or a paramedic. They all need to get themselves and their equipment from A to B efficiently, but the nature of their work impacts what this looks like for them. However, regardless of their industry, drivers need a seamless experience. Your fleet partner should be taking proactive steps to prevent any bumps in the road and keep you at the forefront of your industry.

Here at Zenith, we take the time to understand our customers' business and provide an LCV fleet that's tailor made to their needs. Our LCV consultants are highly experienced in finding the right van, spec, and conversion for the job. We'll use data, insight, and know-how to recommend vehicles that are fit for purpose whilst saving you time and money. We leverage our relationships with manufacturers to manage the build process, making sure that your employees are a part of the process, so they're road ready from day one.

Looking ahead, electrification is an important aspect of any fleet manager's long-term strategy. Whilst it's important that businesses take steps towards electrification, it's even more important to do this at a sustainable pace.

You need a thoughtful approach when introducing changes and if drivers aren't involved in the conversation and the transition isn't communicated clearly, it's unlikely to be a smooth switch. That means any change, whether that's adopting electric vehicles, installing telematics, or implementing new safety protocols, must be framed in terms of how it supports their work, not disrupts it.

Helping customers electrify their fleets

For one customer, to make the shift to eLCVs easy for their engineers, we provided them with Vauxhall E-Vivaros (as they were familiar with earlier Vivaro models) and ran information and training sessions to ensure they felt comfortable with the technology. We included their engineers in the design process for the new racking and held workshops so that the vans were built to reflect their true usage and be genuinely helpful with the engineers' day-to-day work. We then ran feedback sessions and agreed bespoke terms with the manufacturers, third parties, and livery providers, so that the vans were tailored to the team's needs. Consequently, what started as a step towards more sustainable operations has evolved into a multi-year project, and eLCVs now make up the vast majority of their fleet.

Take Charge with Zenith

To help more businesses take these steps towards electrification, we're inviting our customers to take part in our Take Charge campaign. Customers can borrow an eLCV for a month and put it to the test in real life situations. You'll gain firsthand experience into how to integrate eLCVs into your fleet and wider business operations, so that when the time comes to retire ICE vehicles, your business is set up for success and stays ahead of the competition.

Find out more about our eLCV solutions by scanning the QR code or visit www.zenith.co.uk

REDUCING OFF-ROAD TIME

Reducing vehicle off-road time (VOR) through the early identification of mechanical failures is also a major focus of fleet AI solutions.

Geotab estimates each mechanical breakdown can cost between £5,000 and £10,000 when lost productivity, vehicle rental and other associated costs are taken into account.

A predictive fleet maintenance solution takes hundreds of thousands of vehicle data points, such as sensor data and driver uses and then learns from analysing vehicles across all asset classes to pick out patterns that have led to failures in the past.

It then alerts the fleet manager of any potential failures before they happen.

"For example, one of the things we do is look at the cranking voltage and a few other things in every vehicle we have connected, which allows us to build very intelligent machine-learning models that are constantly learning what it looks like in a 12v battery that's about to fail," says Aaron Jarvis, associate vice-president for EMEA at Geotab.

"This means we can accurately predict how long it will be until the 12-volt battery will need to be replaced.

"So, instead of going to the fleet management company and saying 'hey, this car has broken down', we can say 'in six months' time the battery will fail', and then all of a sudden you know you need to replace it before then, with the result being that you never have that vehicle off the road."

Predictive maintenance solutions can also prioritise maintenance tasks based on urgency and failure risk, optimise inventory management through precise forecasting, extending asset lifespan through early detection and mitigation of issues and enhance fleet safety by preventing breakdowns that could lead to collisions.

VEHICLE THEFT

Using AI and machine-learning to predict risky behaviour can significantly reduce the number of vehicle thefts, says Targa Telematics.

It says that by using the technology to identify patterns of a potential vehicle theft, organisations can implement proactive measures to prevent any incidents.

This approach meant Targa Telematics saw its UK customers record a 12% drop in thefts in 2025 compared with 2024.

"The application of advanced algorithms to the large volumes of data included in our data lake plays a crucial role in the development and training of increasingly efficient Agentic AI models," adds Chris Horbowyj, UK commercial director at Targa Telematics.

"The new approach we have implemented has allowed us to significantly reduce the economic impact of theft."

VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

Visual checks are an important way to ensure vehicles are safe and roadworthy, with some suppliers incorporating AI into their solutions to ensure checks have been carried out correctly.

Samsara's app, for example, requires drivers to take photos of the vehicle to prove they have carried out the checks, with AI being used to certify that the picture is current and not an old one, while accident management company Sopp+Sopp has launched FleetScout.

This is a vehicle inspection platform designed to help commercial fleet operators reduce unreported damage, improve compliance and cut unplanned maintenance.

It brings together an inspection app, centralised compliance management platform and fully automated drive-through inspection towers that deliver a real-time view of fleet condition.

FleetScout uses computer vision AI to detect damage automatically, consistently assessing vehicle condition without relying solely on manual input.

Home charging: everything a fleet manager needs to know

Using charge points at employees' properties can result in significant cost and operational benefits, but work needs to be done to maximise their effectiveness. *Andrew Ryan* reports

One of the facts often used to highlight the challenges facing organisations working to electrify their fleets is that between 30% and 40% of UK properties do not have off-road parking, therefore making home charging difficult to implement.

While this is used to highlight the very real obstacles faced by many organisations when adopting electric vehicles (EVs) – and they are difficult to overcome (but not impossible - see p33) – it makes it easy to breeze past the reality that the majority do.

And simply dismissing these drivers as 'low-hanging fruit' may underplay the important role home charging can play in running an effective and efficient fleet.

Here, we answer the key questions fleet decision-makers need to consider to get the most out of the benefits home charging offers.

Do I NEED to install home chargers for my drivers?

The answer depends on a number of factors, primarily whether the EV is taken home each night.

Should the organisation operate a back-to base model where the vehicle is left at a depot overnight, then it would make sense to install and use workplace charging infrastructure.

If, however, the vehicle is parked at an employee's dwelling, then installing home chargers should be considered.

In the majority of these cases, the company will fully fund the charge point installation, although some employers do insist drivers foot the bill, particularly for perk cars (see panel, right).

Those funding the cost may insert a clause into their employee's contract requiring them to repay part or all of the cost should they leave the business within 12 months.

The decision is also influenced by the type of vehicle and whether it is business-need or perk.

For company cars, home charging supports convenience, cost control and driver satisfaction, particularly where public infrastructure can be inconsistent. But it may not be a necessity.

"Vans introduce additional complexity," says Suzanne Phillips, of Ayvens. "Higher daily mileage, payload requirements and operational downtime mean charging speed, installation suitability and energy reimbursement need closer scrutiny."

A home charger is often essential, not optional for van drivers, says Jonny Berry, head of decarbonisation, innovation and strategy at Novuna Vehicle Solutions. "Relying on public charging during the working day introduces real cost to the organisation through lost productivity, driver downtime and schedule risk," he adds. "Time spent charging at public infrastructure during working hours is effectively paid idle time."

Fleets, of course, could opt not to install a dedicated charger and ask drivers to plug their vehicle into their domestic 2.3kW supply, but this could have safety and operational impacts.

"A standard domestic socket can technically charge an EV, but it's not the right solution for fleet drivers," says Naomi Nye, head of sales at Drax Electric Vehicles.

"Charging is slow – often over 24 hours – and prolonged use increases safety risks if sockets or cabling weren't designed for sustained loads."

A domestic socket does not provide safeguards such as dedicated RCD protection, DC fault detection or load balancing or monitoring which is provided by dedicated EV chargers.

""Domestic sockets are not designed for drawing maximum current for 10-30 hours continuously," says Berry.

"Prolonged EV charging significantly increases overheating, degradation and electrical failure.

"Even as a fallback, 2.3kW charging is so slow that it often fails to deliver meaningful range recovery, which can push them back on to public charging during working hours."

Charging an EV with a 60kW battery from 20% to 80% capacity could take more than 15 hours from a domestic socket, compared with around five hours on a 7kW home charger.

If an EV has an efficiency of 3.5 miles per kWh, this equates to around eight miles per hour from a domestic socket, compared with around 25 miles from a 7kW wallbox.

"A dedicated charger also makes it easier to take advantage of smart tariffs, where off-peak rates can cut charging costs by around 70%," says Elvin Nagamootoo, head of product at Octopus Energy. "Plus, many chargers come with a fixed cable, which is far more convenient."

Berry recommends fleets adopt a policy that company EVs must be charged only using approved chargers.

SHOULD an organisation install a home charger if it is not an operational necessity?

> "I think people recognise it (providing charge points) as us going above and beyond"
>
> **BETHANY THOMAS, ALLIANZ UK**

"In most cases, yes," says Jonny Berry, of Novuna. "If an employer expects an employee to rely on an electric company vehicle for regular work, providing access to reliable charging is a sensible and fair approach.

"If a business mandates electric vehicles, it should also take responsibility for enabling the infrastructure that makes them usable day-to-day."

Some organisations, such as Allianz UK, provide home chargers to their company car drivers when it is not an operational necessity to make it as easy as possible for their employees to make the transition to an electric vehicle.

"Providing charge points became a bit of a no-brainer honestly. I think people recognise it as us going above and beyond, as well as demonstrating our commitment to our sustainability ambitions," says Bethany Thomas, head of sustainability at Allianz UK.

The insurance giant has partnered with home charge point provider Indra to supply and install the chargers, with the company working with drivers to assess their ability to have a unit installed.

"That was an addition to the process and really kicked it off: it's worked incredibly well," says Thomas.

However, some organisations opt not to, instead they leave it to the employee to fund their own wallbox out of the significant benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax savings they will make by choosing a battery electric vehicle (BEV) as their company car.

At Schneider Electric, for example, employees taking on EVs are offered the opportunity to have a home charge point installed on a payment plan through Qmerit, which the company is the majority owner of.

What is the financial CASE for providing home chargers?

Installing a home charger typically costs around £1,000 a unit, but this figure can be recouped relatively quickly if it means a driver is charging at their property instead of using the public network.

Zapmap figures show that – dependent on the speed of charger and the operator – it can cost up to 89p/kWh to use a DC public charge point.

This is more than three times as expensive as a typical domestic tariff of 28p/kWh, and up to 12 times more than some EV smart tariffs such as Octopus Go or E.On NextDrive.

If a BEV achieved an efficiency of 3.5 mi/kWh and the driver charged exclusively from a 7p/kWh smart tariff then they would have saved £1,000 – enough to cover the cost of a wallbox – after travelling around 4,300 miles compared with solely using an 89p/kWh rapid charger.

As well as reducing the cost of charging, providing home charge points to employees can reduce an organisation's overall capital costs.

"Home chargers are significantly cheaper to install than depot chargers, even prior to potential upgrade requirements," says Connor Allen, fleet strategy lead at Cenex.

Peter McDonald, mobility director at Ohme, adds: "If you've suddenly got 50 vans plugging in at your depot every night, you're very quickly going to reach the limitation of your site capacity.

"Upgrading those sites is not cheap at all, even if they're on 7kW kilowatt chargers.

"If you can divert that to your drivers' homes by providing them with a charger, then you haven't got that cost of upgrading the network; you've got the cost of buying a charger for your drivers, which you're quickly going to make up."

Is the employee's home SUITABLE for charge point installation?

Another important factor to consider is how suitable someone's home is for a charge point. As well as looking at where it can be installed – whether it is on an external wall, on a post or in a garage, the property's fuse rating is also key.

A lack of off-street parking may not rule out home charging for an employee. The use of cross-pavement charging gullies to run cables safely across pavements for people who can park outside their home is growing, with the Government late last year launching a consultation to make their installation easier.

"Cross pavement solutions should be considered where appropriate, but may need to be trialled before mass-rollout, checking local authority permissions, and having clear health and safety guidance," says Connor Allen, of Cenex.

If the employee owns their home, then gaining permission to install a wallbox should be straightforward. Even if they are renting, this may not be an immovable barrier.

"Renters will generally need landlord permission, but a growing number of landlords are supportive of installations," says Elvin Nagamootoo, of Octopus Energy.

> "A growing number of landlords are supportive"
>
> **ELVIN NAGAMOOTOO, OCTOPUS**

One issue which may arise more commonly with employees who rent their property is that they move more regularly than those who own their home.

If this happens, then organisations can either leave the charger on the property or remove it and install it at the driver's new dwelling.

"Many modern chargers are installed on mounting plates, allowing them to be safely removed or swapped by a competent person," says Jonny Berry, of Novuna.

How should drivers be REIMBURSED for business mileage?

Cenex advises a clear and auditable reimbursement process must be in place before any home charger roll-out.

"This should address how electricity costs for business charging are calculated, paid and monitored," says Connor Allen, of Cenex.

"Employers should consider mileage reimbursement at an agreed pence-per-mile rate, RFID cards linked to a charging backend, direct reimbursement based on energy provider data and monthly charging allowances or fixed payments.

"It is also important to determine whether personal vehicles will use the charger and how those costs are separated to avoid over-claiming."

To reduce the risk of drivers being under-compensated if an employer pays the HMRC-approved AER (advisory electricity rate) and to minimise the cost of home charging, organisations can encourage drivers to move on to an electricity tariff with cheaper off-peak/overnight rates. These can be significantly lower than standard daytime rates.

"Where employees cannot access off-peak tariffs, employers may wish to consider supplementary reimbursement approaches, such as those based on actual kWh consumed or an uplift to AER to ensure drivers are not disadvantaged," says Allen.

Analysis by Ohme has found it would cost £539.98 to power an EV for the average annual UK mileage of 6,800 miles if that vehicle achieved 3.5 miles/kWh and was charged on a standard variable tariff of 27.69p/kWh. If the driver solely used a smart tariff of 7p/kWh, it would be £136.

Solutions do exist which record the actual amount of electricity used by a home charger to allow for accurate reimbursement.

Drivers using an Ohme charge point, for example, can select their electrify tariff on the Ohme app. This allows for automatic smart charging so the vehicle battery is at the desired capacity at the time required, with as much charging as possible taking place during the cheapest time of the off-peak or dynamic tariff.

This information is also available to a fleet manager. "They can see the costings for each of their vehicles and how much those drivers have spent on charging and the CO_2 savings made as well," says Peter McDonald, of Ohme.

"The cost of charging can be automatically reimbursed to the driver and it means they will often get the money back even before they've got their electricity bill, so they never have to worry about expenses claims or being out of pocket."

If a household has more than one EV, then many apps enable the driver to select which vehicle is plugged in, allowing the fleet decision-maker to easily see whether the electricity consumed was by a company or private vehicle.

Allianz UK has also introduced a driver app, which is available to all company car drivers and their line managers.

This allows employees to log their charging and their business mileage to make reimbursement easier: the company pays the AER.

"I use it myself as a company car driver and it's a really slick app for getting reimbursed for business mileage," says Bethany Thomas, of Allianz UK.

What level of SUPPORT should be provided for home charge points?

Home charge points for company EVs should be treated as business-critical equipment, not consumer gadgets, says Novuna's Jonny Berry.

"If a driver cannot charge at home, the vehicle may be unusable the next day, creating operational disruption and unnecessary cost," he adds.

At a minimum, employers should ensure the following support is in place:

- Clear hardware warranty: defined cover for parts and replacement, with clarity on response times and responsibilities.
- Ongoing software and firmware updates: chargers are connected devices. Without active software support, performance, security and compatibility degrade over time.
- Remote monitoring and diagnostics: faults should be detected proactively where possible, rather than relying on drivers to report issues.
- Responsive driver helpline: drivers need a clear point of contact when something goes wrong, particularly outside normal working hours.
- Defined service level agreements (SLAs): support should have agreed response and resolution times, reflecting the operational importance of the vehicle.
- Planned maintenance where appropriate: especially for high-mileage or operational vehicles, chargers should not be left in a 'fit and forget' state.

How should home CHARGING be incorporated into fleet?

Installing the wallbox at someone's dwelling is not the final part of the home charging jigsaw.

"Home charging works best as part of a wider ecosystem – linking home, workplace and public infrastructure into a single managed experience," says Suzanne Phillips, of Ayvens.

"Employees shouldn't navigate charging complexity alone. The right tools, policies and support ensure drivers can charge confidently, reduce operational risk for employers and help electric fleets deliver on both cost and sustainability goals while maintaining the consistency fleets rely on for long-term planning."

Jonny Berry, of Novuna, says the market is now moving towards "what can be described as operational domestic charging".

This applies the same principles used for depot and workplace charging to the home environment: chargers are monitored centrally; issues are identified remotely; maintenance and support are planned, not reactive; and uptime is treated as a priority.

"This approach maximises availability, reduces reliance on public charging and removes the burden from the driver," says Berry.

"A charger supporting an operational vehicle at home should be managed, supported and maintained no differently to a charger installed at a depot."

He adds: "If a home charger underpins a company vehicle, then support needs to match its importance. Anything less creates avoidable downtime, higher costs and unnecessary frustration for drivers.

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AWARD-WINNING KELLY GROUP: WHERE SAFETY IS AN EVER-EVOLVING PROCESS

Larry McGrane and Dermot Coughlan, holders of the 2025 Excellence in Fleet Safety and Compliance Award, tell *Stephen Briers* the secrets to their success

Ask any fleet professional to name their top priority and nine times out of 10 they'll say: "safety". Keeping drivers safe is a moral, legal and societal duty – protecting them, and other road users. But it's also one which can reap substantial financial savings.

Just ask Kelly Fleet Services, the winner of Excellence in Fleet Safety and Compliance at the 2025 Fleet News Awards. The in-house operation of Kelly Group has saved its parent company millions of pounds over the years by developing one of the country's most comprehensive risk management policies.

The investment has been considerable; but the sum is dwarfed by the bottom-line savings.

