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Potholes and poor signage could delay self-driving vehicles

Report casts doubt over Government's autonomous aspirations due to poor condition of the road network

By Gareth Roberts

Potholes, poor road markings and complicated signals and signs could hamper the development of self-driving cars, new research suggests.

It also questions whether the associated communication and information systems will be up to standard and offer the comprehensive coverage which could be required.

Manufacturers predict that by the start of the next decade there will be a degree of full autonomy, with the car able to take complete control, allowing drivers to carry out other tasks, and by 2025 a car will be able to drive itself from door to door without a driver needing to touch the wheel.

But, while advancements in technology are paving the way for connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs), the readiness of the road network to facilitate them has been called into question in the report from the RAC Foundation.

A range of roadside communication devices are being considered to supplement vehicle-based devices, sensors and vehicle-to-vehicle communications, for example.

These include communication beacons located at strategic positions which may replace traffic signals, provide vehicle position information and serve a range of other functions. However, there is likely to be a problem with the loss of certain sorts of communication signals (for connectivity) in urban side streets, which could increase the need for a variety of devices and also raise the corresponding cost.

CAVs will also require very detailed maps of the routes being travelled. Filing construction plans which will affect the road network well in advance will be crucial for planning and mapping activities, says the report.

"Driverless cars will make decisions based on their best assessment of their surroundings," explained Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation. "Throw in variables like potholes, unclear and obscured signs and lines, and intermittent communication coverage from our currently patchy network and you could find that far from offering the swift, comfortable travel we seek, our new autonomous cars are condemned to crawling along in 'proceed with caution' mode."

Little attention has yet been paid to what impact different CAV strategies will have on the condition of road infrastructure, and its maintenance, renewal and configuration requirements, and in particular, the extent to which key features of the infrastructure, such as road signs and markings,

will need to be maintained to a higher standard.

But CAVs are unlikely to develop to their fullest potential without advanced planning by transport policymakers, planners and engineers to ensure infrastructure change is adequate, says the report.

Government, it concludes, needs to decide on the level of automation that will be supported, and how this will be implemented. Policy options – such as prioritising the platooning of heavy goods vehicles – have significant implications for infrastructure change and cost. Without clear policy direction, change in road infrastructure will be slow and piecemeal, it says.

The problem for policymakers at the moment is that research on the infrastructure requirements of CAVs is in its infancy, and evidence for the implications of the various automation options is largely lacking.

Experience in other sectors – for example, aviation and rail – suggests that as greater use is made of sophisticated technology, maintenance costs increase significantly. This will need to be



taken into account in any planning, but also needs to be considered in the light of the Asphalt Industry Alliance's finding that local road condition continues to deteriorate, with the recognition that there will be a need for significant investment (*Fleet News*, March 30).

In the alliance's Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM) survey, it suggested that local authorities need more than £12 billion to

COMPANY CAR DRIVERS 'NERVOUS' ABOUT FULL AUTONOMY



The majority of company car drivers embrace partial autonomous features that can improve safety, such as automatic emergency braking systems, according to an annual study from Lex Autolease.

But there is still a nervousness towards fully autonomous vehicles, with just one in four (26.3%) supporting the greater adoption of driverless cars.

More than half (51%) of respondents also believe that the transition towards driverless vehicles, which could see a mix of driver-controlled and autonomous vehicles on our roads, would be confusing.

Lauren Pamma, head of consultancy at Lex Autolease (pictured), said: "Autonomous vehicles require a culture shift as drivers learn to hand over the responsibility of driving to a machine."

"In this transition from human drivers to autonomous vehicles, there will inevitably be a period where the driver is not sure

what is expected of them or what they need to do in certain circumstances. This risk needs to be carefully managed in the transition stage."

Lex Autolease, which surveyed more than 600 company car drivers and 300 fleet decision-makers as part of the study, found that as the reality of fully autonomous vehicles creeps ever closer it is seeing that reflected in the expectations of fleet decision-makers.

Pamma said: "Most, if not all, major manufacturers are investing heavily in autonomous and connected technologies. How quickly these new technologies are adopted by fleets, and drivers more broadly, will be driven by price and availability, driver attitudes, and most importantly by an appropriate legislative framework and infrastructure."

"Given the pace of change, regular driver training and continually updating driver policies is crucial for fleets, both to stay on-top of technological advances and manage the behavioural shift towards autonomous vehicles."



The RAC Foundation's findings suggest that poor infrastructure may hamper self-driving progress

be able to bring the network up to scratch.

The shortfall has remained largely unchanged for four years – and the gap between the amount councils received this year and the amount they say they need to keep carriageways in reasonable order is almost £730 million.

The RAC Foundation report suggests that a pothole in a traffic lane carrying vehicles in a platoon, where vehicles follow each other very closely, could be extremely dangerous, particularly at high speed.

A recent report published the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee (fleetnews.co.uk, March 15), highlighted similar concerns to those raised by the RAC Foundation.

It concluded that Highways England and Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) needed to engage with motor manufacturers to future-proof new infrastructure and minimise the likelihood of expensive retrofitting.

The Earl of Selborne, chairman of the committee, said: "Connected and autonomous vehicles is a fast-moving area of technology and the Government has much to do, alongside industry and other partners, to position the UK so that it can take full advantage of the opportunities that CAV offer in different sectors."

In England, Wales and Scotland, LTAs, which are often local authorities, are responsible for the

maintenance and management of the majority of roads.

Around 5% of the road network is under the control of Highways England or the Welsh Assembly Government, while the remaining 95% is the responsibility of more than 140 local authorities of varying size and capability.

Darren Capes, transport systems manager for the City of York Council, said: "Authorities need to understand what supporting connected and autonomous vehicles will mean for the policy and funding decisions that they need to make now."

"They need to understand what technology decisions need to be made as existing highway systems reach the end of their life and new systems are considered."

"They need to do this against a backdrop of pressure to reduce costs and find further efficiencies in delivering services."

"They also need clarity on how the co-ordination of countrywide delivery of connected and autonomous vehicles will be managed between national and local government and the public and private sectors."