However, that is not the main motivation behind the programmes introduced and continually refined by fleet director Dermot Coughlan (right) and managing director Larry McGrane (left) over the past two decades. Both have been around long enough to experience the trauma of road fatalities. Consequently, every incident redoubles their efforts towards zero harm.

"No one spends this long in the fleet business and seen that many miles driven without catastrophe," says McGrane, who joined Kelly Group 37 years ago to set up its in-house transport and plant operation.

"We've seen catastrophe, we've seen loss. And that's not something you want to repeat. So that drives us. It drives us to ensure that our people get home safe. Everything from the boardroom down is driven by safety."

This laser focus never wavers, not even during times of intense operational pressure.

Take the past 18 months, for example, when a major City Fibre contract win resulted in the biggest ever increase in Kelly's fleet numbers. Vans swelled by an incredible 68%, from a little more than 2,500 to 4,300; cars saw a more modest rise, from 193 to 230.

In addition, Kelly Group invested millions of pounds on plant to support the new business.

WELL POSITIONED FOR INFLUX

Juggling the onboarding of so many vans and drivers without impacting the business operations while ensuring new recruits were inducted into the Kelly behavioural safety programme was no mean feat. Fortunately, the group was well positioned to handle the influx.

Just months earlier, Coughlan and McGrane had concluded a 'New to Field' project after recognising that drivers who were new to the company (as opposed to new drivers per se) were prone to higher-than-average incident rates.

Their objective was to improve organisational socialisation and

identify areas for skills improvements to accelerate positive change.

One of Kelly Group's three DSA-qualified road risk managers was given responsibility for all new drivers during their first six months to set expectations and ensure they received a consistent message about compliance and road safety.

Each New to Field (NTF) driver also has an AI camera installed into their vehicle which provides them with real-time audible feedback on speeding, seatbelt use, mobile usage, inattentive driving, drowsiness, lane departure and traffic light infringements.

Data is also fed back to their line manager.

Learning starts from day one, with the driver undergoing a full day induction. The morning is spent in the classroom where they are taken through the company's golden rules and expectations, including the rules of the road, how they can improve their driving and the telematics systems. They are also informed about Kelly Group's Elite Drivers Club (more on that shortly).

Then they go out onto the road for a practical assessment. Not everyone makes it.

"Safety is paramount and the risks are so high, so you have to prove to us that you are competent behind the wheel of an LCV," says McGrane.

> "We've seen catastrophe, we've seen loss. And that's not something you want to repeat"
>
> **LARRY McGRANE**

BITE-SIZED LEARNING

Just two years in and the programme is already evolving. McGrane and Coughlan realised that a lot of the drivers weren't just new to the company, they were new to the industry as well. They were having to learn everything, not just Kelly's safety culture.

Coughlan explains: "We're pushing a huge amount of information onto people. So we are changing it to be more bite-sized learning where they can learn the job as well as the vehicles and the driving but with more space between the elements."

Telematics underpins Kelly's safety culture. The company was an early adopter back in the mid-1990s, but the technology was in its infancy and meaningful data was difficult to extract.

It moved away for a few years, returning in 2011 as the next generation systems started to identify high risk drivers based on a spread of key behavioural metrics.

"That's what changed it for us," says Coughlan.

A move to Samsara in 2017 saw another step forward with the advent of AI cameras.

"Nobody questions the data now," he adds. "The confidence that everybody has – the risk management team, the engineers, the drivers – in the data has a huge bearing on people's perception of the product."

The ultimate ambition is for every driver to make it into the Elite Drivers Club, which Kelly Group introduced in 2021.

The benchmark is set high: invitation requires a telematics score of between 98 and 100 achieved over three consecutive months. Initially, just 15% of the drivers reached that yardstick; it's now 70%.

RANGE OF BENEFITS

Members receive a range of benefits, including monthly monetary prizes, merchandise and entry into a six-monthly prize draw.

"A driver wearing the Elite badge is genuinely considered prestigious among Kelly drivers and members are proud to show off their achievements," says Coughlan.

It is having an impressive impact on crash stats, with Elite drivers 63% less likely to be involved in a collision. But it also has a financial benefit. Kelly budgeted for cost mitigation of 10%-15%, but the savings "have been substantially more", says McGrane.

And that's before considering the consequences of handling that massive increase in fleet size and driver population.

The team had predicted a spike in incidents and total costs over the subsequent 12 months; however the peak occurred for less than two months before levelling off and subsiding.

"Proportionate to the size of the fleet, we're actually seeing much better results thanks to New to Fleet and the Elite Driver Club," Coughlan says.

Board buy-in to the safety agenda is a fundamental reason why Kelly Group has been able to incessantly invest in its risk management policy over many years. It also empowered the Fleet Services team to address risks as they arose without, for example, seeking approval to have a driver retrained or stood down from driving duties.

"When we started building this culture, we separated driving as a job within the business," says McGrane. "Regardless of whatever job you have, be it director, supervisor, manager or admin, if you drive a company vehicle, you've got a second job. And in that job, you report directly into the risk management team and the risk manager of the business.

"That was fully supported by the board."

HARD TO REPLICATE WITHOUT BIG INVESTMENT

McGrane recognises that some elements of its policy would be impossible to replicate from scratch without heavy investment.

For example, engineers tend to start driving at 7 o'clock and arrive on site to start their work an hour or two later. At 9 o'clock, a member of the fleet team looks at all harsh driving alerts that morning. Any engineer with multiple events receives a phone call.

The first question isn't an accusatory 'what the hell is going on?'; it's a more benevolent – 'are you ok?'.

"A lot of the time you find they've had a bad morning. They didn't sleep very well the night before or something's going on in their life, perhaps a problem with their manager or one of their colleagues," Coughlan says.

"You don't have that many engineers out there without every day being a bad day for somebody.

"Often, it's a five-minute chat, we'll calm things down and then they go back to work. But we've had a few potential catastrophic situations where people were really not well, mentally, and in no fit state to work.

"At that point, we intervene. Get the vehicle picked up and get the guy taken home. It's uncommon, but it happens."

Meanwhile, another member of the team is reviewing camera footage for dangerous driving with a similar intervention where necessary.

McGrane says: "That's quite a commitment by the company to put that sort of resource in. And then we have other people making the phone calls, but we feel there's a benefit to it; it results in a safer fleet and what really pays the dividends is that human interaction."

It's a comprehensive risk management programme that encompasses assessors, risk managers and the administration team, as well as the technology which underpins their work. And it's ever-evolving.

Monthly meetings always generate several new ideas; some work, some don't. But when your fleet is travelling six million miles a month, incidents are inevitable. So the learnings and trials continue.

"We jump on a call every other day with the risk management team and discuss every incident – why it happened, how long the driver's been with us, has he previous accidents, is there anything we could have done to prevent that, has the vehicle's technology worked," says McGrane.

The last point has led the team to realise that newer, more inexperienced and higher risk drivers should be given the vehicles which have the best safety equipment.

Every incident is handled by the fleet team, including first notification of loss (FNOL) and third-party management.

Drivers are required to call a dedicated line which is answered 24/7 by a member of the team who activates the FNOL procedure.

They talk the driver through what is required, assess whether they might be in shock and, if necessary, despatch someone to the scene. Fault can be established by accessing the video feed and where a third party is involved, Kelly Group offers to handle the end-to-end repair of their vehicle, including supplying a replacement.

Dermot Coughlan, fleet director, Kelly Fleet Services (left), collected the Excellence in Fleet Safety and Compliance trophy from Mark Cartwright, head of commercial vehicle incident prevention at award sponsors National Highways

> "A driver wearing the Elite badge is genuinely considered prestigious among Kelly drivers"
>
> **DERMOT COUGHLAN**

A successful third-party intervention occurs in 87% of driver at-fault incidents. It is saving the self-insured business millions of pounds.

"But there is a cost to run a programme like that which a lot of businesses might not be able to comprehend," says McGrane.

"We've built this over a long period of time. For someone starting out, it would be cost-prohibitive for them to get to that level quickly. But it makes sense, both from the safety point of view and in the welfare of the drivers, but also financially."

SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS

Kelly Group is keen to share its learnings with others, believing that in fleet "there are no competitors when it comes to safety".

Training and coaching are also, not surprisingly, handled in-house.

Risk is assessed via several data inputs, including the telematics and cameras, which identifies areas of weakness.

These are often addressed via eLearning through a series of 25-30 'educational lab' apps, covering universal fleet concerns such as phone use, seatbelts and reversing.

The engineer watches the video and answers questions at the end. The training is logged on their record.

A repeat incident results in human intervention with one of the assessors, usually face-to-face at the depot.

Kelly's default position is to work with the driver to correct any faults.

NAME: Kelly Fleet Services
HEADS: Larry McGrane, managing director; Dermot Coughlan, fleet director
TIME IN ROLE: McGrane 37yrs; Coughlan 16yrs
FLEET SIZE: 4,580 – 230 cars; 4,300 vans; 50 HGVs

As Coughlan says: "We're better off training them because we've already invested a huge amount." But there are limits. Three strikes and "the keys are on the table".

Even then, it isn't necessarily automatic dismissal or permanent removal from driving duties.

"We need to ensure that they understand the seriousness of it and that they are buying into the programme," says McGrane.

Raw camera footage of the incident – particularly the driver-facing evidence showing distraction – is often the necessary wake-up call, the irrefutable evidence that their driving was not up to scratch.

Some drivers are "quite shocked" when they see it, says Coughlan.

He adds: "If they saw someone else acting in that way, they would be the first to criticise it. Watching it gives that third party perception of yourself."

Kelly Fleet Services takes the same approach to near misses as it does actual incidents.

CONTRIBUTION OF GAMIFICATION

Gamification is also a significant contributor to incident reduction. Kelly's approach is to focus on team performance, not individuals, putting the emphasis on local supervisors and management to act as the catalyst for improvement.

"No one wants to be at the bottom of the league table – the relegation zone, we call it – let alone a director or team manager," says McGrane. "This gets their buy-in to the programme, because that's one of the reports we take to the board of directors every month. So you're all involved; everybody contributes."

Every driver has the fleet handbook in an app on their phone (as well as a physical copy in the vehicle with a back page of key contact numbers). It includes a library of information, including the bite-size induction videos, rules and regulations for safety and notification details for incident reporting.

HIGH RISK AREAS

A new addition is a notification for low bridges, where the alert is set to the height of the van they are driving, while the team is looking to introduce audible alerts which flag if a driver enters a high-risk area, utilising Samsara data.

"We also want to be able to send an automated alert which tells the driver their score from the previous day when they get in their van, and how they could improve that performance," says McGrane.

The two men are working on a series of fleet management modules which will empower line managers by giving them the knowledge and responsibility to support the fleet team and their drivers.

It's yet another example of how the Kelly Fleet Services risk and safety strategy continues to evolve by focusing on persistent and continuous improvement through small tweaks and new ideas.

Five steps to a successful GAMIFICATION scheme

Improving driver safety and performance by tapping into their competitive spirits has never been more popular. *Andrew Ryan* looks at how fleets can run a robust scheme.

Gamification is no longer a new concept in fleet, with the theory of using an employee's competitive instincts to improve their driving becoming a proven way to achieve a safer and more efficient fleet.

"Within the first four months of our reward scheme being introduced, we reduced our distracted driving by 92% and our severe speeding dropped by 25% as well," says Amber Kirkby, fleet systems manager at Lanes Group.

The experience of the utilities and infrastructure solutions provider, which has a fleet of around 4,000 vehicles, is not an outlier.

Driver performance company Lightfoot says customers using its gamification technology typically see 20% fewer harsh braking events, a 40% collision cut and an 84% drop in dangerous driving with some fleets – including Iceland – achieving reductions of as much as 94%.

Key to gamification's success is that, while drivers will react positively to the chance to be rewarded for their personal performance, their employer will also benefit from reduced collisions, costs and improved efficiency.

"When drivers feel involved and motivated to improve their driving, the results are far more compelling than when poor behaviour is addressed through criticism and retrospective training," says David Savage, chief revenue officer at Lightfoot. "Our data shows that 89% of workers feel gamification makes them more productive," he adds.

A major reason for this is that it taps into human motivators such as competition and recognition.

"Safety or efficiency targets can seem abstract in the eyes of drivers, but when performance behind the wheel is writ large and can be compared with peers, it can bring the targets to life – drivers can see what 'good' actually looks like," says Alex Crane-Robinson, regional director UK & Ireland at Webfleet.

"The most successful programmes are those that help drivers to feel proud of doing a good job and that embrace a culture of safety.

"Because those that top driving performance league tables will invariably feel a sense of pride and achievement, gamification schemes can also have a role to play in boosting employee morale."

It is also easier to introduce and run a scheme than ever before, as the increasing uptake of technologies such as telematics and cameras mean it is simpler to access the necessary data needed, while more suppliers are offering it through their solutions.

However, there are still some pitfalls organisations need to avoid when introducing gamification. Here we look at the five steps a fleet decision-maker needs to take.

1 GET THE FUNDAMENTALS IN PLACE

A key starting point to introducing a gamification scheme is to decide what behaviours should be targeted for inclusion in the initiative.

Is your priority to reduce speeding? Driver distraction? Or, as is more likely, a wide spread of driving behaviours?

Whatever the decision, scoring can be weighted to allow some behaviours to be worth more points than others.

"We made sure we focused on what we felt were the most important areas such as speeding and mobile phone use, so we placed the biggest penalties on driver scores on those," says Ray Verschoyle, head of transport compliance at telecommunications infrastructure services company Circet.

While any incentives may be enough to win buy-in from most employees, fleet decision-makers should also ensure all drivers understand how a gamification scheme works, why it is being introduced, and what is being targeted.

"Drivers need to understand what is being measured, why and how it is integral to their safety and the wider aims of the business," says Alex Crane-Robinson, regional director UK & Ireland at Webfleet. "Engagement is key," he adds.

Fleet decision-makers should also design schemes to include not only the top performers, but drivers who show the biggest improvements.

"Every month we use the Samsara dashboard to look at performance across the fleet – things like safety scores, speed limit compliance and driving improvements," says Lanes Group's Kirkby.

"We didn't just want to recognise the top drivers. We wanted to flag those who had made the most progress. Right from the beginning, we made sure to call out the most improved drivers, not just the top three, because sometimes the biggest change comes from someone who has been struggling, but manages to turn things around."

As well as individual driver performance, Lanes Group also focuses on team-level recognition.

"We realised it wasn't just about individual recognition," adds Kirkby. "It was also about a shift in culture.

"So we started doing a monthly newsletter that goes out across the group. It shares the top scores and the most improved drivers, as well as the team of the month.

"They don't win anything – it's just about acknowledging progress and effort.

"This might not seem like a lot, but getting a 'shout out' like this is great for morale and helps to build a sense of community.

"It makes people feel like they're part of something, especially in a job where you're often out on your own.

"Rewarding safe behaviours motivates our team and fosters a stronger safety culture where good practices are celebrated."

As well as driving behaviours, gamification can also be used to encourage wider driver health and well-being measures.

Many organisations expand their programmes to support whole-person wellbeing, says Nyanya Joof, head of UK at Motive.

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complement safety gamification, reinforcing that the organisation values drivers not only as operators, but as people," she adds.

Some examples Motive has seen working well include:

- Step challenges – drivers compete on daily or weekly step counts, with prizes for consistency or improvement.
- Healthy eating incentives – drivers log meals while on the road and earn points for healthier choices.
- Mindfulness and sleep challenges – using wellness apps to reward drivers for stress-reduction or healthy sleep patterns.

"Given the health pressures of long hours, sedentary work and variable schedules, these programmes can have a real impact on well-being and retention," says Joof.

Lightfoot's Savage says the versatility of gamification means it can also be applied to many other aspects of an employee's working life, from industry-specific tasks such as meter reading and quality control checks to routine behaviours such as turning the lights off at the end of the day or filing an expense report.

"It can also help to break down complex objectives into simple, more easily achievable tasks that the brain can learn and memorise over time, helping to reduce stress and fatigue for your employees," he adds.

2 GIVE APPROPRIATE REWARDS

Rewards should match the scale of the behavioural performance or improvements and can take many forms, such as cash, gift vouchers or company-branded merchandise.

In many cases, recognition – whether through internal communications, team briefings or informal awards – can be enough to motivate drivers and bring about positive change, says Webfleet's Crane-Robinson.

"Financial incentives can be highly motivating in the short-term, but can become expected over the longer-term," he adds. "Because of this, non-cash rewards often prove a better, more flexible option."

Motive says many organisations use a tiered rewards system in which, for example, smaller rewards such as company shirts, mugs or vouchers are given for quick wins; mid-tier rewards such as fitness gear, subscriptions and local experiences are given for consistent safe driving behaviour; and higher-tier rewards such as extra paid leave and company bonuses reward positive driving streaks.

Kelly Group Services uses the Samsara technology platform which scores drivers out of 100. "Anybody who scores 98, 99 or 100 every day for six months joins an elite driver club, which gives them kudos," says Dermot Coughlan, fleet director at Kelly Fleet Services. "They also get a jacket, a backpack and some other gear, and when they walk around the yard wearing these items a lot of people see that and also want to be an elite driver.

"In 2024, we had 16 guys that hit 100 every single day for the entire year."

The company also has a monthly draw where one of the elite drivers will receive a £1,000 prize, while every six months a bigger prize, such as a weekend away, is up for grabs.

"The cost of this is offset by the accidents that aren't happening," says Coughlan. "Our overall costs have gone down significantly."

Lanes Group gives its top drivers cash rewards – "nothing that's going to break the bank, but amounts that actually mean something to them", says Kirkby – while Circet has a cash reward of £1,000 for top performers every three months.

Joof says that in Motive's experience, gamification programmes often pay for themselves. "When risky behaviours go down and positive habits go up, the benefits to organisations far outweigh the cost of the incentives," she adds.

Lightfoot uses a slightly different rewards model. Its scheme is funded as part of the company contract and is run across its customer base, with one-in-nine drivers winning prizes and rewards on a weekly basis.