He concluded: "Connectivity and some degree of autonomy is inevitable and will be driven by industry, the motor manufacturers and public demand. However, I feel that most local authorities are not yet sufficiently prepared to deliver it."



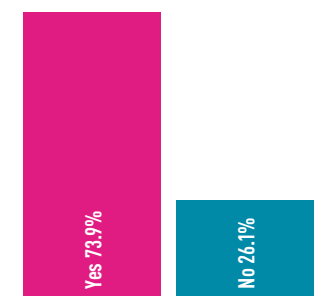
"You could find autonomous cars are condemned to crawling along in 'proceed with caution' mode"

Steve Gooding, RAC Foundation

FLEET FACTS AND FIGURES

OPINION POLL

Have you been put off selecting a hybrid or pure EV because lower BIK rates for plug-in cars are not being introduced until 2020?



FleetNews view:

Almost three-quarters of respondents to our poll said they had been put off a plug-in car, with the benefit-in-kind tax rate potentially falling from 16% in 2019/20 to 2% the following year. Fleet News believes it is therefore inevitable that the Treasury's decision not to bring forward lower BIK tax rates for hybrids and pure EVs looks set to damage the take-up of ultra-low emission cars.

This week's poll: Do you think the road network is ready for self-driving cars?

fleetnews.co.uk/polls

MOST COMMENTED ONLINE

Diesel hysteria 'unhealthy' for the fleet sector

fleetnews.co.uk/news – full story on page 15



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Build new Thames tunnel 'before it becomes obsolete' urges RHA

Government gives green light to £6bn project to relieve Dartford Crossing pressure

By Gareth Roberts

The Government is being urged to get on with building a new tunnel under the Thames which aims to help reduce delays at the Dartford Crossing.

Costing up to £6.2 billion, the planned route will create a new link between the A2 and M25, boosting the capacity for vehicles crossing the Thames east of London by 70%.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said: "This route will greatly improve journeys as well as unlocking more than £8 billion of economic benefits and creating some 6,000 jobs."

But, with a start date yet to be confirmed, fleet operators look likely to be left with the daily grind of the Dartford Crossing for at least a decade.

The Road Haulage Association (RHA) wants work to get underway as soon as possible. Welcoming the Government's decision, RHA chief executive Richard Burnett said: "The congestion on the Dartford Crossing will be reduced and the potential savings for operators in terms of time, money and fuel will be considerable. Our main concern is that the anticipated completion date will be 10 years from now. If traffic continues to increase at current levels, the new crossing may be obsolete before it even opens."

Dubbed one of the least reliable stretches on the strategic road network by Highways England,



Artist's impression of the new tunnel which the RHA and FTA want to see started as soon as possible

the crossing is already operating at over capacity. It was designed to cater for 135,000 vehicle movements a day, yet it regularly exceeds that figure at an average 150,000 per day. That equates to 55 million crossings per year, 6m more than it was designed to deal with.

The crossing is also partially or fully closed 300 times a year and it typically takes three to five hours for the roads to clear following a closure.

Efforts have been made to alleviate the hold-ups. A cashless payment system – the Dart Charge – was introduced in November 2014, delivering a 56% improvement in crossing times, according to Highways England.

Drivers were saving up to 14 minutes south-

bound and seven minutes northbound at peak times after the payment barriers were removed.

However, congestion at the Dartford Crossing is predicted to reach pre-Dart Charge levels by 2020. Christian Brodie, chairman of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), said: "It is vital we get the traffic flowing better across the Thames and must get the work started so the economic benefits can start to flow as soon as possible."

SELEP is urging local politicians and businesses to keep the pressure on ministers to avoid any further delay on the route going through the planning process.

Two locations were shortlisted in 2013 for a new bridge or tunnel across the river: one near the existing Dartford Crossing and the other linking the M2 with the M25 via the A13, with a possible further link to the M20.

The majority of some 47,000 respondents to a consultation last year identified the latter as the best solution.

Transport secretary Chris Grayling agreed, giving the green light to the scheme almost 30 years after it was first mooted in Parliament.

The new 13-mile route will run from the M25 near North Ockendon, crossing the A13 at Orsett before travelling under the Thames east of Tilbury and Gravesend. A new link road will then take traffic to the A2 near Shorne, close to where the route becomes the M2 (see plan, left).

O'Sullivan said: "The decision for a new crossing east of Gravesend and Tilbury is underpinned by years of studies, assessments and careful consideration of the record-breaking response to our 2016 consultation. As we progress there will be further consultation and opportunities to be part of shaping the detail for the area, now and for future generations."

Highways England also confirmed £10m will be used to improve traffic flow at and around the existing crossing as well as studying ways to further tackle congestion. This will include a wide-ranging investigation into options to cut 'rat-running' through Dartford and Thurrock.

THAMES CROSSING INTENDED ROUTE



Addison Lee pumps £5m into new service and driver training facility

Up to 250 cars can be serviced and cleaned each day at new base near Heathrow

By Tom Seymour

Addison Lee has announced the opening of one of Europe's biggest and most advanced service and driver training facilities in the private vehicle hire sector.

Called Grand Union, the £5 million project will include a new base near Heathrow which will officially open at the end of this month.

It will employ more than 100 people to help support Addison Lee's fleet, including a dedicated team of 30 technicians to keep vehicles on the road that can service 250 cars a day from 21 vehicle bays.

Grand Union will also be the dedicated training centre for Addison Lee's 5,450 drivers.

Addison Lee has run its training programme since 2010 supported by its in-house team and specialist third party providers.

Grand Union features four dedicated classrooms and an average of 100 drivers a day will be trained, ranging from newcomers to current employees.

On-road training is provided by RoSPA-accredited driving instructors and first aid training is provided by Quallsafe instructors.

Addison Lee's drivers will be able to gain a bespoke accredited qualification equivalent to an NVQ level 2.

The training course takes five months to complete through three modules that drivers have to attend and pass.

These sessions include written assessments that demonstrate advanced customer service and conflict management skills, defensive driving and cyclist awareness training, knowledge and practical on the road assessment,

"We've consolidated five operational sites across north London into one purpose-built centre"

Andy Boland, Addison Lee

emergency first aid with a theory test and CPR practical assessment.

The driver diploma is available to all of Addison Lee's drivers across all fleets, and the company said modules are kept up-to-date with refresher sessions that are held every three years.

Andy Boland, chief executive officer at Addison Lee, said: "This £5m investment is a milestone not just for our business, but a clear indication of how we are spearheading the professionalisation of the sector.

"Quite simply, there is nothing like it in Europe. We've consolidated five operational sites across north London into one purpose-built centre of excellence, with the latest diagnostic and servicing facilities to help make sure we give our customers the safest and most reliable cars on the road."

Grand Union also features its own car wash, which uses water recycling technology resulting in a reduction in water usage of up to 80%. It has the capacity to clean 250 vehicles a day.

The investment at Grand Union underlines Addison Lee's commitment to reducing its emis-

sions with the installation of the largest bank of electric vehicle charging points in London.

A total of 22 charging stations means vehicles will be able to cover 14,000 low emission miles a week using its fleet of 650 hybrid Toyota Prius vehicles.

The chargers are a mixture of fast and slow charging units "to meet the future requirements of Addison Lee's fleet operations from the site".

A spokesman said Addison Lee is currently evaluating the market to determine whether it will increase its EV fleet beyond its current number.

An increase seems likely, however, due to London's ultra-low emissions zone (ULEZ) forcing taxi and private hire companies to adopt plug-in vehicles.

Transport for London (TfL) is looking to bring the introduction of the ULEZ forward from September 7, 2020, to April 8, 2019.

TfL has already confirmed it will provide grants of £3,000, on top of the Office for Low Emission Vehicle's plug-in car grant, towards the purchase of a zero-emission capable taxi from mid-2017 to 2020.

TfL has also promised to install 150 rapid charge points by the end of 2018 and 300 by 2020 to support the electrification of taxis, PHVs and other commercial fleets.

However, Addison Lee raised concerns around the level of charging infrastructure that will be available to commercial fleets in the capital.

The spokesman said: "We believe there is a requirement in London to have a minimum of 4,500 rapid charging points and not the 350 currently planned to meet the demands of commercial fleets."





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HGV operators already pay towards enforcement via their testing fees

Compliant fleets may face charge to help DVSA target unsafe vans

FTA argues only those that fail their MOT should pay for enforcement action

By Gareth Roberts

Fleets could face a hike in MOT fees to help pay £2 million a year towards the cost of targeting unsafe vans by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

Currently, enforcement action is paid for out of general taxation, but the Department for Transport (DfT) has recommended that van operators should pick up the tab instead.

It wants the sector to cover the costs in the same way HGV operators do, with the cost of enforcement paid via its testing fee.

The DfT says that, while the details of how costs are recovered from the fee "would need to be determined", this may include an increase in the MOT fee, which it said is likely to add £3.25 to a class seven test.

A class seven MOT, which is conducted on commercial goods vehicles weighing between 3,000-3,500kg, currently costs about £50.

James Firth, head of licensing policy and compliance information at the Freight Transport Association (FTA), believes it is unfair to ask fleet operators that comply with the law to "prop up" those businesses which do not.

He said: "We urge Government to take the opportunity to apply costs only to non-compliant operators whose vehicles do not pass the MOT at the first attempt."

With 46.8% of vans failing their MOT at the first time of presenting, the FTA is also concerned about the practice of using the test as a diagnostic tool, rather than ensuring that regular maintenance programmes are upheld across the industry.

Firth continued: "Many of the vehicles which feature in the failure stats could have been given a temporary fix to pass the test, but could easily deteriorate to a dangerous level shortly thereafter, with no follow-up inspection."

"By ensuring that the enforcement levy falls on those requiring a retest, FTA is confident this would be an additional financial incentive for all van operators to maintain standards and strive for a first time pass, every time."

The possible rise in the class seven fee was part of a wider package of measures from the Government about the future of the MOT.

They included allowing all vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes an additional year before they had to undergo official tests, extending the period before the first MOT from three to four years.

Fleets have raised particular concerns about the proposed extension to the first MOT for vans (*Fleet News*, February 16).

Official statistics suggest the average mileage for a car presented for its first MOT is 32,000 miles, compared to around 70,000 miles for vans. As a result, the failure rate for vans tends to be double that of cars.

Members of fleet operators' association ACFO were unanimous in a survey on the issue, with 100% voting to keep the MOT for vans at three years. However, fleets were divided on the correct approach for cars, with 60% of ACFO members in favour of moving to four years.

More than 2.2 million cars each year undergo their first MOT test, according to Government figures, which also show that the number of three- or four-year-old cars involved in accidents where a vehicle defect was a contributory factor has fallen by almost two-thirds, from 155 in 2006 to 57 in 2015.

In a *Fleet News* poll readers were asked if they thought extending the first MOT for cars was good news for the fleet industry and opinion was divided, with 51% voting 'yes' and 49% voting 'no'.

The Government argues the current three-year test, introduced in 1967, is out of step with most of Europe, including Northern Ireland, where four years tends to be the benchmark for cars.

In addition, it says vehicle components are more reliable and failures tend to be related to basic maintenance issues, such as lights, that could be dealt with by encouraging drivers to carry out regular checks themselves.

If the current administration forms the next Government after the general election on June 8, any changes would be expected to be introduced in 2018.



"This would be an additional financial incentive for all van operators"

James Firth, FTA

LeasePlan signs deal to provide vehicles for Uber drivers in UK

Partner-drivers will not be obliged to take up 'free from hassle' offer

By Tom Seymour

LeasePlan has signed a memorandum of understanding with Uber to supply vehicles to the technology company's driver partners in the UK.