It also runs a driver of the year competition which this year has a prize pot of £25,000, as well as other seasonal challenges. Some of its clients also top-up the prize pots by running their own competitions.

3 COMPLY WITH GDPR RULES

Compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules is key when a gamification initiative is introduced.

Birmingham City Council fell foul towards the end of last year with a scheme at its Smithfield depot.

A league table posted on the staffroom wall ranked named drivers in order of their infringements according to their tachograph readings.

This was a 'bullying tactic', said Unite union and was a serious contravention of GDPR legislation as the information contained was of a personal nature.

The council acknowledged the names should not have been published, although an overview of key performance indicators would continue to be shared to help promote improvement.

"GDPR compliance is essential, and in most cases quite straightforward with the right safeguards: use aggregated or anonymised data where possible, apply clear access controls and data-retention policies, ensure alignment with existing privacy frameworks, and be transparent with drivers about what is being measured and why," says Joof.

"Accuracy is also critical. If drivers receive false alerts or believe they're being evaluated unfairly, trust breaks down quickly. Gamification works best when drivers trust the system, the data and the intent behind it."

Crane-Robinson says fleet decision-makers can avoid GDPR issues by partnering with a technology provider that embeds security and data protection for gamification.

"League tables require particular care," he adds. "Instead of publishing rankings of individual named drivers, many fleets use team-based comparisons, anonymised scores or allow drivers to see their own performance against an average benchmark.

"If the plan is to name individuals, this should be limited to positive recognition and drivers should be informed in advance and given the chance to opt out."

4 ENSURE LONGEVITY

With any initiative, there is a risk that once the initial impact has subsided then its effectiveness will reduce.

The same is true for gamification, so it is vital drivers remain engaged over the long-term.

Circet has found that giving drivers access to their scores through its Geotab app helps to maintain driver interest.

"Our drivers can actually see why their scores are going up or down on our app," says Verschoyle. "It's great to get the interaction from drivers coming back to me and asking 'how come my score is only 95?'.

"You kind of go 'what do you expect? Ninety-five is really, really good', but people do get motivated by seeing their score. You can see it's not just the money aspect that motivates them."

Fewer repeats

Lanes Group has also found that enabling drivers to see their scores has led to ongoing improvements.

"We're seeing fewer repeat safety events and better driver engagement overall," says Kirkby. "Drivers are logging into the app, checking their scores and asking how they're doing.

"There's a real buzz about this and it's become a two-way conversation now."

Fleets can also keep gamification schemes fresh by changing, for example, the area of performance that is focused upon month-on-month or quarter-on-quarter, says Crane-Robinson.

"Regular communication – sharing updates and celebrating individual achievements – is also important to help maintain momentum and engagement," he adds.

5 GAMIFICATION SHOULD BE PART OF WIDER SAFE STRATEGIES

While gamification alone is a valuable tool to improve driver behaviour, it should form part of a wider safety strategy to have the most significant, long-lasting effect, warns Tony Greenridge, head of driver risk management at Fleet Operations.

"Gamification can help maintain engagement and keep safety on the agenda, but it should not be used in isolation or as a blunt incentive," he says.

"Simply presenting drivers with league tables or scores based on a narrow set of metrics risks missing the point.

"Data on harsh braking or acceleration might highlight what is happening, but, on its own, it rarely explains why.

"From a risk perspective, sustainable behaviour change comes from understanding the full picture.

"Telematics data can be valuable, but it should be considered alongside other indicators such as collision history, licence endorsements, fines, driver feedback, working patterns and the operating environment."

This data can be used to inform targeted engagement, such as one-to-one coaching or group interventions where common issues such as fatigue, urban driving pressure or workload demands are identified and addressed at a business level.

"The real value lies in using data to start better conversations, with drivers and employers, and in tackling the root causes of risk rather than just the symptoms," he adds.

"This is where meaningful, long-term safety improvements are delivered."

Work safe, home safe: How Morson Vital reduced claims loss ratio by more than 50%

Work-related driving remains one of the biggest workplace risks for UK employers, yet it's still often overlooked in day-to-day safety training.

But not at Morson Vital, a trusted partner for workforce, project delivery and safety across the UK rail infrastructure. To ensure safety across the 650-plus light commercial vehicle fleet, fleet manager Keith Woodcock put several tools and processes in place.

Result: the fleet claims loss ratio was slashed from 87% to 32%, saving tens of thousands of pounds annually.

Making fleet safety a priority

Morson Vital operates 24/7 across multiple depots with thousands of workers in a safety-critical rail environment.

"Our motto is 'work safe, home safe'," explains Woodcock. "Your shift starts the minute you get in the van, and it only finishes when you park up back at home."

That approach demanded technology capable of location tracking, maintaining strict vehicle safety standards, monitoring driver behaviour and managing driver hours. "We're extremely conscious of driver fatigue and the risk it presents," he adds.

Technology that supports and delivers

To bring consistency across depots and improve driver accountability, Morson Vital introduced Quartix tracking, behaviour reporting, integrated dashcams and digital vehicle checks.

The impact was immediate. "As soon as drivers know driving is being supported by dashcam insight, their driving scores change for the better," says Woodcock.

The Quartix system highlights harsh braking, speeding and excessive driving hours, triggering alerts for targeted intervention.

Benefits extend beyond behaviour monitoring and protection in the event of an incident. "We also use the dashcams to confirm staff are double crewed in the vans, per company policy," Woodcock explains, demonstrating how telematics supports operational compliance while protecting driver welfare.

> "As soon as drivers know driving is being supported by dashcam insight, their driving scores change for the better"
>
> **Keith Woodcock, Morson Vital**

Quartix technology is key to maintaining safety standards and providing compliance evidence. Before dashcams and behaviour reporting, Morson Vital's claims loss ratio was 87%. Today, due to fewer incidents and better driver protection it's 32%.

Tyre defects remain one of the leading causes of vehicles failing roadside inspections. Woodcock introduced the Quartix Check driver app, enabling systematic daily walkaround safety checks with digital records to ensure vehicle defects are spotted early.

"If drivers report an issue on the app, we can often get it rectified the same day before the end of their shift," says Woodcock, noting that proactive risk management means safer vehicles and less downtime.

Building a safety culture

Every business has a responsibility to treat work-related driving with the same seriousness as other safety-critical activities. Morson Vital's results show how combining safety culture with integrated fleet technology can deliver measurable reductions in risk and cost.

Tyre management

Tyres are a vital, but often undervalued, part of running a fleet, impacting directly on safety, cost, operational efficiency and compliance. *Ben Rooth* looks at six key considerations for how they can be effectively managed

As the only part of a vehicle that is in contact with the road, tyres form a key part of every fleet operation, but their importance is frequently overlooked.

They influence numerous critical outcomes simultaneously – safety, compliance, operating efficiency and vehicle availability. And, of course, they have an obvious impact on each fleet's operational costs.

"Fleet decision-makers and company car and vans drivers can spend hours looking for, test driving and ultimately speccing their next vehicle," says Lee O'Neill, operations director at Venson Automotive Solutions.

"However, it is almost a racing certainty that, in searching out the very latest technology and available bells and whistles, the one feature they probably ignore is tyres.

"Yet, in many ways, tyres are perhaps the most critical feature or item of equipment on any vehicle.

"After all the essential contact area – no larger than the palm of a hand – is all that is linking the car or van to the road.

"What's more, tyres are essential for safe driving, providing grip for braking and acceleration, steering and directional control."

Safety charity TyreSafe says over the past five years an average of 153 people have been killed or seriously injured in incidents involving defective tyres, while 2.1 million MOT failures were attributed to tyre defects in 2023-24.

Furthermore, tyre-related issues remain one of the most common causes of roadside incidents, with one-in-five motorway breakdowns tyre related.

"The tyre management landscape has evolved significantly in recent years, making it important for fleets to revisit their strategies," says Jason Chamberlain, chief revenue officer at DTM (Direct Tyre Management).

"Increased availability of data, including pressure and condition monitoring, is enabling fleets to move away from reactive checks toward more preventative and exception-based management."

Consequently, the volume and complexity of the different tyres now available has made proactive planning more important than ever.

"Overall, tyres may be a relatively small component in isolation, but they play an outsized role in fleet performance," he concludes. "A structured, well-governed tyre strategy remains one of the most effective ways for fleets to improve safety, control costs and maintain uptime."

Here we look at six key considerations of robust tyre management.

1

TYRE PROCUREMENT

Fleets generally face a choice between sourcing tyres independently or bundling them into a leasing or 'maintenance included' agreement. But what are the pros and cons of each approach?

"Independent procurement offers greater control over brand choice, specification and supplier relationships and can deliver strong value where fleets have sufficient scale and governance," says Jason Chamberlain, of DTM.

"However, it also brings added administrative complexity and the risk of inconsistency if standards are not tightly enforced. Bundled tyre provision, by contrast, can offer cost predictability and operational simplicity, but requires clear specification and performance measures to ensure tyre quality, availability and service levels are maintained.

"In both cases, success tends to depend less on the procurement model itself and more on how clearly expectations are defined and managed."

Chris Milligan, head of key accounts at ATS Euromaster, says that fleets have a choice between "the flexibility of independent sourcing" versus the "predictable security of bundled leasing packages".

"Going independent often results in lower initial outgoings and grants freedom over brand choice and service providers," he explains.

"However, this path carries the risk of unexpected costs, greater admin and requires strict adherence to lease return conditions.

"Conversely, bundling tyres into a maintenance-included lease offers fixed, higher, monthly payments, greater convenience and minimal surprise charges.

"The main trade-offs here are reduced flexibility in tyre brands and the fact damage caused by poor driving is typically excluded.

"Coming out of a bundled package and using a reputable service, maintenance and repair (SMR) provider can give the best of both worlds by offloading the technical burden of tyre health to experts while retaining more independent cost control."

2

WHEN SHOULD YOU REPLACE TYRES?

Although the legal minimum tread depth in the UK is 1.6mm, many fleets choose to replace tyres before this point.

Waiting until the legal limit has been reached can increase wet-weather risk and leave little margin for error if inspections are missed or conditions deteriorate.

Consequently, replacement thresholds should be considered based on vehicle usage, seasonal conditions and operational risk, particularly for high-mileage or safety-critical vehicles.

Manny Singh, commercial director at JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions (VLS), adds: "While the legal minimum tread depth is 1.6mm, most leasing companies operate a replacement threshold of 2mm, ahead of the legal limit.

"Some fleets prefer to replace at this stage to improve planning and reduce safety risks.

"However, some fleets – predominantly operational ones – adopt a 3mm replacement threshold, increasing the margin of safety taking advantage of better stopping distances, specifically in the wet and a lower aquaplaning risk.

"The trade-off here is cost, with tyres effectively being replaced 16.67% quicker, which would directly impact your costs either as a pay-as-you-go (PAYG) or through an increased budget if included within your lease.

"This is all about finding the right balance between the key drivers and objectives for your fleet and working with the right providers to support the management of your policy."

David Legg, director of propositions and partnerships at i247 Group, asserts that recent regulatory changes should give fleets the confidence to run tyres closer to the 1.6mm limit.

"Under EU Regulation R117-04, introduced last year, tyres must now meet the same minimum wet braking performance at 1.6mm tread depth as they do when brand new," he says.

"As long as the tyre condition is good, early replacement is no longer necessary, so we expect to see a change in approach from 3mm tyre policies and, therefore, fewer tyre replacements.

"There are also clear environmental and sustainability benefits associated with extending the life expectancy of tyres.

"Replacing tyres in line with the legal limit reduces raw material use, manufacturing emissions and tyre disposal volumes which directly supports fleet and wider business sustainability policies."

TYRE INFLATION AND CONDITION

Maintaining correct tyre inflation and condition is another cornerstone of effective fleet management.

Regular inspections, accurate pressure checks and prompt action on damage or irregular wear are essential.

"Under- or over-inflation can accelerate wear, increase fuel or energy consumption and compromise handling," says Jason Chamberlain, of DTM.

"Just as importantly, tyre condition often provides early warning of wider mechanical or operational issues such as alignment problems, overloading or aggressive driving."

Drivers need to understand what is expected of them and how to do checks correctly.

Regular visual inspections of tread depth and overall tyre condition are also important.

Drivers should be checking for uneven wear, cuts, bulges or embedded objects that could lead to failure.

"With any vehicle, ensuring that the correct tyre pressure is maintained will maximise tyre life," says Lee O'Neill, of Venson Automotive Solutions.

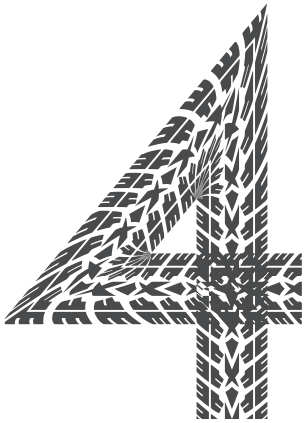
"Therefore, fleet operators need to ensure that drivers check tyres on a regular basis – every two weeks is the industry recommendation – for excessive and uneven tread wear, damage and pressure.

"Far too often we find that company car and van drivers are failing to check their tyres and are running on illegal tread depths," says O'Neill.

"Too frequently drivers only give their vehicle tyres a cursory glance and do not put the steering wheel on full lock to check across the full width."

The increased popularity of electric vehicles (EVs) – which often have higher inflation pressures than internal combustion engine (ICE) models due to their additional weight – increases the need for driver engagement.

"Tyre longevity is influenced by numerous factors – tyre selection, in-life maintenance and driver behaviour – and those characteristics will have a greater dominance in respect of EVs due to their added weight versus ICE models." says O'Neill.



SHOULD YOU CONSIDER SPECIALIST TYRES?

Specialist tyres have the potential to offer clear benefits, but fleets should assess whether the convenience and resilience gains outweigh any performance trade-offs.

"EV-specific tyres can improve efficiency, manage higher loads and reduce noise, but they often come at a higher cost and should be selected based on actual usage rather than vehicle type alone," says Jason Chamberlain, of DTM.

"All-season tyres can improve year-round capability and operational resilience in the UK climate, though they represent a compromise compared with dedicated summer or winter tyres."

Lee O'Neill, of Venson Automotive Solutions, maintains that all-season tyres should be fitted to vehicles that are identified by fleet operators as 'business critical'.

"The UK does not consistently have the extremes of weather that justify the cost and inconvenience of changing tyres on a season-by-season basis," he adds.

"For vehicles that are identified as business critical or that are required for emergency response on a 24-hour basis we recommend all-season tyres.

"In many cases it may not be the whole fleet that is required to be fitted with all-season tyres only those perhaps in certain locations.

"Ultimately all-season tyres are not a magic carpet, but if drivers live on a steep road or have a steep drive, they can also be a useful asset."

James Parnell, procurement director at Grosvenor, is in no doubt about the potential benefits of all-season tyres.

"All-season tyres can carry a higher upfront cost and may not match the peak performance of specialist seasonal tyres in extreme conditions," he says.

"However, for most fleet use, these drawbacks are outweighed by year-round safety and reduced changeovers."

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5

MINIMISING DOWNTIME

Minimising downtime during tyre replacement requires both planning and coordination.

Aligning tyre work with scheduled servicing, using mobile fitting where appropriate and having clear pre-approved tyre policies all help reduce vehicle off-road time.

Holding the right stock in the right locations and replacing tyres in logical pairs or sets can also prevent repeat visits and unplanned disruption.

"I'd recommend fleets transition from a reactive 'fix-it-when-it-breaks' approach to a proactive, preventative mindset," says ATS Euromaster's Milligan.

"Central to this strategy is the increasing use of telematics and data analytics to predict potential failures. By working closely with a SMR provider to negotiate fixed pricing or volume discounts, fleet managers can also mitigate the impact of rising costs and supply chain disruptions."

David Legg, of i247 Group, asserts the importance of 'proactive management' when it comes to minimising downtime.

"Regular inspections by drivers and/or the fleet operators allow bookings to be made before tyres reach the legal limit or fail – rather than reacting at the last minute," he says.

"Providing accurate information to the tyre supplier is critical to ensure the correct stock is available and avoid delays, as downtime can be caused by unusual or new-to-market tyre sizes.

"Where tyre replacements are pre-planned, fleets may be able to take advantage of mobile fitting services, which reduces downtime and increases convenience. However, when mobile fitting is used reactively or as a breakdown response it is typically more costly, so it's key to anticipate tyre requirements."

Singh, of JCT600 VLS, adds: "For fleets where even short periods off the road are problematic, it's worth discussing short-term hire options. Having access to replacement vehicles when your own are unexpectedly out of action ensures service continuity."

6

BUDGET, MID-RANGE OR PREMIUM TYRES?

When choosing between budget, mid-range and premium tyres, fleets should look beyond the initial purchase price.

Factors such as mileage to removal, safety performance, durability, energy efficiency, availability and driver acceptance influence total cost of ownership (TCO).

In many cases, the lowest-priced tyre does not deliver the lowest overall cost once downtime, wear rates and operational risk are considered.

But Milligan, of ATS Euromaster, says choosing the right fit depends on your fleet's profile.

For example, premium tyres are best for high-usage vehicles where tyre integrity and performance are critical for safety and operational uptime.

And budget tyres have the potential to be a cost-effective solution for low-mileage drivers whose vehicles are subject to less intense wear and tear.

"As budgets face continued pressure, many fleets are considering budget tyres – however this can be a false economy," adds Milligan.

"True value is found by analysing initial spend against longevity to ensure every pound of the maintenance budget is used effectively."

Europcar Mobility Group UK: Rental solutions to enable sustainable fleets

Europcar Mobility Group UK is supporting businesses on their sustainability journeys with flexible, connected and extensive mobility solutions

Fleet News spoke to Paul McNeice, commercial director at Europcar Mobility Group UK about the pressures UK businesses are facing to transition to low- and zero-emissions vehicles, and how Europcar is supporting them with flexible rental options.

Sustainable fleets: A growing priority with nuanced challenges

With UK businesses facing mounting calls for greater sustainability from regulators and stakeholders alike, their fleets are increasingly expected to demonstrate progress in driving down their emissions and transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs).

The wide-ranging nature of fleet operations with their varying priorities means that no two EV transitions will be the same – each will have unique nuances and considerations.

Despite this, the latest data from the Europcar EV barometer indicates an increase in positivity from modern fleets when considering EVs.

McNeice explained: "In 2025 there was a significant decline of more than 18% of business drivers saying that a lack of knowledge about electric driving was a barrier for their employers in making the switch to a more sustainable fleet.

Yet a successful EV transition cannot be achieved without overcoming significant challenges. Europcar has identified that costs and the uncertainty around charging infrastructure are crucial issues that must be addressed before industry-wide EV adoption will be possible.

"Nearly a third (29%) of employees said charging infrastructure was holding back their employers from switching in 2025," said McNeice.

"And this is a particular challenge for commercial vehicle fleets. Charging infrastructure is not fit-for-purpose for the van user – we regularly hear of bays being too small and charge points not being suitable for vans. Plus, OEM investment has only recently started to be evident in battery technology for vans, which means range is still limited and charge times impact significantly on productivity.

"But the most significant barrier to switching to EV remains cost, cited by 38% of employees. This is both the cost of acquisition and ownership plus the cost of charging. The current disparity between VAT for home charging – at 5% – and public charging at 20% makes it complicated for businesses to fully understand operational costs which is another deterrent when trying to manage change."

Paul McNeice, commercial director at Europcar Mobility Group UK

Committed to helping businesses run more sustainable fleets, Europcar is providing rental options and battery charging solutions to enable fleets to fully transition to EVs.

Enabling sustainable gains with accessible and connected rental options

With a fleet of more than 40,000 cars and vans – including battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) – available across a nationwide network that includes downtown, airports, railway stations and van supersites – Europcar can provide fleets with the vehicles they need to carry out their operations effectively and sustainably.

McNeice explained the benefits for fleets making use of rental options, and why they are a more sustainable choice.

"The fundamental fact is that 'usership' is a more sustainable solution for mobility than 'ownership'," he said.

"Vehicle rental that is accessible in the right place, at the right time, is critical. And right now that must be across both internal combustion engine (ICE) and electric drivetrains."

Greater vehicle accessibility is ensured with a market-leading delivery and collection service that places a vehicle at a customer's home or work address from four hours, eliminating the need for a driver to come to a branch. Customers can be confident of lower emissions thanks to Europcar's use of EVs for a quarter of its

vehicle delivery and collections.

Plus fleet managers benefit from Europcar's £36 million investment in its connected vehicle strategy, offering greater operational efficiency improvements and actionable information.

McNeice explained: "Our connected vehicle strategy is all about operational efficiency – knowing where vehicles are and any issues that may cause downtime to ensure we can provide the right vehicles to customers at all times.

"Having a 100% connected fleet means we can give fleet managers certainty over vehicle provision which is crucial to sustainability. SMS messaging provides accurate ETAs (estimated times of arrival) for vehicle delivery and collection.

It also reduces administrative burden and costs – other factors that can often hit sustainability targets – with visibility of the end of rental fuel levels, mileage driven, tolls used and any parking and speeding fines, plus date and time a vehicle was returned."

The data delivered by the connected fleet also means businesses using long-term rental can achieve more balanced fleet mileage for greater sustainability.

Encouraging EV adoption with Flex Model Choice

Europcar has launched Flex Model Choice, enabling customers to book specified BEVs and PHEVs for three-to-12 months at fixed monthly rates, ideal for salary sacrifice schemes and offering the flexibility of rental with the vehicle model certainty of leasing. The service also provides customers with the necessary information to allow them to make informed decisions – including WLTP range, P11D value, and fleet holding periods when choosing vehicles.

To further encourage EV adoption, Europcar has introduced three-week trials for existing customers for Chapter 8-compliant electric vans, and an expansive array of tools and resources – including a digital knowledge hub and EV guide, and the free EV Assist smartphone tool for new EV drivers.

McNeice commented: "Dealers and manufacturers can't offer test drives of more than a few hours. So, we have committed to offering trials of various van models to give the frontline drivers who will be expected to manage their operational requirements, while adjusting to a new way of fuelling, the opportunity to learn more."

A new operational partnership with Octopus Electroverse has also unlocked access to more than a million public charge points across the UK and Europe for Europcar customers, available through the award-winning Octopus 'Electroverse' app.

Electroverse has been designed to streamline the EV charging experience, making it easy for drivers to power up without needing multiple apps or accounts – a key benefit for rental customers.

Drivers can find chargers and plan routes in real time – helping to reduce range anxiety – and start charging via the app or with a radio frequency identification (RFID) card. Its user-friendly interface delivers the benefits of going electric, from discounted charging prices to hassle-free payments.

McNeice said: "It is designed to make EV driving simpler, smarter and more accessible for rental customers, removing common barriers to electric vehicle use, particularly around charging confidence."

The mobility partner of choice

But, as McNeice concluded, the reality is that many organisations are only just starting on their sustainability journey. "Having a mobility partner that straddles both ICE and electric solutions is critical right now, with a wide choice of petrol, diesel and EVs that can be rented for a few days, weeks or much longer.

"Underpinned by our connected vehicle strategy, we believe we can support any business as they tackle the challenges of reducing emissions and complying with Scope 3 emissions targets, while maintaining operational productivity."

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VWCV LOOKS TO ENHANCE PROPOSITION WITH NEW TELEMATICS PACKAGE

Commercial vehicle manufacturer targets growth with new models and a new man at the helm. *Gareth Roberts* reports

In a struggling light commercial vehicle (LCV) market, fleets are looking beyond the metal; they are looking at how manufacturers can support day-to-day operations – cutting risk, downtime and costs. It's a key metric for commercial fleet decision-makers and one that's not lost on Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles (VWCV) UK as it battles for market share.

The new LCV market declined by 10.3% last year and recorded its worst start to a year in more than a decade, according to sales figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

Vauxhall's LCV registrations were down by 20% in the year, while Mercedes-Benz and Peugeot fared even worse, recording decreases of 32% and 37%, respectively.

With van makers suffering such significant falls, it makes VWCV UK's sales figures look even more impressive, despite also recording a decline.

Performing better than the overall market, it registered almost 36,000 new LCVs – a 4.5% year-on-year decline – according to SMMT data.

It also grew market share – up from 10.65% to 11.35% – retaining its second place behind commercial vehicle market leader, Ford, which was responsible for more than a third (35%) of the market.

ADDING VALUE TO ITS FLEET PROPOSITION

With reliability and the need to avoid vehicle downtime key, the new UK boss at VWCV, David Hanna, is particularly proud of retaining top spot in the 'Most Reliable Van Maker' category for the second year in a row at last year's Fleet News FN50 Awards.

The Volkswagen Transporter was also ranked top in the 'Most Reliable Van Survey', for a second consecutive year, with the Volkswagen Caddy also featuring in the top 10.

Hanna, who was appointed VWCV UK director in October 2025, understands that to be successful in fleet it's about adding value, helping operators to cut costs and run safer, more efficient vehicles.

He has held numerous roles across several brands over a 20-year career, both within OEM and retail groups. He first joined Volkswagen Group UK in 2014, holding positions within Audi, Volkswagen Passenger Cars and Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, including head of fleet and head of service and parts.

When appointed to his new role, he said he was excited to be able to lead the team in the UK and work with the network again in order to continue the "success of the brand".

ENHANCED IN-LIFE SUPPORT

Maintaining and growing market share is about enhancing in-life support for fleets. Hanna highlights how VWCV's vehicles come with a '5+ Promise' as standard, featuring five services, plus three MOTs, five years' warranty and five years' roadside assistance, backed by its "extensive" network.

Hanna also says that choosing VWCV UK as your fleet provider also means partnering with a dedicated team of experts.

Working with the operator, VWCV's fleet team aims to fully understand business needs to be able to design a fleet that not only meets day-to-day requirements but can also help them manage everything from finance to maintenance and servicing.

Small fleets are offered fixed cost maintenance and fixed priced servicing, with the aim of making planning and paying for upkeep simple. For fleets of more than 100 vehicles, VWCV offers a bespoke service that includes "beneficial terms" on everything from labour rates to oil costs.

There is centralised billing, online booking tools and a dedicated portal for managing vehicles and drivers. It is backed by genuine parts, trained technicians, and a national network of 62 van centres, which rises to almost 100 when authorised repairers are included.

"We've put in some strategic, authorised repair locations for increased coverage," says Hanna. "We're heavily focused on lead times, diagnostics, parts availability, technician training and qualifications, because these are the crunch points.

"When the customer needs to use a workshop, if it's a great process, vehicles are turned around quickly and there's great communication, that makes all the difference."

He stresses: "We don't underestimate the importance of when someone needs a booking, they get a booking that has a sensible lead time, they get good communication and they get back on the road quickly.

"It's not the most exciting topic, but for us, it's really, really important."

EMBEDDED VEHICLE TELEMATICS PRODUCT

Equally important is enhancing its offering to fleets further. While Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles offers fleets access to its embedded vehicle telematics via third-party providers, it is considering launching its own product later this year.

"We are currently looking at offering a B2B (business-to-business) telematics system," says Hanna, noting this would be provided through the vehicle rather than a dongle. "We're just looking at how that would work."

David Hanna, director of Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles UK

It would, he explains, build on VWCV's efforts to help fleets manage uptime more effectively. "We're not able to share all the details yet, but we want it to be free, and we want it to be not limited to any fleet size," he says. "These are our two guiding principles."

Potentially similar to the Ford Liive uptime management system, which was launched in 2021, it would aim to improve the performance of fleets by monitoring vehicle health and addressing problems before they result in significant downtime.

ELECTRIC VAN MARKET SUCCESS

With Ford dominating the LCV market – it was responsible for one-in-three LCVs sold in 2025 – Hanna is not content with playing second fiddle to 'blue oval' dominance.

He's quick to claim that VWCV is already leading the market for UK battery electric vehicle (BEV) registrations, when the maker includes fully electric passenger versions registered to commercial fleets.

SMMT data actually has Ford ahead of VWCV's electric-only registrations, with it registering 8,627 units in 2025, compared with VWCV's 6,217.

However, Hanna says: "As far as we see it, we're number one with a commercial vehicle electric share of 23% – almost one-in-four electric vehicles were from us.

"That product has done really well; it's been well received and it's got great residual values."

Overall, BEV share in the van market increased from 6.3% in 2024 to 9.5% in 2025, but still fell well short of the mandated 16% Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate target.

There is a further uptick this year, with van makers targeted with ensuring that more than one-in-four LCVs registered in the UK (26%) are zero emission.

While accepting he may have a different view on Government targets if VWCV wasn't achieving such a high electric share, he says: "We are performing well and the products have been in the market for a few years now and are well established."

Hanna acknowledges that hasn't been the case for some competitors, but says they have product coming.

"We've been very fortunate to have it available in the market now," he adds.

WORKING WITH FLEETS TO HELP THEM ELECTRIFY

Hanna also stressed that Volkswagen was not forcing quotas of electric vans on to fleets when they were ordering internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

He explains: "What we're doing is talking to them about the fact that they've got to learn with electric, because of the transition.

"We're really keen that we're consulting, taking some of our big fleet learnings and saying, 'we're not going to limit (ICE vans) but let's work together to see what could work as electric in your business'.

"You can't just not learn and then all of a sudden in your next fleet change cycle, you've got to be 100% electric."

To gain traction in the market, Hanna explains that, while decarbonisa-

Caddy featured in the Top 10 Most Reliable Vans


Amarok registrations fell by almost a quarter last year


Crafter is still only available with a diesel powertrain


ID Buzz Cargo was named Best Small Van in last year's Fleet News Awards

Key fleet models

CADDY
Segment: small
Loadspace: 3.1-3.7cu m
Payload: 702-771kg
Pricing (CV OTR): from £23,790
Powertrain(s): diesel, PHEV

ID BUZZ CARGO
Segment: small
Loadspace: 3.9cu m
Payload: 589-785kg
Pricing (CV OTR): from £35,650
Powertrain: EV

TRANSPORTER
Segment: medium
Loadspace: 5.8-6.8cu m
Payload: 842-1,355kg
Pricing (CV OTR): from £30,995
Powertrain(s): diesel, PHEV, EV

CRAFTER
Segment: large
Loadspace: 9.3-18.4cu m
Payload: 782-2,410kg
Pricing (CV OTR): from £37,875
Powertrain: diesel

AMAROK
Segment: pick-up
Loadspace: n/a
Payload: 877-1,113kg
Pricing (CV OTR): from £35,190
Powertrain: diesel

tion is the motivating factor, it's also about highlighting potential cost savings for van operators.

"We have to work with fleets to try to help them see the total cost of ownership (TCO) benefits," he says.

"We see our role to help fleets save some money as well as achieve these (ZEV Mandate) targets... that's been our approach, and it has worked well so far."

ELECTRIC VAN LINE-UP

VWCV's UK fully electric line-up is led by the ID Buzz Cargo, which was crowned 'Best Small Van' at last year's Fleet News Awards.

Officially, it can cover up to 276 miles on a single charge, while offering load space of 3.9cu m.

It's proved extremely popular with small and large fleet operators, with a number of major organisations, such as Wates Group and Mitie, taking on the fully-electric LCV.

"While we do have some big fleet names, it's probably done better in SMEs (small-to-medium-sized enterprises) than it has in big fleet," says Hanna.

"It's not the cheapest electric van, but it's got a really good residual value, and I think it makes a great statement about your business."

VWCV registered almost 4,800 ID Buzz electric vans in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 55%.

Hanna explains: "What ID Buzz does really well is it straddles quite a few segments, especially with its cargo space.

"People that have previously run Caddy diesel or run Transporter diesel, can make an ID Buzz work, but we're always looking at what opportunities there are."

Alongside ID Buzz, VWCV offers the all-new e-Transporter, which was launched alongside new diesel and plug-in hybrid (PHEV) versions at the start of last year.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH FORD

The seventh-generation Transporter is based on the Ford Transit Custom, developed as part of Ford and VW's 'strategic partnership', which has also resulted in the Ranger/Amarok and Caddy/Connect. The Transporter is built at Ford's factory in Turkey.

However, offered with a lower list price, a longer warranty and improved specification, than the Ford Transit Custom, Hanna says it has been received well by customers.

He explains: "I think it's something customers are very used to. It's very commonplace in automotive, but in commercial vehicles in particular, and Ford is a market leader. We know it's a good product."

However, he says VWCV has "worked hard to differentiate" its proposition, with a greater payload and more technology than its predecessor.

There is also a PHEV version of Caddy, but no PHEV version of Amarok, with Hanna saying it was something that the manufacturer is considering but "no decision" has been taken yet.

He adds: "We just need to look at what the market looks like now and what's going to work for our customers."

Registrations of Amarok fell by almost a quarter (23%) to 3,018 units in 2025, compared with the previous year, with the Government's decision to treat double cab pick-ups as company cars blamed, in part, for the decline.

LACK OF AVAILABILITY

Transporter registrations, meanwhile, fell by almost a third (30%) to 10,827 units, with vehicle availability an issue as the new van was being launched.

Hanna is focused on embedding new Transporter into the market, recognising the gap between this all-new version and the previous generation.

"Now we've got a full range, we really want to get that embedded into the bigger fleet market and 5-Plus (Promise) is the feather in the cap for that product," he says. "It differentiates us and gives a great TCO from a customer perspective, especially on e-Transporter but on ICE Transporter as well."

He also understands it is a "very tough" economic backdrop for UK businesses. "That's why our market is where it is. So, if we can give customers that kind of ease of budgeting by knowing that everything is included, they can be really sure what their costs are going to be."

Hanna expects ID Buzz Cargo and Transporter to account for half of VWCV's commercial vehicle registrations in 2026.

"WE DON'T WANT TO BE FOLLOWERS; WE WANT TO LEAD THE WAY"

A determination to innovate with new technologies and invest in staff has seen Bri-Stor Systems power to another record year. *Andrew Ryan* reports

A commitment to put innovation and people at the heart of its operations is helping Bri-Stor Systems go from strength to strength. The company, which was named converter of the year at the 2025's Fleet News Awards for the second consecutive time, is part of The Hex Group, which also includes Alpha Manufacturing, Hex Graphics, Atlas Coating, the Hex Group Academy managed apprenticeship scheme and Hex Living, which are all based on the same site near Stafford in the Midlands.

This gives Bri-Stor Systems direct access to support functions such as parts manufacturing, vehicle livery and powder coating.

The site also has secure storage for up to 2,000 vehicles, enabling it to support customers in managing large-scale build programmes, while Bri-Stor's Neptune stores and assembly facility supports defleet, end-of-life, refurbishment and tool recycling services.

In recent years, the company has also reinforced its kitting service, which allows it to load tools, parts and consumables into new vehicles before they are delivered to the end-user customer so they are ready to use immediately.

This breadth of capabilities helped propel Bri-Stor Systems to a record year in 2025.

"It was a phenomenal year," says Simon Webb, managing director of Bri-Stor Systems. "It was driven predominately by two major customers: Openreach had a replacement programme which was probably a little bit larger that we were anticipating, while early in the year Network Rail presented us with a challenge of 'there's 1,000 welfare vehicles that we want on the road before the end of the year'.

"That was great, but there is a fair amount of legal requirements that we need to go through in terms of converting a panel van to a welfare vehicle, and the real challenge was getting the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA) approval done in the three-month period we needed to."

Due to the quantity of the vehicles, Bri-Stor Systems could not do this under the GB Small Series Approval, so had to use the GB Medium Series Approval, which adds another layer of complexity.

"We managed to get the approval towards the back end of June, which then left the 'small' challenge of converting 1,000 vehicles and getting them delivered to Network Rail before the end of the year, which we managed to do," says Webb.