The deal is in its early stages but it would see LeasePlan offering a package of services, including leasing vehicles to Uber drivers, as well as handling repairs, maintenance and insurance. The deal is not mandatory, so it is up to drivers to decide if they wanted to source their vehicles in a different way.

LeasePlan already has a co-operation with 500 drivers in Portugal and following success with that scheme is now rolling it out across 23 European countries, including the UK. It opens up a potential market for LeasePlan to also target the 40,000 drivers that use the Uber app in the UK.

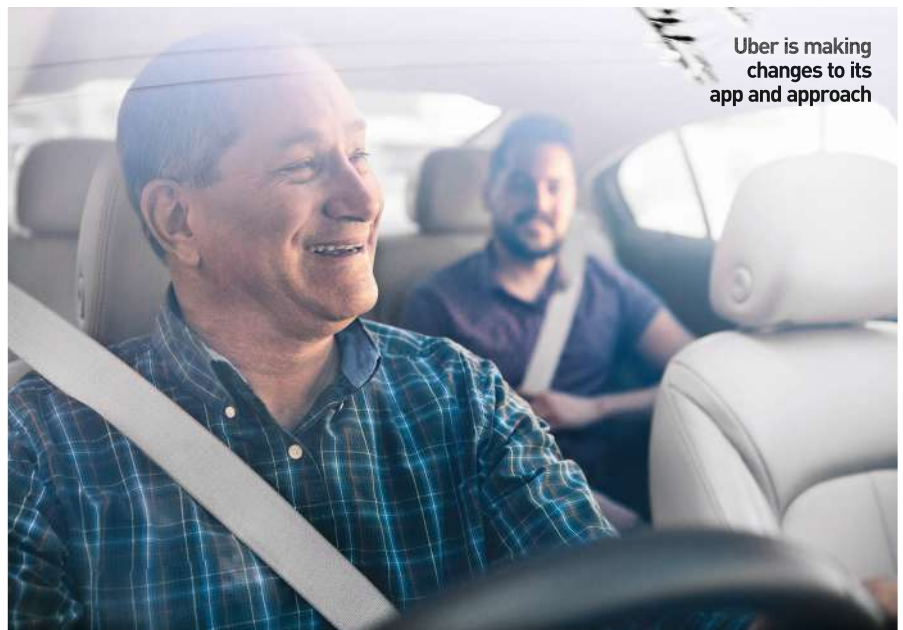
A spokesperson for LeasePlan said: "In return for a fixed monthly fee, that is often lower than the cost of running a private vehicle, Uber partner-drivers can drive a vehicle that fits their needs and frees them from the hassle of ownership, such as arranging insurance and organising maintenance.

"Our aim is to substantially grow in this area but we do not have specific volume targets. We have a sound proposition so we are positive, but we have just started."

Leaseplan added that the rising popularity of ride-hailing technology did not pose a threat to the future of its own business. The spokesperson said: "We are well positioned to become a leading provider of fleet management services to the ride-hailing industry.

"Uber's core business is to connect drivers with passengers through advanced technology. Providing cars and keeping them on the road is ours, so we're very well placed to help Uber meet that need."

However, Uber has received a substantial amount of negative press around its working practices and lost a London employment tribunal in October last year. LeasePlan declined to comment on what sort of impact it would have



on its business by aligning with Uber's brand.

Driver's union GMB brought the case against Uber last year, with the tribunal ruling that Uber had acted unlawfully by not providing drivers with basic workers' rights.

While Uber is still appealing the tribunal, it has now admitted its policies are "unintentionally stacked against drivers".

Rachel Holt, head of operations and marketing at Uber's home market in the US & Canada, said: "We all understand that things fundamentally need to change and some of those changes are within our leadership and our culture.

"The most important change in my view, though, is how we work with drivers."

Holt said that while drivers value the freedom



Uber offers them in being their own boss, Uber has "underinvested in the driver experience and relationships with many drivers are frayed".

Fleet News asked how these policies will affect UK drivers that use the Uber app but a spokesman said it was still too early to say how or when Holt's suggestions for change will be implemented in the UK.

GMB preferred not to comment on Uber's statements due to "sensitivities" with the continuing legal case.

Holt said: "Drivers are at the centre of the Uber experience, and the app they use to go online and earn money is at the centre of theirs.

It's about more stable earnings, a better product to take the stress out of driving, providing more human and understandable communications, and support so that drivers are true partners."

Uber is making changes to its app and approach "to ensure drivers feel heard and respected". Part of the changes will be investing in training for its driver support teams.

"We're updating many customer support policies in the coming days that were unintentionally stacked against drivers," Holt said.

"We know we have a long way to go. We have listened and we've heard that the major pain points from drivers are earnings, stress, support, and communications. We are committed to making progress on core driver issues this year."



"We are well positioned to become a leading provider of fleet management services to the ride-hailing industry"

LeasePlan



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MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions. Vehicle shown is a 308 SW GT Line 1.2L PureTech 130 S&S with Magnetic Blue metallic paint. [^]The boot area level with the retractable parcel shelf in place holds up to 660 litres, this extends up to 1775 litres with the rear seats folded flat, loaded to the roof. Information and data for the model shown correct at time of going to print.

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Fuel consumption figures for the Fiat Professional Ducato range in mpg (l/100km): Combined: 33.2 (8.5) – 49.6 (5.7). CO₂ emissions 150g/km – 224g/km. Fuel consumption and CO₂ based on standard EU tests for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. *Business Contract Hire. Ducato 30 SWB Diesel 2.3 Multijet Tecnico Van. Initial rental of £1,374 followed by 35 monthly rentals of £229, excl. VAT & maintenance. Based on 10,000 miles p.a. Excess mileage charges apply. Vehicles must be ordered and registered between 01/04/17 and 30/06/17. Subject to status. Guarantees may be required. Ts&Cs apply. Fiat Professional Contract Hire, SL1 OWU. FCA FLEET SERVICES

Calls for calmer, more measured diesel debate to reflect advances

Anti-diesel headlines could adversely impact the fleet sector's green initiatives

By Gareth Roberts

The diesel share of fleet registrations is steadily declining, but still accounts for more than half of the market, data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) reveals.