"It was a learning curve for us and the VCA because they hadn't gone through the process of a GB medium series type approval either, but I think that taking that from a blank sheet of paper to a full approval within a circa three-month period underlines our technical understanding, our type approval understanding and our in-house technical capabilities."

> "We've spent so much time and effort in making sure we retain that family feel"
>
> **SIMON WEBB, MD**

DESIRE TO INNOVATE

The growing success of the group is also due to the desire to innovate and develop new technologies, as well as investing in staff.

"We don't want to be followers," says Webb. "We want to lead the way as opposed to following the market trends."

He highlights one example of this – the development of Bri Stor's innovative van-mounted electrically-powered tyre-fitting equipment, which it has installed into some of Halfords' fleet.

Traditionally, tyre-fitting vehicles use their internal combustion engines (ICE) to power their equipment, with engine idling using up to two litres of fuel per hour, as well as producing CO_2 and noxious gasses.

However, these are eliminated in the vans fitted with the electric system as it uses a high-density lithium battery that is recharged as the vehicle travels from job to job.

"Halfords has had some fantastic results in terms of fuel savings on the first vehicles we put out there," says Webb. "We're currently converting another 30 vans for them."

Another eye-catching use of technology is the development and introduction of VR (virtual reality) to save time and cost while designing and signing-off racking.

"The traditional way has been to talk to a customer about their requirements, produce some 2D drawings and from those manufacture some steel, built the vehicle and then invite them to come to site to sign it off," says Webb.

"Inevitably there were changes from the first prototype, and this could add time and cost to the process."

The new system sees customers wearing a VR headset so they can see how a racking system works inside a virtual van. Bri-Stor Systems has installed this into a van, together with a large television, which can be taken to clients instead of them travelling to the supplier.

"Using VR speeds up the process, reduces cost because we are not manufacturing parts that potentially are going to change, and we can get the customer sign-off much quicker in the timeline as they are not waiting for a physical prototype," says Webb.

"Prior to Christmas we achieved the first virtual sign-off, which gave us and the customer the confidence to go into the physical build without the need to do any kind of physical prototype, so that was a massive step.

Nick Tomlinson, head of sales at Bri-Stor Systems (right), received the converter of the year trophy from Barnaby Smith, managing director of award sponsors Mediafleet at last year's Fleet News Awards

ORGANISATION: Bri-Stor Systems
MANAGING DIRECTOR: Simon Webb
FLEET NEWS AWARD: Converter of the Year
PARENT COMPANY: The Hex Group
CEO: Martin Smith

"Some customers are really interested in VR, some we have to encourage a bit more, but more and more are getting on board with it.

"Without a shadow of a doubt it's going to save a lot of time, both for us bringing products to market in the future and for the customers getting the vehicles they so desperately need."

MAKING SUSTAINABILITY A PRIORITY

Webb says sustainability continues to be a key priority for fleets and the Hex Group's Hex Graphics division has benefited from this.

"I think there is a lack of knowledge within the industry just how much waste is produced through liverying vehicles, both in terms of the backing paper and the vinyl that gets removed from vehicles at end-of-life," he adds.

"We've done an awful amount of work with (vinyl supplier) Metamark and we've now got a fully circular process where we collect the waste as we apply it to the vehicles.

"We segregate the Metamark waste from the rest of the waste, that then goes off to a recycling centre, gets stripped, gets recycled and it comes back out in the form of either Wellington boots or notepads.

"The graphics side of things has really pushed forward, but I think there's still a lot we need to do to educate the industry on what recyclability really means and how much waste we're producing.

"It's not that they're ignoring it. It's just never been brought to their attention just how much waste is produced by the graphics on some of these big fleets and that there's a much cleaner way of doing it."

Interest in second-life racking is also increasing, which sees racking removed from defleeted vehicles and installed in new vans.

"Traditionally, racking is used for one life cycle, but ours is made out very high strength steel and with a small bit of refurbishment a lot would be good for two life cycles," says Webb. "More and more customers are talking about that as part of the sustainable journey."

INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

While its investment in technology may take the headlines, the family-owned Hex Group has also invested heavily in its employees, recognising they are a major part of its success.

This includes initiatives such as opening a new centre of excellence for training and development last year, health care plan, enhanced long service awards, quarterly food days when caterers come in, a golf society and padel club.

It will also host its second HexFest family festival this summer to celebrate the company's success.

"There has been a shift in staff welfare over the past five years and I think it's fair to say you could canvass our staff and 95%-to-100% would say it's a very different place now," says Webb.

"We've spent so much time and effort in making sure we retain that family feel, that everybody's got a place and feels welcome."

The company has a particular focus on its apprenticeship programme, and this helped the company be named employer of the year in the 2025 Staffordshire Business Awards.

"Every employee now goes through a minimum two-week induction plan in the training school, understanding the tools, the techniques, the different ways of working on converting vehicles," says Webb.

"It also gives us a platform for bringing new people in, as well as upskilling our existing workforce, taking them from the level they're at now to the next level, in a safe environment.

"Last year around 150 people passed through the training school, and that undoubtedly helped us achieve some of the challenges last year by having the ability to bring people in and quickly get them up to speed."

Webb says Bri-Stor System's apprenticeship programme is also incredibly successful, with the natural output that it feeds in talented people into its workforce.

NEW SECTORS

To build on its growing success, Bri-Stor Systems is looking to expand into sectors of the van market it does not have a presence in.

It is currently carrying out research on sectors such as security vans, food delivery and refrigerated transport.

"We've got all the capabilities to operate in these areas because they are all variations on the theme of what we do today," says Webb.

"We're thinking of security vans, we don't do a lot in food delivery or the refrigeration market.

"These are all variations on the theme of what we do today, really. So we're looking to understand how big some of those segments are, and where the biggest opportunities are."

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How to cut the costs of your EV fleet in 2026

In 2025, the sale of electric vehicles for fleets hit an all-time high, as perceptions surrounding fleet electrification shifted from simply an exercise in sustainability to a strategic business imperative. For fleet managers grappling with rising operating costs, tightening emissions regulations and shifting tax policies, the switch to EVs presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities in 2026. This year marks a pivotal time for fleet owners to build an EV strategy that looks to reduce the total cost of ownership (TCO), strengthen long-term resilience, and position themselves ahead of the competition.

Shifting to a long-term financial mindset

When it comes to transitioning to an EV fleet, the costs of the initial investment can seem daunting, but this is a short-term view. Instead, most successful EV strategies look at the TCO. Rather than simply examining the upfront purchase cost of a vehicle, fleet managers should also examine the lifespan costs of fuel, maintenance and operations.

Over time, the TCO of an EV is cheaper than its ICE counterpart. When charging at a depot or at an employee's home, the power to charge an EV is significantly cheaper than refuelling using petrol or diesel. A study by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) found that each ICE vehicle costs £700 a year more to run in comparison to a similar EV.

Maintenance is another powerful driver of cost reduction. EVs have far fewer moving parts than their ICE counterparts. As any mechanic will tell you, the parts of an engine that move are the parts that are most likely to go wrong. By switching to EVs, fleet managers not only spend less on replacement parts, but also must deal with less mechanical service interruptions and lower servicing requirements.

When it comes to transitioning to an EV fleet, the costs of the initial investment can seem daunting, but this is a short-term view

Finally, the costs of EVs themselves is continuing to drop. The secondary market for EVs is now rapidly expanding as that first wave of high-performance vehicles now reach the end of their leases, filling the market with fleet-worthy vehicles. Meanwhile, the manufacturers are benefiting from technology maturation, with Goldman Sachs anticipating a 50% decrease in the price of EV batteries in 2026. Overall, this creates an environment where the price of EVs is decreasing. But before you think about waiting for prices to drop further, there is one key issue that must be addressed.

The ticking cost savings clock

The tides are turning in 2026, as government policy is slowly shifting away from incentive driven policy for adoption

Natasha Fry, Head of Sales – Fleet and Workplace Charging | Mer UK

towards regulation and penalties. Many of the current incentives are winding down their funding over the next few years, meaning the window is closing for fleet operators to capitalise on the available funding.

For instance, the Plug-In Van Grant offers fleet owners purchase savings of up to £3,750 per electric van. However, this grant ends in 2027, so you must act fast if you wish to utilise this grant while expanding your fleet. There are also various first-year capital allowances and business rate relief for the purchase and installation of EV chargers, which can help to further reduce upfront investment.

While these schemes are winding down, regulations are tightening. Already the UK has seen a vast expansion of Clear Air Zones (CAZ) across many of its largest cities, with local authorities potentially increasing the fines for non-compliant vehicles. Ultimately, fleet owners need to decide whether the costs of all these fines outweigh the costs of investment for EV fleet transition.

2026 represents a cliff edge moment for fleet owners. Right now, the incentives are still in place and provide a lower initial investment cost for the procurement of EVs and associated infrastructure. However, those that wait could face a higher investment cost and increased financial penalties.

How to use your EV fleet to build financial resilience

While there is a ticking clock, it is important to carefully consider your EV charging strategy. Planning effectively is a key part in further reducing the upfront costs and TCO of your fleet. It would be a mistake to treat an EV fleet transition as simply swapping out ICE vehicles for EVs. Therefore, careful planning is imperative. This is the point when many fleet operators turn to onboarding an EV charging partner such as Mer, to lend their expertise in developing a strategy.

For instance, your charging partner can help to implement smart charging technologies that can schedule your charging cycles to take advantage of the lower off-peak energy tariffs whilst avoiding expensive grid connection upgrades. As a boon to both costs and your sustainability initiatives, you could also consider integrating renewable energy sources at your depots.

Your EV charging partner can also integrate or provide detailed analytics that can sit alongside your existing telematics to help drive further efficiencies. Most modern systems offer detailed insights into vehicle utilisation, charging schedules, energy usage and tracking. Having this data at your fingertips can inform your EV strategy, helping to deliver routes optimised around charging schedules and operational demands while reducing waste and boosting uptime.

Fleet owners who act now to plan effectively, take advantage of financial grants and tax incentives, and build resilience will not only reduce costs but also secure a competitive edge in a world that is rapidly electrifying.

Drawing upon a decade of experience working with more than 700 business customers including IKEA and DX Delivery, Mer's experts have produced a guide to help fleet managers understand more about how they can transform a depot for an EV fleet. Download our depot charging guide (*uk.mer.eco/ev-fleet-charging/ev-depot-charging/guide/#download-guide*) for a full de-brief on what to expect, how to avoid common pitfalls, and how to enhance your electrification strategy.

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AFP Fleet Academy guide to acquisitions and disposals

Acquisition and disposal are core parts of fleet management, but identifying the right approach can be difficult. The Association of Fleet Professionals' (AFP) Fleet Academy trainers explain why – and how to get it right

"It seems there's often more focus on the procurement of people's laptops or mobile phones than there is on vehicles. You can't really go far wrong with those devices, but you can go really wrong with your choice of vehicle."

That is AFP trainer Peter Milchard's take on one of the most common problems with vehicle acquisition. Especially, if vehicles are outsourced, they are often seen as someone else's problem, and if those with ultimate responsibility lack fleet experience, then decisions can be void of the nuance that best practice demands.

"When you've got a company with lots of job perk cars, acquisition tends to get more attention because everybody's emotive about whatever car is the flavour of the day," says fellow AFP trainer, Derek Thornton. "But the majority of fleet vehicles are operational – doing what the business requires – and the interest in the fleet isn't as high profile," he adds.

"Some people think the leasing company can handle it all and may have a view that they don't need the expertise in-house. However, without an in-house specialist, you have less financial control."

The same applies with vehicle disposal, with both factors ultimately determined by the fleet's size and, as Milchard puts it, bigger does not necessarily equal better.

"Part of the fleet manager's responsibility is ensuring that acquisition and disposal is ultimately determined by your company's need for vehicle usage. It's about asking why people

> "We can try to make calculated, accurate decisions about acquisition and disposal by working together as a group"

travel and where. What do they do? And is that right for the future?

"Other than wages, the fleet is probably the second – or third – largest cost in a business, but despite this, fleets can have a tendency to grow over time for no good reason."

It is not unheard of for a degree of acquisition control to drift into drivers' hands when choice lists are involved. Milchard recounts a story of a company car driver he knew who had his own methodology for choosing a make and model.

"He was not interested in the vehicles whatsoever, and I asked him how he made his decision when his company car was up for renewal. He said, 'it's easy: I look at the most expensive on the list with no contributions and I choose that'.

"I said, 'there are lots of factors you should look at when choosing a company car,' and he wasn't interested. He just wanted to feel as though he'd got the best deal by getting the most expensive car he could.

"People can be very emotional about these kinds of choices, but I think acquisition should be for the business rather than its drivers."

Having the confidence to challenge suppliers is essential for fleet managers who outsource their vehicles. Thornton, encourages delegates attending AFP Fleet Academy courses to question complex terminology.

"There's a level of assumption that people won't challenge suppliers when they use complex terminology to explain pricing and charges, and nine-out-of-10 will think, 'I'd better accept that, because I'm not confident enough to challenge it'.

"What we say is, if you're not comfortable or in doubt, then always make that challenge, because that's how you learn and get to the crux of the issue. As soon as you say that to a lot of people who come on AFP courses, you can see their eyes light up. They realise, 'I'm not on my own, it's not just me, my peer group in this room have had the same experience'."

There is also no shame in not knowing which way to go with acquisition and disposal. In recent years, fleet has changed immensely in an extremely short period and many old-faithful habits and methods are no longer effective. A certain amount of trepidation about where to go now is quite understandable, and common ground can be a great asset.

"I think building a network of people around you, such as the AFP provides, is really important," says Milchard. "The key is to communicate both within your own organisation and within the wider industry, because a modern fleet manager will develop confidence and knowledge when they speak to others and share challenges and experience.

"Lots of people are saying that we're going through the most change that has ever happened in fleet, so it's probably a case of admitting no one knows all the answers, but we can try to make calculated, accurate decisions about acquisition and disposal by working together as a group."

Top five tips for acquisition and disposal success

1. **Bigger does not equal better. A right-sized fleet trumps greater numbers, and should be cheaper to run.**
2. **Ask yourself why the business is procuring vehicles. Purpose and utilisation should inform acquisition and disposal above all else.**
3. **Value in-house expertise. Outsourcing vehicle procurement and remarketing can be a good option if it is well managed, but there should be someone with the skills to manage them. Equally, an in-house, direct line for drivers is very worthwhile.**
4. **Ask, when in doubt. If you don't understand something a supplier has said, do not hesitate to question it. It is not unreasonable to expect a transparent, jargon-free answer.**
5. **It's good to talk. Discussing best practice with colleagues and those outside the business in similar situations using forums, such as the AFP, goes a long way to informing best practice.**

Hiboo targets 'mature' UK market

Mixed fleet data start-up believes in keeping it simple. *Tom Seymour* reports

Fleet News speaks with Ciaran Higgins, Hiboo's UK lead, on how the French mixed fleet data start-up (focusing on trucks and heavy equipment) is growing due to increasing data demands from fleet operators.

Fleet News: Hiboo has already connected around 10,000 vehicles and machines in the UK construction industry. How did you reach that point and why has the UK become such a focus?
Ciaran Higgins: "We have been around as a company for just over seven years, but I joined in April 2024 with a specific focus on expanding into the UK and Ireland.

"From early on, it was clear the UK was a good fit for what we do. It is a rental-driven market, with a lot of healthy competition and strong demand for reliable data from tier one contractors, even though they do not own the vehicles and machines.

"That created fertile ground for us. Our role is to collect, centralise and harmonise machine data, but also to facilitate data sharing between organisations across the supply chain.

"That need is very real in the UK, and that is what has driven our growth here so far."

FN: How is Hiboo's UK operation structured today, and how does it sit within the wider business?
CH: "As a wider company we are around 50 people, split roughly 50-50 between tech and the commercial side. In the UK specifically, we have a dedicated team including myself, a full-time customer success manager and a pre-sales and sales engineer.

"We also work closely with a strong local channel partner that understands the UK construction and rental landscape extremely well. That local knowledge was crucial in the early days, helping us understand what would and would not work in this market.

"As the UK business has grown, we have also committed four people to UK-specific product development. Some of that will benefit other markets over time, but the UK is quite advanced and demanding in this area, so we need to be ready for that."

FN: Why do you see the UK as a strategic priority compared with other European markets?
CH: "When people talk about the UK being a mature market, what that really means in practice is that conversations are not starting from scratch. Customers are already doing something with data. The discussion is about how to improve it.

"In the UK, requirements around reporting, efficiency and sustainability are becoming standard parts of major project tenders.

"That means having access to reliable, shareable machine data is no longer a 'nice to have'. It is becoming a base requirement to operate on larger projects. Other markets are catching up, but the UK is further along that curve."

FN: Hiboo positions itself as more than a traditional telematics or tracking provider. How do you explain that difference to fleet managers?
CH: "Trackers are traditionally where all this started, with location and theft prevention, which are still important.

"But today there is far more data available, and the value comes from what you do with it. It is about understanding utilisation, reducing idling, improving performance and planning maintenance properly. If you reduce idling by even 5% or 10% on large machines, you are talking about millions in fuel savings and significant CO_2 reductions.

"So it goes well beyond putting a device on a machine. It is about benchmarking, alerting and helping businesses actually change behaviour and improve productivity."

FN: What are the biggest pressure points you see for rental companies and contractors right now?
CH: "Usage is a big one. Rental companies want to know that machines are being used where and when they should be, because that has compliance and insurance implications. Contractors want to know whether they are over- or under-stocked on site.

"What our platform enables is a more open, shared view of usage between rental companies and their customers. That supports more constructive conversations about whether the right equipment is on site. It is about winning the long-term relationship, not squeezing extra revenue out of unused machines."

FN: How do you handle data sharing between different stakeholders without it becoming a barrier?
CH: "A key principle for us is that Hiboo is not a walled garden. Some customers want to use our platform directly.