Diesel registrations accounted for 56.4% of the fleet market in March – a four percentage point fall on March 2016.

February's figures showed an even greater decline, with diesel market share falling by more than six percentage points from 63.7% in 2016 to 57.5% in 2017.

And, it was a similar story in January, with diesel accounting for 57.1% of the fleet market compared to 61.4% in 2016.

Petrol has been the main beneficiary, with its market share growing by about four percentage points year-on-year, while alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs) have also shown a small rise. For example, petrol hybrids such as the Mitsubishi Outlander have proved popular among company car drivers.

Diesel has been the powertrain of choice for most fleets since the taxation rules changed in 2002, thanks to better fuel efficiency and lower CO₂ emissions. But, growing concerns around air quality is "unfairly" impacting its market share, according to the SMMT.

Contrary to recent reports, it says diesel cars are not the main source of urban NO_x. In London, for example, gas heating of homes and offices is the biggest contributor, responsible for 16%.

Road transport as a whole is responsible for around half of London's NO_x, with diesel cars producing just 11%, although concentrations will vary dependent on congestion, it says.



"Euro 6 diesel cars on sale today are the cleanest in history"

Mike Hawes, SMMT

Mike Hawes, chief executive of the SMMT, told *Fleet News*: "Euro 6 diesel cars on sale today are the cleanest in history. Not only have they drastically reduced or banished particulates, sulphur and carbon monoxide but they also emit vastly lower NO_x than their older counterparts – a fact recognised by London in their exemption from the Ultra Low Emission Zone that will come into force in 2019."

Hawes claims some recent reports have failed to differentiate between these much cleaner cars and vehicles of the past.

"This is unfair and dismissive of progress made," he said. "In addition to their important contribution to improving air quality, diesel cars are also a key part of action to tackle climate change while allowing millions of people, particularly those who regularly travel long distances, to do so as affordably as possible."

According to Emissions Analytics, which

measures and contrasts real-world driving to the manufacturers' published figures, average NO_x emissions from Euro 6 diesel are 55% lower than Euro 5. However, they are still on average 4.3 times over the EU limit for Euro 6 in real-world operations.

The Government has hinted at tax rises after Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond promised to look at the tax treatment of diesel vehicles, before announcing any changes in the Autumn Budget later this year – June 8 general election permitting.

Shaun Barritt, CEO of Grosvenor Leasing, argues that an anti-diesel agenda could have a negative impact on the fleet sector.

"We need a sense of calm, because if the 'dirty diesel' phrase gets into people's minds the likelihood is it will impact resale values," he said.

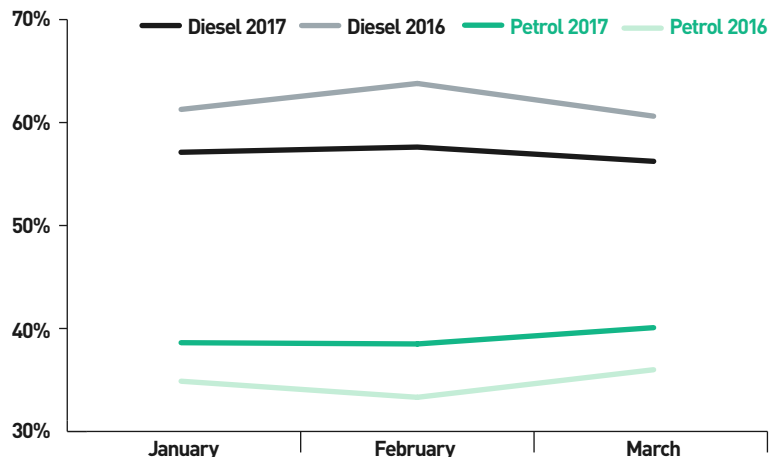
"This could lead to the leasing sector suffering losses against forecasted residual values."

The latest figures from pricing experts at Cap HPI report that overall values reduced by 0.1% at three years/60,000 miles. Petrol vehicles rose by 0.3% but diesel fell by 0.4%.

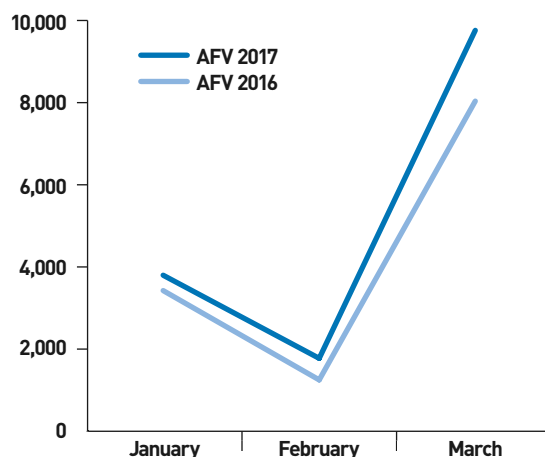
James Dower, senior editor of Black Book at Cap HPI, said: "Continual press reports painting diesel in a negative light appear to be having an effect on buyer behaviour."

Barritt wants a more measured debate. He concluded: "I would urge the UK Government and the media to push the positive green message rather than focus on this negative campaign of ridiculous hysteria for anyone driving a diesel car, as it is very counter-productive and could be very damaging to the fleet sector which is playing a vital role in driving the green agenda."

FLEET SHARE: PETROL VERSUS DIESEL



AFV FLEET REGISTRATIONS



Michael Consitt joined
Vanarama from
carleasing365.co.uk



Vanarama explores 'untapped' short-term lease opportunities

Cars to be offered alongside vans as demand for flexibility grows

By Tom Seymour

Vanarama hopes to tap into the growth in short-term vehicle leasing with the launch of a dedicated division, which will provide access to vans and cars from six to 18 months.

The company is best known as a leasing broker specialising in vans, but has now registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and its short-term leasing division will be an official lender taking on risk, headed by Michael Consitt.

It is the second new business Vanarama has launched this year, after stepping into the commercial vehicle insurance market in January.