"Others want the data fed into their own systems via APIs. Often it is a mix of both.

"Importantly, data owners stay in control. For example, rental companies can decide what information is shared with end users and what is not. We are also fully agnostic. We are not tied to an OEM or a rental group, and that neutrality is particularly valuable on joint venture projects where everyone needs to trust the data."

FN: What practical benefits are UK customers seeing today?
CH: "Predictive and usage based maintenance is a major area. Planned maintenance is around 50% cheaper than unplanned maintenance, but historically it has been calendar based. By analysing usage patterns, we can forecast when maintenance is actually due and help businesses plan resources, parts and customer communication.

"That reduces downtime, avoids unnecessary disruption on site and improves relationships between rental companies and contractors."

FN: Sustainability reporting is increasingly important for fleets. How does Hiboo support that?
CH: "It is no longer optional. Many tenders now ask how you will report on emissions and fuel use. Because we already have the underlying usage data, carbon reporting becomes much simpler.

"For organisations working with multiple rental partners, all that data can be brought into one place. Running a report for a given period can be done very quickly, rather than manually collecting information weeks after the event. That speed is valuable not just for sustainability, but for operational decision-making too."

FN: What is next for Hiboo in the UK?
CH: "We are working on a number of large scale UK projects that will be confirmed in due course, which underlines the growing role we are playing. More broadly, we are continuing to invest in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI) to detect anomalies, improve maintenance forecasting and make data easier to access for those who are not data specialists.

"There is a strong desire across the industry to become more data-driven, but it can feel overwhelming. Our approach is to keep things simple, start with a small number of meaningful metrics, prove the return on investment and build from there."

Ciaran Higgins believes in winning long-term relationships

A SPECIAL REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY FleetNews

In association with

RENAULT: EMBODYING MODERNITY WITH OPTIMISED AND INNOVATIVE LCVs

The changing requirements from modern LCV customers

Mobility brand and light commercial vehicle (LCV) provider, Renault, is delivering greater value for fleet customers in 2026 through its updated Pro+ retailer network and innovative range of E-Tech electric and diesel vans.

Fleet News spoke with Renault UK's Head of LCV brand and performance, Seb Brechon, about what LCV fleet customers can expect this year from Renault, and how the brand is optimising its products and services to offset the challenges faced by modern fleets.

For many businesses, from small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) to multi-national organisations, LCVs form a crucial part of their fleets; offering adaptable and robust mobility tools that can be utilised to achieve a wide range of operational needs.

However, with fleets facing increased pressures, their expectations for what their chosen suppliers should be providing are similarly growing.

Brechon highlighted how priorities of modern fleet customers with regards to LCVs are shifting due to such challenges.

"They're facing several major pressures," he noted.

"In terms of efficiency, to maximise the return on their products and assets. Sustainability, we see from the ZEV Mandate and government pressure for businesses to move to electrification. Also, flexibility, whereas fleets were happy to have multiple vehicles, some having increased downtime for one particular role, they're now looking at having the flexibility of a product that can do multiple tasks within what their business requires.

"They're also expecting digital tools. In the modern era where you can buy something online today and it arrives tomorrow and they give you six updates in-between times, I think it's only expected that we develop our products for the future with more connected services to help those businesses optimise their fleets and work together with their vehicle to make sure that they're maximising its return on investment (ROI), which is what we want for them.

With LCVs representing more than a quarter of Renault's global sales, the brand has worked to optimise its services and develop its wide range of attractive products to better meet the updated needs of its customers.

"Businesses are trying to navigate decarbonisation, electrified fleets and transition to smart energy," observed Brechon.

"It's important that we, as an OEM, take responsibility to deliver the right products and services that best suit their needs."

THE RENAULT PRO+ PROGRAMME: UPDATING STANDARDS IN 2026

In 2026, Renault has committed to strengthening the value of its LCV products and services; to that end, the brand has updated the standards of its Pro+ Programme and is working to expand its network of retailer partners within the initiative, as well as the services they provide.

"We're looking to double our Pro+ network from a sales and aftersales perspective," explained Brechon.

"We're really invested in ensuring that our network partners offer the right level of service for our customers and, by doing so, we're looking to double the network over the course of 2026 into 2027."

The Pro+ network is committed to providing customers with extended servicing hours that keeps their businesses moving, price-match guarantee, dedicated experts and a 12-month parts and labour warranty as standard. In this way, customers can rely on assistance in finding solutions for their vehicle and service requirements.

With the updated standards, Renault customers can take advantage of optimised facilities, upskilled sales and aftersales services.

When engaging with Pro+ dealers, customers will have access to a dedicated member of staff to talk through the range of LCV vehicles, responses within one hour to queries or expressions of interest, and all service advisors will be Pro+ accredited. Additionally, visiting customers can explore the LCV range at every Pro+ centre.

If making use of a Pro+ workshop in the network, LCV customers can take advantage of extended hours, with the certainty that their vehicles will have access for maintenance – with Pro+ workshops now offering three LCV ramps.

The 2026 Pro+ network standards are aiming to reduce lead times, with one-day initial diagnostics for recoveries, two-day repairs, and five-day maintenance services, with courtesy vans as necessary.

"They'll have the right sales and aftersales facilities to be able to provide fleet customers with the expected level of service," said Brechon.

"By raising the bar in terms of network standards and by increasing the number of Pro+ retailers within the network, we are increasing the popularity of the Pro+ network and also the level of service given. There should be a two-fold effect of improvement for our customers – they've not got far to go to get to a Pro+ retailer, and they'll receive a better service from the network."

PROVIDING MODERN MOBILITY ACROSS THE RENAULT VAN RANGE

Renault's LCV range has been developed to reflect the needs of modern customers – offering E-Tech electric vehicles (EVs) and internal combustion engine (ICE) options for each model.

Brechon expanded on why this is a priority: "We all know the ZEV Mandate pressures that all OEMs are facing. We know that the target is ambitious for the country to get to a level of electrification across retail cars and LCVs.

"From our perspective, we have to show customers we have the right vehicles that suit their needs."

"WE'RE REALLY INVESTED IN ENSURING THAT OUR NETWORK PARTNERS OFFER THE RIGHT LEVEL OF SERVICE AND, BY DOING SO, WE'RE LOOKING TO DOUBLE THE PRO+ NETWORK OVER THE COURSE OF 2026 INTO 2027"

SEB BRECHON, HEAD OF LCV BRAND AND PERFORMANCE, RENAULT UK

Renault Master:
The large van fit for any business

The Master is Renault's long-running, award-winning LCV – now in its fourth generation. Available in E-Tech electric and diesel powertrains, Renault Master offers fleet customers award-winning mobility built on more than 40 years of on-the-road experience.

Businesses can benefit from the Master's high-performance and aerodynamic design that helps to reduce energy consumption and boosts range for EV and diesel models alike.

The Master's interior is a driver-oriented cockpit and a mobile office[1], combining wrap-around individual seats, under-seat storage, and an S-shaped dashboard with 10-inch open RLink touchscreen capability with wireless smartphone integration and Google built-in[2] for accessible controls and exceptional working comfort.

On the move, the Master offers up to 20 advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS)[3] features, including booster emergency braking as standard.

Customers interested in the internal combustion engine model can choose between three different diesel engines with manual and nine-speed automatic variants, and CO_2 from 196kg[4].

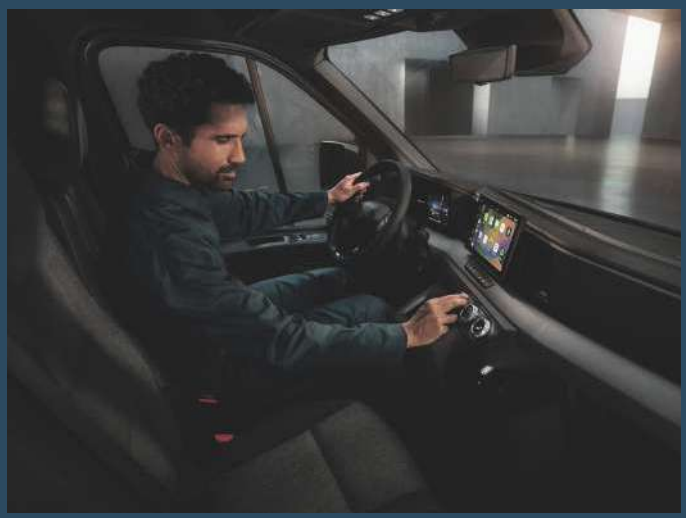
Master E-Tech electric, in turn, offers up to 285 miles of range[5] with an 87 kilowatt-hour (kWh) battery, with 22-kilowatt (kw) AC and 130 DC charging as standard. The E-Tech electric has a payload of up to 1,500kg and towing capacity of up to 2,500kg[6].

"It's got excellent aerodynamics and efficiency," said Brechon.

"It's a modular platform, we've got diesel and electric powertrains today, but it's hydrogen-ready should that infrastructure come to fruition in a way that makes it manageable from a customer's perspective, outstanding payload and towing capability, it supports heavy duty. It has fantastic conversions; we have a wide range of Master conversions available for our customers with leading brands in the UK."

Current conversion options include ready-made converted vehicles, such as the Luton box van, Luton low loader and the Aluminium tipper.

"We brought the best partners and converters in the UK together to develop the platform to make sure that we have a robust and complete offering for Master – whether it's ICE or E-Tech electric."



Renault Trafic:
Evolution of the medium van

Renault's biggest selling van, Trafic represents an industry standard of the versatility, reliability and performance that fleets should expect from a medium van.

Now, with four trim levels available – including the new Graphite edition – there is a Trafic for every fleet.

"Everyone knows Trafic," said Brechon. "It's earned its reputation through durability, adaptability and low running costs. Businesses trust it because it has a wide variety of uses; from trades to logistics to passenger transport to medical patient transport."

Trafic offers excellent loading capabilities thanks to its optimised loading length of 4.15 metres as standard with a load-through bulkhead under the passenger seat and ergonomically-designed load area.

Trafic has also been fitted with optimised safety and driver assistance systems – including rear parking sensors and camera, lane departure warning system, tyre pressure detection and intelligent speed assist – all integrated as standard across all variations of the model.

With a high level of specifications available for Trafic customers to choose from – across interior trim, equipment, engines and even the dimensions for the vehicle itself – fleets can ensure that they drive away with the exact Trafic model that best suits the needs and preferences of their drivers and operations.

Whether customers require a rear parking camera, optimised air conditioning upon entry, or more bespoke options, Trafic has it covered.

Brechon commented: "It's a really versatile vehicle in the range. It delivers a good balance between load, practicality and onboard comfort. It's got good residual values (RVs) and it's highly competitive in terms of total cost of ownership (TCO). For fleets that need a van – their day-in, day-out, reliable workhorse – Trafic has been there for years. It seems an obvious choice."

The new Trafic Graphite Edition has the strengths of a medium van in an offering designed for small businesses and owner-drivers. The model provides optimised design features, ideal for frequent deliveries and day-to-day transportation; including sidestep functionality and a rear spoiler. Users can be confident of stylish and comfortable travel thanks to the Graphite Edition's black alloys and sleek faux leather seats.

In 2026, Renault is introducing the new Trafic E-Tech electric, which will offer a WLTP range of up to 279 miles[7].

"It's going to revolutionise what we think of as the medium LCV," said Brechon.

"It will have a very competitive range and charging times lower than what we see in the market today and will be an incredibly versatile product."

"We are looking forward to showcasing the road-going model at this year's Commercial Vehicle Show."

Renault Kangoo:
The go-to for small van users

The award-winning Renault Kangoo serves as an ideal option for small van drivers, offering fleets practicality without compromising on comfort or technology.

Loaded with innovation, Kangoo has ICE models with petrol and diesel engines, with the E-Tech electric option also available. Fleets can choose between panel and crew van specifications, with medium- and long-wheelbase versions.

Users can rely on Kangoo for loading volumes of up to 4.2m3[8] and a payload of up to 975kg[9], with high levels of specification. Drivers can also add the option for Kangoo's easy inside rack – with a load length of 2,088mm and 2,514mm – which folds down from the ceiling, ideal for transporting long objects while leaving the floor uncluttered.

Driver safety and efficiency is assured with Kangoo's provision of up to 20 exceptional and innovative ADAS features, enabling drivers to make use of the vehicle's rear-view camera, hill-start assist, wide-view mirror and active emergency braking system with vehicle detection.

"It's the perfect small van," Brechon commented.

"It combines compact dimensions, exceptional usability. Its smart design maximises cargo space and accessibility, while maintaining manoeuvrability, which is essential for those small-city, urban operations.

"It's a strong contender in the small van category. It provides really good driver comfort, safer technologies, and its EV variant does well, it's got a great range. It delivers everything that a small van user would need."

Kangoo's electric E-Tech model offers up to 186 miles of WLTP-certified driving range[10] with a 44kWh battery that utilises a 22kw AC and 80kw DC charging as standard

Brechon said: "The Kangoo brand name can stand on its own two feet. It's a well-known product within the market and, from an LCV perspective, one of the go-to vehicles for small van users.

"Be it local fleet, corporate fleet, or the large major fleets, Kangoo is a great product to have on board."

1 Follow road safety regulations when using mobile office. It is the driver's responsibility to stay alert, drive safely and always be in control of the vehicle.
2 Available as standard from Extra trim.
3 It is your responsibility to stay alert, drive safely and be in control of the vehicle at all times. Driver assistance features have speed and other limitations and should not be solely relied on. For more information, please refer to the owner's manual or visit renault.co.uk/safety.
4 CO_2 figures from MM35 130 panel van advance.
5 Based on 87kWh E-Tech 100% electric L2H2 4T version. WLTP test data is shown for comparability purposes only. Actual real-world driving results may vary dependent on a number of factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted after registration, weather conditions, driving styles and vehicle load.

business.renault.co.uk

6 Payload and towing capacity based on LM35 version.
7 Pending UK homologation.
8 Loading volume based on LL21 panel van.
9 Payload figure based on LL21 panel van.
10 Based on L1 WLTP test data. WLTP test data shown for comparability purposes only. Actual real-world driving results may vary dependent on factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted after registration, weather conditions, driving styles and vehicle load

MOT changes will reduce admin and financial burden, but change must come soon

By Lee O'Neill, operations director at Venson Automotive Solutions

A nugget of good news for the battery electric van (BEV) sector arrived last November as the Government agreed to introduce legislation to move 3.5 to 4.25 tonne zero-emission vans into scope of the class 7 MOT testing system.

This harmonisation of MOT rules represent the demolition of a significant barrier to adoption for fleet operators wishing to transition to BEV, a reform that Venson has long called for.

Fleet operators with 3.5t-to-4.25t BEVs will no longer have to rely on limited testing slots (once the legislation is introduced and passed), easing both administrative and practical burdens and, vitally for businesses heavily reliant on their fleet, reducing expensive downtime.

It was clear from the zero emission goods vehicles: regulatory flexibility consultation response, published in November, that the move to harmonise MOT rules is a popular one given that 82% of respondents to the consultation agreed with the shift to class 7 MOT testing. Importantly 80% of respondents agreed the shift would provide sufficient safety assurances.

Safety is, of course, the issue here, as it is the very essence of the MOT, ensuring a vehicle meets road safety standards, and a central consideration for Venson while campaigning for change.

In a celebration of BEV technology, it was good to see BEVs recognised for their 'advanced engineering and reliability of new vehicles, which are designed to meet stringent safety and performance standards from the outset'.

Venson also supports this safety-first approach to legislative changes, noting that future reforms are subject to post-implementation review to assess future road safety impacts. Great news for fleets, who can rest assured that any future changes will be carefully monitored.

What fleets will be looking forward to now, though, is the significant benefits coming their way once the legislation is passed.

Indeed, 84% of respondents to the Government's consultation believe moving 3.5t-to-4.25t zero-emission vans into the class 7 MOT system will reduce the burden on them, and for good reason.

Reasons to be cheerful about the MOT harmonisation include a significantly reduced financial outlay. The maximum fee for a Class 7 MOT is £58.60, significantly lower than the £146 fee required for an HGV test.

The lower test frequency means operators will gain an additional two years usage before the first mandatory test. For those concerned about safety here, it's important to recognise that a 4.25t electric van is, in essence, the same as its internal combustion engine (ICE) equivalent. It has always been just the battery that tips the balance.

In addition, the more widespread availability of testing centres will reduce both travel and down time for fleet operators.

Meanwhile, those managing mixed fleets of diesel and BEVs of all sizes can now rely on one consistent testing regime for all their light commercial vehicles, simplifying administration and maintenance planning significantly.

It's easy to see the immediate practical benefits to fleets already operating 3.5t-to-4.25t BEVs. But, what about the impact on the zero-emission van market as a whole?

There is a healthy appetite amongst fleet operators for BEVs. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) reported that deliveries of them rose by 36% in 2025, with 30,169 registrations marking a new annual record.

As fleet professionals aim to provide the greenest fleet possible, perhaps the higher number of testing locations, reduced test fees, reduced vehicle downtime and greater flexibility provided by the class 7 MOT testing removes another hurdle in the decision to go electric.

The alignment of testing may also help the second-hand market, with BEVs becoming more attractive to buyers and, in turn, improving resale values for outright purchase fleet and overall a more attractive picture of total cost of ownership.

It is great to see pragmatic steps being taken to make BEVs of all sizes a more viable and accessible option for fleet operators.

Before any of these benefits come to light, however, the legislation needs to be passed through parliament.

Until then, businesses remain in a holding position, watching closely for these crucial reforms. Let's hope they happen quickly, allowing fleet professionals to plan confidently for a more sustainable and efficient future.

> The alignment of testing may also help the second-hand market

Fleet choices

Helping you to select the best car and van models to meet your fleet requirements

Vans on charge

Citroën eDispatch, Farizon SV, Kia PV5 Cargo and Volkswagen eTransporter p76

Best-selling fleet cars of 2025 p88

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New cars coming soon

BMW iX3

BMW's all-new iX3 is the first car built on its next generation Neue Klasse platform. The fully-electric SUV has a 500-mile range and 400kW rapid charging, making it among the most capable electric cars on the market. It goes on sale in March, priced from £58,755.

The new iX3 premieres BMW Group's sixth-generation eDrive technology, which comprises highly efficient electric motors, new high-voltage batteries with cylindrical cells and 800-volt technology.

The BMW iX3 50 xDrive is powered by two electric motors, which together generate an output of 469PS and 645Nm of torque. The vehicle accelerates from 0-to-62mph in 4.9 seconds and has an electronically-limited top speed of 130mph.

With the sixth generation, BMW claims energy losses are reduced by 40%, weight by 10% and manufacturing costs by 20%.

The new powertrain technology is introduced alongside a fresh version of BMW's iDrive infotainment system. Panoramic iDrive uses a display that runs across the entire width of the windscreen, at the top of the dash. It works in conjunction with a central touchscreen.

The luggage compartment can be increased from 520 litres to a maximum of 1,750 litres by folding the rear seats.

At 4,782mm long, 1,895mm wide and 1,635mm high, the iX3 is proportioned to compete in the mid-size premium SUV segment.

OMODA 7

Omoda is expanding its model line-up with the new Omoda 7, a mid-size SUV with petrol and plug-in hybrid powertrains.

The car arrived in January, with petrol versions priced from £29,915 and plug-in hybrid models starting from £32,000.

It sits between the existing Omoda 5 and the Omoda 9.

The Omoda 7 features a Super Hybrid System (SHS), which combines an 18.3kWh battery with a 1.5-litre petrol engine. A self-charging function ensures it never runs out of charge. The car is capable of travelling for more than 700 miles – including 56 miles in EV-only mode.

The powertrain produces 204PS and 365Nm of torque, giving a 0-62mph time of 8.4 seconds. The battery is capable of fast charging at up to 40kW and includes Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) via a 3.3kW port. CO_2 emissions are 23g/km, placing the car in the 9% benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax bracket. There will also be a 1.6-litre TGDI petrol engine delivering 147PS.

Inside, the Omoda 7 has a 15.6-inch central touchscreen and a 10.25-inch digital instrument display. Standard equipment includes a heated steering wheel and dual-zone air-conditioning.

ISUZU D-MAX EV

Isuzu's D-Max EV will be the first fully electric 4x4 pick-up truck in the UK to offer a one-tonne payload, when it arrives in March.

The model will be priced from £59,995 (exc VAT), have a 3.5-tonne towing capacity and feature full-time four-wheel drive.

With a dual-motor powertrain and 66.9kWh battery, the D-Max EV will have a driving range of around 150 miles.

The new model looks identical to the existing diesel D-Max and will be available in extended cab and double cab body styles.

It is capable of water wading up to 600mm, has a ground clearance of 210mm and off-road approach and departure angles of 30.5° and 24.2°, respectively.

The D-Max's electric powertrain will produce 190PS and 325Nm of torque, and will support DC fast charging at 50kW – enough to supply a 10%-80% charge in an hour.

Pre-sales began late in 2025, and first UK arrivals began in February. Customer deliveries were scheduled to follow in March.

Isuzu expects the model will be of particular interest to utility and public sector fleets that require electric vehicles, but also need towing and off-road capabilities.

Key models that will be available to order in the coming months

Scan here for Full details of every new vehicle launch in 2026

MERCEDES-BENZ GLC

This year Mercedes-Benz will retire the EQC and replace it with the all-new GLC EQ. The electric powertrain has a range of up to 406 miles. It follows the recently launched CLA, as part of an all-new electric product line-up.

Pricing starts at £60,350, for the GLC 400 4Matic. Additional powertrain options will be introduced later.

Powered by a 94kWh battery and two electric motors, the range-topping GLC 400 4Matic can travel 406 miles (WLTP) on a single charge.

It has 489PS, can accelerate from 0-to-62mph in 4.3 seconds and reach a top speed of 130mph. Using 800v technology, the battery can add 188 miles of range in 10 minutes at a rapid charger.

A heat pump comes as standard, along with a one-box braking system that maximises energy recovery without compromising brake pedal feel.

The new GLC is longer than the existing model, benefiting passenger space. There is more legroom and more headroom for those on board, while boot space measures 570 litres. There's an additional 128 litres of storage under the bonnet.

A widescreen display spans the width of the dashboard, measuring 39.1 inches in diameter. It serves as the infotainment touchscreen and the instrument cluster, while also offering functionality for the front passenger. It incorporates AI technology to provide a personalised and more intuitive user experience.

Every model has an extensive sensor set using up to 10 external cameras, five radar sensors and a dozen ultrasonic sensors to offer advanced driving assistance.

KIA EV2

Kia will launch its most compact electric car this year, with the introduction of the EV2.

The new model will compete with cars such as the Ford Puma Gen-E and Renault 4, as well as new VW Group models.

Built on Kia's dedicated electric platform, the EV2 combines compact exterior dimensions with interior space comparable with larger segments.

A new sliding and reclining rear seat system maximises everyday usability.

Rear legroom can be extended or, when the seats are fully slid forward, up to 403 litres of boot capacity is possible.

The EV2 will offer two battery options: a 42.2kWh standard-range and a 61kWh long-range battery. Anticipated driving ranges reach up to 197 miles for the standard-range and up to 278 miles for the long-range version (WLTP pending).

Both feature 400v architecture and deliver rapid DC charging. The Standard model completes the process in 29 minutes, while the Long Range takes just a minute or so more.

MG4 URBAN

The MG4 was a game-changer for the brand when it launched in 2023, bringing advanced technology and a long range for an affordable price.

It will be updated later this year.

Before then, MG is introducing the MG4 Urban as an all-new model that will sit alongside the existing MG4.

This new car will compete in the compact segment, targeting drivers of models such as the BYD Dolphin Surf, Citroën e-C3 and Renault 5.

Despite sharing a name with the MG4, the MG4 Urban sits on a completely different platform. It is front-wheel drive and is compatible with advanced solid state battery technology.

The car is available now with pricing starting at £23,495 for the Comfort Standard Range (201 miles range), rising to £27,995 for the Premium Long Range (258 miles).

New vans on

The four on test (from left): the Farizon SV, VW eTransporter, Citroën eDispatch and Kia's PV5 Cargo

the charge

New electric vans are arriving thick and fast, but do they improve the picture? *Matt de Prez* investigates

The electric van market is entering its second stage of evolution thanks to advancements in powertrain technology and the introduction of new brands bringing a broader range of options for fleets.

Last year, alone, saw the introduction of a new electric Renault Master, the VW eTransporter and the Ford E-Transit Courier. Kia also expanded its remit into the commercial vehicle world, with the debut of the PV5. Finally, new-to-market brand Farizon arrived with the SV.

These new models bring faster charging speeds, longer ranges and improved value to a much-needed sector of the market.

Fleets looking for a medium-size van have plenty of choice when it comes to marques, but there's only a handful of platforms on the market.

In this test, we've assembled a trio of the new arrivals, along with a contender from Stellantis, to see how the newcomers shape up against the established rival.

CITROËN eDISPATCH

Stellantis has been a major player in the medium electric van segment, with its entrant offered across four in-house brands and Toyota. This year, Iveco will offer a re-badged version too. The popularity of the platform, along with its diverse powertrain line-up, makes it a hard option to ignore.

Updates were applied across the line-up, in 2024, bringing enhancements to the on-board infotainment and a longer range.

The eDispatch comes in two sizes – M and XL – and with the choice of either a 50kWh or a 75kWh battery. Here, we've got the smaller M variant, with the larger battery. It costs £43,885 in Driver specification – the higher of the two available. A range of up to 230 miles (WLTP) is possible.

The eDispatch is the most conventional van in our group, but that also makes it the most dated – highlighting the fact that this platform arrived in 2017. It's the only one that comes with a mechanical key, for example, and the halogen headlights are unremarkable when compared with the LED units used in the newer vans.

That said, it has a practical loadspace with sliding doors on both sides and a square opening at the rear. There's a section in the bulkhead that can be opened, allowing longer items to be accommodated by using the front passenger footwell.

A durable floor lining provides a smooth and clean space with integrated eyelets for securing loads.

Up front, the cabin is spacious and comfortable. Our only disappointment comes from the


Citroën eDispatch


Kia PV5 Cargo


VW eTransporter


Farizon SV

unnecessary transmission tunnel that eats into leg space for the middle seat passenger.

There's a proper set of heater controls on the dash, along with an easy-to-use touchscreen infotainment system. Build quality feels robust and Citroën provides a decent amount of interior storage.

Our van is equipped with the £500 Winter Pack, which includes a heated driver's seat and steering wheel. Following the 2024 facelift, the eDispatch comes with a heat pump as standard.

Drivers should have no problems getting comfortable in the fully adjustable seat that includes lumbar support and an integrated armrest. It's a key criteria for fleet managers. The van provides decent visibility and, on the Driver spec, comes with a surround-view camera system and a digital rear-view mirror.

It also drives well. Road and wind noise are pleasingly suppressed, making it well suited for longer-distance motorway work. Ride and handling are impressive, too. The eDispatch feels planted and stable, while also offering easy manoeuvrability.

When it comes to efficiency, the Citroën's older powertrain technology was unable to keep up with the rest of the group. It managed a sub par 2.0mi/kWh in our test, suggesting a maximum range of only 136 miles would be possible on the day.

The eDispatch is also the slowest van of the four, with its 136PS motor taking 14.3 seconds to drag it to 62mph. The van never feels particularly brisk, requiring a fair amount of throttle to get it moving.

FARIZON SV

As an all-new brand, Farizon has the most to prove to fleets. The Chinese manufacturer, which is part of the Geely Group, is being introduced to Europe by importer Jameel Motors.

It's in the process of establishing a dealer network to support sales and aftersales of its purpose-built SV. Currently, the brand is relying on a contract with The AA for the majority of servicing and repairs.

The vehicle straddles the medium and large van segments, with an initial five-model line-up. The L1H1 version, tested here, competes with other mid-size models, as the most practical in our group.

It offers 6.95cu m of loadspace and an impressive payload of 1,300kg (note all SV variants have 3.5-tonne gross vehicle weight). The van's overall footprint is slightly smaller than that of the VW eTransporter, but clever packaging means it offers more space in the rear.

Three battery options are available across the line-up – 67kWh, 83kWh and 106kWh – giving a range of up to 247 miles. We've got the mid-spec unit, which promises 234 miles. It costs £48,000 (CV OTR).

Compared with the rest of our group, the Farizon comes with the highest spec. There are no trim levels, but all models get heated and cooled seats, adaptive cruise control, keyless proximity entry, LED headlights and a 360-degree camera system.

The van has a modern look, with its design dictated by aerodynamics. The smooth panels and body-coloured bumper give a good aesthetic, but make the van more prone to paint damage in day-to-day use.

At the rear, the SV offers a spacious cargo area with minimal wheel arch intrusion and the widest loadspace off our group. There's a useful 230-volt three-pin plug back there, too, for powering tools or other devices.


Citroën's eDispatch and Kia's PV5 Cargo

Citroën eDispatch

Kia PV5 Cargo

VW eTransporter

Farizon SV

Citroën eDispatch

Kia PV5 Cargo

VW eTransporter

Farizon SV

We found the door handles a little flimsy in feel and the sliding side door wasn't as easy to open and close as it was on the other vans we were testing.

The cab area is less spacious than in the VW Transporter, meaning the seats can't be pushed that far back leaving the driver and passengers with limited knee room. We also struggled to get comfortable as there's limited adjustment of the steering column. However, height adjustment and lumbar support for the ventilated/heated driver's seat were both added to MY26 vans after feedback from fleets.

Storage options are also limited, compared with the other vans in this test. There's nothing on the top of the dash, only a small compartment in the lower section and a pair of slide-out cupholders, the latter of which you can't use if there's someone in the middle seat.

Farizon does provide a proper climate control panel, but the heated and cooled seat controls are buried in the infotainment system menu. Compared with the other vans in this test, which all come from manufacturers with passenger car divisions, the Farizon operating system leaves a lot to be desired. The menu system and graphics feel a decade or more behind.

In our efficiency test, the SV outperformed the Citroën and VW with a return of 2.6mi/kWh – enough for a real-world range of 215 miles. Fast charging is supported at 140kW, which is the best in this group.

It puts the Farizon in a strong position for higher-mileage fleets, although we've concerns about driver comfort as the SV's ride and refinement are the worst of the quartet.

KIA PV5 CARGO

Having made great strides in the electric car market, Kia is now turning its attention to vans. A full line-up is expected before the end of the decade, all based on a new modular platform built specifically for electric powertrains.

The PV5 Cargo has a slight disadvantage in this group test, as it's the smallest van here. Straddling the small and medium segments, this L2H1 variant offers 4.4cu m of loadspace and a payload of 690kg. However, with gvw below 3.0-tonnes, it's the only van qualifying for the less expensive class 4 MOT.

While it lacks outright space, the Kia is considerably cheaper than other vans evaluated. This Plus version, with the larger of two battery options, is just £31,055. It also offers the most range, managing 258 miles (WLTP) on a full charge.

The PV5 has another trick up its sleeve, too. The floor is extremely low, making it easier to step in and out of the cargo area. It offers the tallest load space in the group, making it easier to stand inside. The compromise, here, is width. Kia needed somewhere to house the van's rear suspension so there's two additional humps in the floor which means a pallet cannot be loaded flat. A flat floor is available as an option, but that raises the height and reduces loadspace volume.

Drivers sit high in the van, which makes getting in and out a little tricker than in some other small vans. We also found the gap between the steering wheel and the seat to be quite narrow.

The seats are comfortable and supportive, with cloth upholstery. There's a reasonable amount of adjustment, up and down, but no lumbar support. Kia says it's coming at a later date.

"The Kia is considerably cheaper than other vans evaluated"


The Farizon (left) and the VW

Citroën eDispatch

Kia PV5 Cargo

VW eTransporter

Farizon SV

Storage solutions are integrated well, with hidden compartments in the floor of the cab providing extra security. There's only space for two, however.

A large (12.9-inch) central touchscreen display incorporates the audio, navigation and climate controls to provide a largely buttonless dashboard. We'd have preferred some physical switchgear to minimise driver distraction. Certain functions, such as the heated seats, are not immediately accessible from the home screen.

As the PV5 Cargo is twinned with a passenger car version, refinement is impressively high. It's one of the quietest vans with subdued wind and road noise.

With 160PS the PV5 gathers pace with little fuss. It's smooth, progressive and has a well-managed throttle pedal. Ride comfort is equally impressive, balancing poise and stability without too much harshness. There's not much body roll, and the van's low centre of gravity gives an assured feel.

Around town, the van feels lightweight and nimble, with a good turning circle. Yet, at higher speeds, it's equally proficient with a quiet and relaxing cruising manner.

During our efficiency test, the Kia was a clear winner. It managed 3.0mi/kWh, enabling a real-world range of more than 200 miles.

VOLKSWAGEN eTRANSPORTER

While Citroën is carrying the flag for six different marques in this test, it's the VW that arguably has the biggest weight on its shoulders. The all-new Transporter is a product of Ford and VW's strategic partnership. It's pretty much identical to the Transit Custom, which is the UK's best-selling van.

Ford led the design and development work, leaving only minor differences between the two. The eTransporter comes with the same 65kWh battery as the Ford, promising a 200-mile range.

It's sizeable, with the largest footprint of the four. Loadspace matches the Citroën's, at 5.8cu m, although payload is behind at 1,084kg. Sliding doors are fitted on both sides, aiding practicality.

When it comes to fit-outs or conversions, the van can accept anything designed for the Transit Custom, giving fleets a broad choice of options.

Load height is the smallest of the group, so it may not be the best choice if you regularly step in and out of the cargo area.

In Commerce Pro trim, the eTransporter costs £44,165. It's notably cheaper than the Farizon and has far stronger residuals in addition.

The Transporter has the most practical and user-friendly interior of all the vans in this test. It has a spacious cab, that easily accommodates three, and there's plenty of storage. The plastics and upholstery have a robust and hard-wearing feel, which should hold up well come resale time.

Like the Kia, there's an over-reliance on the central touchscreen. Everything, including the climate controls, is in there. The system is based on Ford's operating system, but has a VW-specific skin. We found it straightforward to use.

Overall efficiency was a little disappointing. We managed 2.3mi/kWh, which will barely get you 150 miles. Paired with slower charging speeds (125kW), the eTransporter can't match the Farizon or Kia for long distance work. An updated battery, with a larger 70kWh capacity, is coming this year, but it only increases the official range by around 35 miles.

The Transporter wins points for driveability. It's on par with the Kia, offering a refined ride and a positive driving experience. The steering, brakes and throttle are well calibrated for a smooth drive and the 136PS motor is gutsy. The VW eTransporter is noticeably quicker than the other vans here. That's partly due to its rear-wheel drive configuration, which provides far more traction. The front-driven Farizon and Kia were often left scrabbling for grip when emerging from junctions.

> "The VW eTransporter is noticeably quicker"

Verdict

Pitching three new vans against an eight-year-old model was never going to work in the Citroën's favour but the eDispatch put up a good fight, nonetheless.

It's a versatile platform and one that was recognised as a class-leader when it launched. Of course, aging powertrain technology means efficiency and overall range is the worst here.

And that's really where the Citroën loses ground, because in all other aspects it's still a decent van and one that will fit the needs of many fleets.

Then there's the Farizon. This is a van that shows a lot of promise. It has a long range, the largest loadspace and the best payload. Unfortunately, it just doesn't hold a candle to the other vans here when it comes to driveability. There's too much wind noise, the ride is choppy and, at motorway speeds, the electric motor emits a dreadful whine that quickly becomes tiresome. It's also the most expensive van here, with the highest running costs, but it feels like the cheapest.