Consitt joined Vanarama from carleasing365.co.uk, a short-term leasing specialist he was running, and believes a gap has been left in the market between 'on-the-spot' daily rental and more standard contract hire terms of between three and four years.

While contract hire dominates as the lead funding choice for FN50 customers in the UK, chosen for 90% of cars according to the 2016 data, Consitt claims short-term leasing could become the second most popular type of funding (if you classified it outside general contract hire). Salary sacrifice currently holds that title, with 4% share of the market, but faces some uncertainty due to changes in the tax treatment of vehicles announced in the Finance Bill (*Fleet News* March 30, 2017).

Consitt said: "There is a lot of pent up demand and opportunity in short-term leasing, particularly for cars, which I think is largely untapped.

"You need the expertise with this sort of market"

Michael Consitt, Vanarama

"Vanarama was already delivering around 11,000 vehicles a year before launching this and the background systems it has will really help to back up this short-term lease offering."

The British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA) does not currently track the size of the short-term lease market due to its members having a mix of long-term rental and short-term leasing products.

However, it is predicting continued growth in demand for flexible rental in the commercial vehicle sector, as this enables customers to hire, return or exchange vans and trucks without any penalty, in return for a fixed monthly or weekly fee. It has also speculated that the market could see similar car-based products start to emerge in 2017.

Gerry Keaney, BVRLA chief executive, said: "Developments in fleet management software are making it easier to manage and provide ever more flexible rental and leasing products.

"The strength of the used van market, in particular, makes it easier for leasing and rental companies to be flexible around van contract terms."

Northgate Vehicle Hire, for example, launched a suite of new rental products in February this

year to attract more traditional contract hire and outright purchase van fleets. The commercial vehicle flexible rental specialist expanded its offering via Northgate Choice with customers able to 'fix, flex or mix' rental options to suit their needs.

Meanwhile, Vanarama has already started delivering vehicles to short-term lease business customers and is waiting on approval by the FCA to offer the same to sole traders and private customers.

Consitt said: "I think other providers have looked at the short-term lease market but have got their fingers burned because you can't treat cars in this sector like a commodity. Over a 12-month period, getting it wrong can be disastrous. You need the expertise with this sort of market and knowing what sort of models work."

For Consitt, this is premium brands like Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, but also the right products from within volume brands, like high-spec Kia Sportages, for example.

While short-term leasing has launched first for business customers, Consitt expects sole traders, which the FCA treats as retail customers, and private customers will make up to 70% of its business in the future.

He said: "Short-term leasing often suits smaller businesses who aren't sure how their circumstances might change.

"They want a high-spec premium vehicle and are prepared to pay for that but they don't want to be tied into an agreement that is going to span four years. I think things like Brexit have played a part in this, too, as people aren't sure how their business will change."

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THE BIG PICTURE

By Stephen Briers, editor, *Fleet News*



To poorly paraphrase Shakespeare: to bundle or not to bundle – that is the question. Fleets have long debated the merits of tying the majority of services into one contract with

leasing or fleet management partners, typically bringing together funding, maintenance, glass repairs, tyres etc.

For some, it's about convenience and relationships via the fewer number of suppliers; for others the priority is cost reduction by striking separate deals with different suppliers. There isn't one correct way; often it's whatever suits the broader business culture.

“Good news for fleets who have more options than ever when deciding SMR policies”

For those seeking new options, the market for service, maintenance and repair (SMR) has heated up following the announcement by Royal Mail in *Fleet News* (April 13) that it is opening up its national workshop network for third party business.

It goes head-to-head with BT Fleet and, given that it has filled much of its senior team with former BT Fleet executives, it should make for interesting viewing.

The two companies seem to have taken slightly different approaches. BT Fleet's relationships have been direct with bluechip fleets and have often extended beyond SMR into fleet management. It has also introduced a funding option through a panel of partners to broaden its appeal to fleets.

In contrast, Royal Mail expects many of its contracts to come via leasing companies, as well as fleets that take responsibility for their own maintenance contracts. It wants to be an alternative to franchised and independent dealers by becoming an approved supplier of SMR services to the biggest leasing companies.

This is all good news for fleets who have more options than ever when deciding their SMR policies. It will raise the quality of services, as both organisations step up investment to improve their facilities and range of services, for cars, vans and trucks.

YOUR LETTERS

DIESEL DEBATE

Weighing up the alternatives

EDITOR'S PICK

Glenn wrote:

Having read 'Diesel hysteria unhealthy for the fleet sector' (fleetnews.co.uk, April 18) it isn't hysteria, it is simple re-balancing.

We can play the blame game later. Whether the blame needs to be aimed at the green lobby for misleading us about the effects of CO₂, the Government for incentivising diesel and holding duty rates at just about the same for both fuels, or the manufacturers and leasing companies for going along with the deception about how 'clean' modern diesels really are, all will become apparent.

The warnings have been there for years, but no one was prepared to listen as it didn't fit the script.

Whatever happens next will be messy, expensive and probably wrong because the green lobby and



politicians will be involved.

We need to look at alternative fuels (but not just electric), scrappage of old diesels, and possibly conversion or changing of engines on newer diesels.

Simply introducing charging zones will not work.

No one drives in a city centre for fun, so they'll have to pay until someone comes up with viable alternative propulsion than diesel, petrol or electricity.

■ The editor's pick in each issue wins a £20 John Lewis voucher.

Nigel Boyle added:

Diesel hysteria is a good title as fleets change their cars three-four years so by now more of the fleets are 50-75% Euro 6.

If we swap to petrol we will double our fuel bills and increase our CO₂ output.

If we swap to a plug-in hybrid the same applies as they only do a few miles then switch to petrol.

If we swap to electric we will have 400 employees spending around two hours a day at recharge stations.

The only alternative to diesel is electric, but only when all EVs achieve

400 miles range will they get into the mainstream. Suggesting petrol is a little like telling a film watcher to use Betamax not BlueRay.

Robberg added:

It always surprises me how easily the public is swayed by the media and how the ignorant have to be appeased these days.

The word hysteria is not used lightly in the article and a robust campaign from manufacturers and leasing companies alike is needed to tell the true story about modern diesel engines.

SALARY SACRIFICE CORRECTION

In the March 30 issue of *Fleet News*, we published a story on the changes to salary sacrifice and cash allowance tax treatment ('Finance Bill gives clarity to fleets on revised salary sacrifice rules'). It included a quote from company car tax specialist Alastair Kendrick claiming that for employees with a cash or car option entered into before April 5, 2017, the new tax rules would apply from April 2018, not 2021 as per the rules on existing arrangements for salary sacrifice cars. We now understand this view to be incorrect – the new rules for existing arrangements will be introduced in April 2021 for both salary sacrifice cars and those with the car/cash option. We would like to apologise for any confusion caused.

HYBRIDS

High mileage drivers

David Watts wrote:

Having read 'Government warned to replace contradiction with clarity on diesel tax treatment' (fleetnews.co.uk, April 5) we should be careful how we generalise about driver profiles and their suitability for a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV).

A perk driver who commutes in the region of 40 miles each way to work (and is able to re-charge at work) would be, on paper, a high mileage driver. But a significant proportion of their mileage would be done on electric power and so their overall mpg will be very good. Therefore you can't just say that PHEVs are unsuitable for all high mileage drivers.

EMISSIONS

Ultra-low emission zone

Sage and onion wrote:

Having read 'Diesel vehicles targeted with early introduction of Ultra-Low Emission Zone' (fleetnews.co.uk, April 4) more needs to be said about what the revenue raised by these taxes will be used for. Will they go to the NHS? Or is that wishful thinking? Or will they be used to fund the transfer of the Transport for London bus and commercial fleet over to cleaner engine technology?

In any case London mayor Sadiq Khan has either just sparked a demand for new Euro 6 diesel cars or has just killed the resale value of current diesel cars that aren't Euro 6.

He's given no thought to the public and companies alike who will now take the double whammy of paying out more for a new Euro 6 vehicle while at the same time depreciated the value of their current trade-in significantly. And why would anyone want to buy a diesel now when the goalposts can be changed so easily with only two years' notice to adapt to what for a lot of private motorists is a much longer term investment.



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TYRES

Lack of roadside tread checks

Steve Edwards wrote:

Having read 'Fleets should adopt bluelight tyre policies, says Kwik Fit' (fleetnews.co.uk, April 7) I think there is a case for this as tyres at 2mm do lose traction compared to 3mm. However it still never ceases to amaze me how many fleet drivers still drive on totally bald and dangerous tyres. There must be a distinct lack of roadside checks by police compared to a few years ago.

Gary Dawson added:

We change at 3mm and a slight charge is incurred for this change based on the tyre cost. However, it is reducing risk as well as preventing the tyres becoming illegal.

Bob added:

For an industry that ties itself in knots over safety and duty of care this is one of the biggest driver frustrations. We have a policy of tyres being sub-2mm before change is considered. Driving on our frequently flash flooded motorways on 1.9mm of tyre might be legal and economically prudent, but it's not wise and it's not duty of care.

Contact us

Fleet News, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough, PE2 6EA
Email – fleetnews@bauermedia.co.uk

Burning question:

If you had to give up one of your five senses, which one would it be and why?

Editorial

Editor-in-chief

Stephen Briers 01733 468024
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Given that I barely have it anyway, my sense of smell. At least I have risk-free enjoyment of very hot and spicy foods

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Smell

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Smell but would prefer to keep them all thanks

Features editor

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The least unpalatable option is taste. At least you could smell food before eating it

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We have at least nine – so the sense of fullness

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Can't afford to lose humour so I guess smell

Photos Chris Lowndes

Production

Head of publishing

Luke Neal 01733 468262

Taste, then I could eat more food that is 'good for me'

Production editors

David Buckley 01733 468310

Hearing already 'ify' but I'd forsake my sixth sense given I've never had one

Finbarr O'Reilly 01733 468267

Smell – because a colleague comments on every aroma that crosses her nostrils anyway

Designer

Erika Small 01733 468312

My sense of smell

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NORTHGATE

FLEET OPINION

DRIVER EYESIGHT

More rigorous eye testing is required

By Jim Lythgow

“ The European Council of Optometry and Optics issued a consensus paper called Visual Standards for Driving in Europe earlier this year.

The aim of the paper was to see how member states had implemented the medical annex of Directive 2009/113/EC on driving licences. What the paper highlighted, however, was a complete lack of uniformity in visual standards for driving and how the UK is lagging hugely behind the rest of Europe.

Of the 29 European countries covered by the paper, the UK is one of just five countries that, at the time of licence acquisition, still relies solely on the number-plate test. The vast majority of European countries require visual sharpness tests and 20 of the 29 countries require assessments of visual fields, too. Some 11 countries also require measures like testing twilight and colour vision.

While the significant majority of European countries require eye tests to be carried out by a medical doctor, ophthalmologist or optician, the UK is again lagging behind by relying on the driving examiner.

It is a similar story on licence renewal. While many countries demand regular re-testing of visual capabilities, either every 10 years, or at set ages from 40, the UK is one of the few countries to never require another visual assessment after the driving licence is issued.

It is our belief this needs to change and that the UK must apply similar standards as other European countries. While the Government is clearly behind in this issue, fleet managers are well placed to be able to stimulate change in our attitudes towards driver eyecare.

We feel eyecare checks should be as standard as any other checks for workplace drivers, like vehicle and insurance checks, with professional eye examinations taking place at least every two years.

Implementing a simple blanket eyecare scheme for drivers would be positive for employers and employees alike. Eyecare leads to better driving vision, which should result in lower risk of accidents, leading to a reduction in uninsured losses for employers and immeasurable benefits for the fleet drivers themselves. **”**

“We feel eyecare tests should be as standard as any other checks for workplace drivers”



Jim Lythgow
director of strategic
alliances for
Specsavers
Corporate Eyecare



Richard Brown
managing director
of Licence Check



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opinion](http://fleetnews.co.uk/opinion)

FAKE DRIVING LICENCES

Licence fraud poses unacceptable risks

By Richard Brown

“ The number of victims of identity theft rose by 57% year-on-year, according to recent figures, while the estimated annual cost of fraud in the UK is around £193 billion – or nearly £3,000 per head of population.