Kia, meanwhile, has made an excellent first impression. While smaller than the competition, it demonstrates a far greater focus on comfort and driveability, without compromising efficiency (although floor space is compromised by the slimline design).

Residual values are excellent, leading to the lowest running costs here.

There's still work to be done, however, as Kia's dealer network is very much in a learning phase when it comes to commercial vehicles and the van has a couple of small ergonomic issues such as its poorly placed rear door hinges that stick out of the ceiling.

That leaves the VW eTransporter as our pick of the bunch. Along with the Transit Custom, it leads the medium van segment as the best all-rounder.

While range is disappointing, the vast adaptability, low running costs and strong residuals make it ideal for fleets.

Drivers will have no complaints, thanks to the comfortable and spacious cab. VW also operates a vast network of van specialists, providing optimal support.


Citroën eDispatch


Kia PV5 Cargo


Farizon SV


VW eTransporter

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The Farizon (left) and the VW


Citroën eDispatch


Kia PV5 Cargo


Farizon SV


VW eTransporter

	Citroën eDispatch M 75kWh Driver	Farizon SV 83kWh H1	Kia PV5 Cargo Plus Long Range	VW eTransporter SWB Commerce Pro
Price (CV OTR)	£43,835	£48,000	£31,055	£44,165
VED (4yrs)	£1,725	£1,725	£1,725	£1,725
Residual (4yrs/80k)	£5,650	£5,925	£8,425	£8,300
Running cost (ppm)	41.3	43.9	25	37.6
Battery useable	68kWh	83kWh	67kWh	64kWh
WLTP range (miles)	230	234	258	200
WLTP efficiency	3.4mi/kWh	2.8mi/kWh	3.8mi/kWh	3.1mi/kWh
FN test range (miles)	136	216	201	147
FN test efficiency	2mi/kWh	2.6mi/kWh	3mi/kWh	2.3mi/kWh
Max charge AC	7.4kW	11kW	11kW	11kW
Max Charge DC	100kW	140kW	150kW	125kW
Charge time 7.4kWh	11hrs	9hrs (15%-100%)	10.75hrs	10.25hrs
Charge time 22kWh	11hrs	N/A	7.25hrs	7hrs
Max DC Charge time 10%-80%	39mins	36-40mins (20%-80%)	30mins	39mins
Power	136PS	231PS	163PS	136PS
Torque	270Nm	336Nm	250Nm	415Nm
0-62mph (secs)	14.3	11.6	12.5	8.6
Max speed	81mph	84mph	84mph	70mph
Drivetrain	FWD	FWD	FWD	RWD
Length	4,981mm	4,990mm	4,695mm	5,050mm
Width	1,920mm	1,980mm	1,895mm	2,032mm
Height	1,904mm	1,980mm	1,923mm	1,979mm
Gross vehicle weight	3,230kg	3,500kg	2,650kg	3,225kg
Load length	2,510mm	2,690mm	2,225mm	2,622mm
Load width	1,636mm	1,795mm	1,565mm	1,777mm
Load height	1,397mm	1,440mm	1,520mm	1,377mm
Load capacity	5.8cu m	6.9cu m	4.4cu m	5.8cu m
Payload	1,220kg	1,300kg	690kg	1,084kg
Towing capacity	1,000kg	2,000kg	750kg	2,300kg
Warranty	3yr/100k	4yr/125k	7yr/100k	5yr/124k

Volume players

Mid-size SUVs are a hot commodity, especially if they're electric. *Matt de Prez* investigates


Smart #5 Premium

Škoda Enyaq 85 Edition

Mid-size SUVs are big business for manufacturers. They are the UK's most popular car type and account for a third of all company car sales, so competition is fierce.

The VW Tiguan is the best-seller, but Nissan's Qashqai, Kia's Sportage and the Hyundai Tucson all take their fair share of business.

Electric powertrains are gaining momentum in the segment and, again, it's the fleet market where they are selling in the largest numbers. So we thought we'd put the latest models to the test.

Kia is the latest entrant, bringing its EV5 to market as an electric alternative to the Sportage. The two cars aren't technically related though, as the EV5 sits on the brand's bespoke EV platform.

Prices start at £39,345, although we've got the top-spec GT Line S variant here which lists at £48,045 (on-the-road). All variants use the same 218PS electric motor and 78kWh (useable) battery.

Like the smaller EV3, the EV5 is very much a 'no frills' package. It has a conservative design that houses clever packaging and a spacious, yet drab, interior. There's more space inside than a Sportage offers, making it great for practicality. The 566-litre boot is competitive, but not class-leading, however.

The plain looks go hand-in-hand with the driving experience. The EV5 is the most efficient car here, managing 3.2mi/kWh during our winter range test, yet it's rather uninspiring to drive. Power delivery is lethargic – clearly reigned in to prevent the front wheels from spinning – and the peak output struggles with the car's 2.1-tonne bulk. An 8.4-second 0-62mph time sounds brisk enough, but, in this test, it leaves the EV5 on the back foot.

When it comes to comfort and refinement, the EV5 claws back credibility. The soft-sprung nature of the car provides a nurturing ride. It covers miles with ease and, thanks to its efficiency, manages the longest distance between charges out of the cars here. Charging speeds are a little underwhelming, at a peak of 150kW, as the EV5 doesn't feature the 800-volt battery technology used in the EV6 or EV9. It means a longer wait at chargers with an official 10%-80% charge time of 30 minutes.

Renault has taken a different approach with the Scenic and leant more into the design, giving the car a sportier nature and more character. It's the smallest car here, which puts it at a disadvantage for space and practicality, but it has a larger battery than the Kia and promises an impressive range of 381 miles.

The Scenic also wins points for price. This top-spec Iconic Esprit Alpine version is only £41,995 and provides all the creature comforts you'd expect from a premium-segment car.

A keenly tuned chassis makes it the most dynamic car here, with a firmer suspension set-up and quick steering. Despite having the same power output as the EV5, the Scenic feels much quicker in the real world. The throttle is keener and when it comes time to scrub speed, the brakes are seriously sharp. As the lightest car here, the Scenic offers good agility, but the downside is a slightly fidgety and nervous feel when compared with the other cars on test.

Efficiency left us a little disappointed. At 2.7mi/kWh, the Scenic's 87kWh battery will deliver just 235 miles in real-world driving. Granted it is winter, but it's not a great performance.

Škoda has managed to bridge the gap between the Kia and Renault. It's larger than the EV5, quicker than the Scenic and costs £44,550 in 85 Edition guise. A WLTP range of 359 miles is not to be sniffed at, either, and, while not as dynamic as the Renault, the Scenic easily matches the EV5 for comfort.


Kia EV5 GT Line S


Renault Scenic Iconic Esprit Alpine

Following a facelift, last year, the Enyaq has a sharper look and a stronger specification. It's powered by a 286PS motor, which gives a noticeable bump in performance. With power sent to the rear wheels, the Enyaq has excellent traction and is able to deploy its substantial torque advantage for healthy mid-range acceleration.

It is not perfect to drive, though. It can fidget over tricky surfaces at low speed, body control unravels over undulations taken at higher speed, and the brake pedal is worryingly unresponsive.

We managed 2.7mi/kWh in our test, suggesting a real-world range of barely more than 200 miles was possible from a charge.

It's a poor result for Škoda, although the car clawed back some credibility by achieving 4.0mi/kWh on the drive back from our photoshoot.

Now for the most interesting part of this test. The Smart #5.

Firstly, it's quite a looker. The modern, but slightly quirky, styling gives a purposeful, yet premium, appearance. Move inside and you'll find a palatial cabin. Wood, leather and soft-touch materials are in abundance. There's acres of leg room in the back and the boot is the largest here.

The version we're testing is the Premium, which sits fairly low in Smart's hierarchy, yet comes packed with equipment. Even the rear seats have an electric recline function.

A giant 97kWh battery promises 366 miles of range and is the only unit in this quartet to support ultra-rapid charging. It takes just 18 minutes to complete the benchmark 10%-80% charge.

Power is good too. There's 363PS available, giving a 0-62mph time of 6.5 seconds. And to top it all, Smart's engineers have done a fabulous job of setting up the ride and handling. It's wonderfully smooth, yet agile enough to hide its size and weight.

There's really nothing to fault about the #5 – it really is brilliant. Well, until you look at the trip computer. Sadly, it all fell apart for the Smart when we performed our efficiency test and the car returned just 1.5mi/kWh.

It's an atrocious result, considering all the cars were driven on the same roads on the same day. The car didn't fare much better in subsequent attempts to eke out more miles, either, peaking at 1.8mi/kWh.

	KIA EV5 GT LINE S	RENAULT SCENIC ICONIC ESPRIT ALPINE	ŠKODA ENYAQ 85 EDITION	SMART #5 PREMIUM
Price (P11D)	£47,080	£41,930	£44,245	£47,235
BIK %	3%	3%	3%	3%
BIK @ 20%	£282	£252	£265	£283
BIK @ 40%	£565	£503	£531	£567
VED (4yrs)	£1,870	£1,870	£1,870	£1,870
Residual (4yrs/80k)	£17,175	£13,750	£14,325	£15,475
Depreciation	37.5ppm	33.4ppm	37.5ppm	39.7ppm
SMR	3.3ppm	3.7ppm	4.5ppm	6.1ppm
Fuel cost	4.7ppm	4.8ppm	4.1ppm	5.0ppm
Running cost	45.4ppm	41.2ppm	46.0ppm	50.9ppm
Battery (useable)	78kWh	87kWh	77kWh	96kWh
WLTP range	313mi	381mi	359mi	366mi
WLTP efficiency	4.0mi/kWh	4.4mi/kWh	4.6mi/kWh	3.8mi/kWh
FN test range	249mi	235mi	208mi	144mi
FN test efficiency	3.2mi/kWh	2.7mi/kWh	2.7mi/kWh	1.5mi/kWh
Max charge AC	11kW	11kW	11kW	22kW
Max charge DC	150kW	150kW	135kW	400kW
Charge time 7.4kWh	12.5hrs	14hrs	12.25hrs	15.25hrs
Charge time 22kWh	8.5hrs	9.5hrs	8.25hrs	5.25hrs
Max DC Charge time 10%-80%	30mins	37mins	28mins	18mins
Power	218PS	218PS	286PS	363PS
Torque	295Nm	313Nm	545Nm	372Nm
0-62mph	8.4sec	7.9sec	6.7sec	6.5sec
Max speed	103mph	106mph	112mph	124mph
Drivetrain	FWD	FWD	RWD	RWD
Length	4,610mm	4,470mm	4,658mm	4,695mm
Width	1,875mm	1,864mm	1,879mm	1,920mm
Height	1,674mm	1,571mm	1,622mm	1,705mm
Weight (unladen)	2,069kg	1,917kg	2,141kg	2,335kg
Boot volume – seats up	566l	545l	585l	630l
Boot volume – seats down	1,650l	1,670l	1,710l	1,530l
Towing capacity	1,200kg	1,100kg	1,000kg	1,600kg
Infotainment screen	12.3"	12.3"	13"	13"
Heat pump	£900	Y	£1,100	Y
Heated front seats	Y	Y	Y	Y
Adaptive cruise	Y	Y	Y	Y
Blind spot monitor	Y	Y	Y	Y
Keyless entry	Y	Y	Y	Y
Apple Carplay/Android Auto	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/Y	Y/Y

"As an all-rounder, the Enyaq is the car we feel is the best of the four"

Verdict

The Smart would have walked this test if it hadn't guzzled electrons at a rate to challenge an electric lorry. With a real-world range of 150 miles, in winter conditions, we can't, in good faith, make it our pick of the bunch.

But the Smart wasn't the only car that disappointed. The Kia was thoroughly underwhelming, considering its price point is only a few hundred pounds behind the Smart's. It easily feels like the cheapest car here and certainly lacks punch. The only redeeming feature was efficiency, which is notable, but, without ultra-fast charging speeds, overall capability is still limited.

The Renault left a more positive impression, not least because it represents the best value here, but also because it provides more flair than the Kia and Škoda. Efficiency wasn't the strongest, which, combined with the car's modest power output and light weight, left us perplexed.

While the Škoda is heavier and much quicker than the Renault, it proved itself just as efficient.

And, as an all-rounder, the Enyaq is the car we feel is the best of the four. There are compromises: it's not the best to drive, or the most efficient, but it's relaxing, spacious and makes light work of long journeys. The technology is intuitive, the interior is upmarket and the meatier power output is welcome.

2025's best-selling company cars

Fleet and business registrations accounted for more than 60% of new car sales in 2025.

Figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) show that the overall new car market grew for the third year in a row, reaching 2,020,520 new car registrations for the first time since the pandemic – a year-on-year increase of 3.5%.

True fleet registrations were up by more than 65,000 units in 2025, an increase of 12% on 2024's result.

When it comes to powertrain choice, 41% of true fleet registrations were for electric cars. Regular petrol and diesel engines accounted for 32% of the total, while plug-in hybrids made up 18%.

Company car drivers continue to be key advocates of electric car sales, as 53% of all EVs sold in 2025 were registered via the true fleet channel.

Here are the best selling models.

1. Volkswagen Tiguan

Having launched in 2024, the all-new third-generation Tiguan has been an immediate hit in the fleet market. Its plug-in hybrid powertrain – accounting for three-quarters of those registered – offers a zero-emission range of more than 70 miles and a benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax rate of just 6% (2025/26).

The Tiguan is spacious, well-equipped and has a premium feel. It's not the cheapest option in the segment, but strong residuals, good driveability and smart styling help it stand out. Sales figure: 17,058.

2. Tesla Model 3

Tesla's Model 3 has climbed the sales charts after receiving a facelift in 2024, making it the UK's best-selling electric company car. The updated version offers more range and sharper styling.

It's keenly priced – starting at £37,995 – and provides a range of up to 466 miles, along with seamless access to Tesla's Supercharger network, enabling drivers to put range anxiety to the back of their minds. Sales figure: 16,964.

3. Tesla Model Y

2024's best-selling company car slipped to third place in 2025 as Tesla's overall fleet volumes dropped. The Model Y remains a practical and strong-performing model, but competes against a growing pool of rivals. Like the Model 3, the Model Y received a healthy facelift that addressed some of the car's shortcomings, while also increasing its range.

The latest Model Y is priced from £41,990 and offers a range of up to 391 miles. Sales figure: 16,614.

4. Kia Sportage

The Sportage was facelifted at the end of 2025, but that didn't stop it from being a force to be reckoned with in the fleet market. It also ended the year as the UK's second best-selling car, overall.

While there is a plug-in hybrid, it's not the most competitive. As such, it was the hybrid powertrain that most company car drivers opted for in 2025.

Kia is expanding its footprint in the Sportage's segment, this year, with the introduction of the electric EV5. Sales figure: 13,469.

5. Hyundai Tucson

As a close relation to the Sportage, the Tucson offers an equally attractive package of practicality, driveability and value for money.

Freshly facelifted, it's a sharp looker and comes with a decent level of kit as standard. A new N Line trim level provides a sportier look and feel, while fleets can choose from petrol, hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains. Sales figure: 12,693.

6. Volkswagen Golf

The Golf always performs strongly in fleet and as the oldest nameplate in the top 10, its success proves the old adage that it's sometimes best to stick to what you know.

While there's no electric version, the latest Golf eHybrid has an impressive zero-emission range of more than 80 miles. With hatchback and estate body styles, the Golf is practical and spacious. It drives well, looks good and returns great fuel efficiency. Sales figure: 12,139.

7. Qashqai

Now in its third generation, the Qashqai continues to be one of the UK's favourite cars. The no-nonsense crossover sells strongly in the fleet market, too, despite not having an electric or plug-in hybrid powertrain option.

Nissan's E-Power system is the best option for company car drivers, utilising a unique arrangement whereby the engine works only to provide power to an electric drive motor. Sales figure: 11,929.

8. Audi Q6 e-tron

It didn't take long for Audi's Q6 e-tron to become a favourite in the fleet market. The Q5-sized electric SUV was developed in conjunction with the Porsche Macan and it's packed with tech, including ultra-fast 800-volt charging capability.

The car manages almost 400 miles of range and offers strong performance, with a starting price of £61,315. Sales figure: 10,208.

9. BMW i4

With multiple Fleet News Awards to its name, it's no wonder the i4 is among the best-selling cars of 2025. It might not be the most spacious or practical model, but the svelte four-door coupé offers an outstanding drive, excellent refinement and returns decent efficiency.

Recent updates saw an improvement in range across the line-up, giving a peak figure of 380 miles for the eDrive40 variant. Sales figure: 9,307.

10. Ford Puma

The Puma was the UK's best-selling car in 2025 and that popularity resonated in the fleet market. It's stylish, fun to drive and packed with technology. An electric variant joined the line-up last year, making the Puma even more attractive to company car drivers. The Puma Gen-E represents good value and is eligible for the Government's £3,750 electric car grant. Sales figure 8,975.

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Defender 90 Hard Top. Durable. Capable. Flexible. With wading features, up to 3.5 tonne towing capacity, 1,355 litres* of load space and N1 rated tax efficient, it's the commercial vehicle for the hardest to get to jobs.

Model shown is 26MY Defender 90 Hard Top S with optional Tasman Blue metallic body, white contrast roof and 18" steel wheels. Official Fuel Consumption Figures for the Defender Hard Top range in mpg (l/100km) (weighted combined): [33.7-31.5 (8.4-9.0)]. CO_2 Emissions in g/km: [219-237]. The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer's tests in accordance with EU legislation with a fully charged battery. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. CO_2, fuel economy, energy consumption and range figures may vary according to factors such as driving styles, environmental conditions, load, wheel fitment, accessories fitted, actual route and battery condition. Off-road sequences carried out on private land with full permissions. Always check route and exit before wading. *Wet: Volume as measured by simulating the loadspace filled with liquid.