While the finance industry is making moves to stamp out fraud by developing secure verification software such as voice biometrics, other industries are slower to respond.

Driving licences are regularly used as a means of identification and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) could – and should – be doing more to tackle the growing number of illegal drivers holding counterfeit driving licences.

It is difficult to estimate the scale of the problem, as there is no data available on the number of these licences in circulation, but you only have to search Google to find numerous UK and overseas websites openly selling fake driving licences and other ID documents.

Counterfeit driving licences pose enormous risk to fleet operators, delivery companies, car rental businesses and, indeed, any organisation that requires its employees to drive.

Ensuring an employee holds a valid driving licence is one of the required checks organisations should carry out to address their duty of care obligations. If such basic checks do not take place, employers (including senior management) may be criminally liable for any deaths or serious injuries that occur as a result of a road traffic accident involving an employee who is driving on company business.

While many organisations are prioritising driver compliance, some fleet managers with a small number of vehicles, simply take a copy of an employee's driving licence, without undertaking any further checks. This is worthless, especially when a counterfeit licence can be easily bought online.

The simple answer is to supply third party licence checking providers with more data. For example, each driving licence carries a unique identifier which is a unique reference etched into a driving licence. The DVLA should be making this available to licence checking providers to carry out these enhanced checks. By checking against this reference, lost, stolen or forged cards could easily be flagged up and withdrawn from circulation. **”**

“Simple answer is to supply third party licence checking providers with more data”



Meaningful management data is 'a doddle' with fleet software

Fleet News Awards finalists explain how software helps them to manage risk

By Andrew Ryan

Managing a huge amount of data is becoming a growing issue for fleet managers, as technology and processes such as telematics and driver risk assessments become more widespread.

This has been a challenge for many of the attendees at the Fleet News Awards finalists roundtable in London, sponsored by Škoda, with a number of attendees using fleet management software to help them.

Other issues discussed included the adoption of electric vehicles and managing the grey fleet.

Fleet News: How are you managing data?

Alison Moriarty, fleet road risk manager, Skanska: Over the past 18 months we've introduced the Key2 system from Jaama and, apart from telematics which we are close to getting in, we've got every bit of information about every driver and vehicle in there.

It's got collisions, endorsements on licences, whether they've undergone a risk assessment and the associated training, their age, the miles travelled. It makes giving meaningful management information to the various parts of the business a doddle whereas before we were pulling things from lots and lots of different systems and trying to look at different trends. It was just impossible.

This is great and in terms of risk profiling, it does give us a really good snapshot of every single driver in the business, whether that's somebody in a commercial vehicle, company

"For annual assessments the driver trainer has got a good idea of what the employee's driving style is like before they get in the vehicle"

Rory Morgan,
Iron Mountain

car or even someone who has got a car allowance if they are driving for the business.

Mark Woodworth, head of transport and logistics, Speedy Hire: We also run Jaama Key2. When Lycrecia (Lycrecia Rea, project manager – transport and logistics, Speedy Hire) joined, her first job was to get 14 systems into one and we are now down to three. We'll never get to one because with telematics data Jaama is never going to produce a map for you, but we can see the average age of a driver in one of our grades etc., all within two or three minutes. We can now report on a huge amount of data very quickly.

Rory Morgan, head of logistics support – Western Europe, Iron Mountain: We use eDrive Fleet and we can access the same sort of data: we send in driving assessments, online assessments, licence history, incidents, tachographs, etc. You can then build a profile of that driver, so when the driver trainer goes to visit someone to take them out on his annual assessment, they've got a good idea of what the employee's driving style is like even before they get in the vehicle.

The trainer doesn't have to spend two hours with them to find out how they drive, while the employee is driving very carefully and watching his mirrors.

Mark Woodworth: We are trying to develop that at the moment. We want the driver trainer to be able to find out at the click of a button when the relevant employee is in the depot. If the driver trainer gets there and that driver has phoned in sick, they can say 'while I'm in the depot, who's the next highest risk driver?' and they can click on a report, and it will give information on mileage, vehicle type etc.



DELEGATES



David Millar, procurement manager, Advantage Smollan



Graham Telfer, fleet manager, Gateshead Council



Stewart Lightbody, head of fleet services, Anglian Water



Julie Madoui, head of fleet and transport, Skanska



Robert Whitmore, engineering manager, London Fire Brigade



Rory Morgan, head of logistics support – Western Europe, Iron Mountain



Alison Moriarty, fleet road risk manager, Skanska



Lycrecia Rea, project manager – transport and logistics, Speedy Hire



Ted Sakyi, group fleet manager, Wates Group



Luke Stanbridge, marketing director, Z-Tech Control Systems



Mark Woodworth, head of transport and logistics, Speedy Hire



Helen Palmer-Smith, contract hire and leasing account manager, Škoda UK



Steve Hopkins, area fleet manager, Škoda UK

Rory Morgan: For us, it is important to say that when we talk about high risk drivers, they may only be a high risk in comparison to the other drivers in our system. So someone we identify as high risk could be a very good driver, he's just high risk compared to a fantastic driver. Doing this keeps you pushing for improvement.

Alison Moriarty: One of the important things when using a system like this is that you have to make it clear to your drivers that being identified as high risk doesn't mean they are bad drivers. It's about us identifying potential risk to them and we want them to get home safely at the end of the day.

FN: How do you manage your grey fleet?

Alison Moriarty: Probably one of the best things we've done in terms of our car fleet is that the fleet department has to sign off payment to anybody for driving for the company, whether they are company car allowance employees or very occasional users.

Having this control means if we haven't seen all the documentation to show the driver and vehicle is compliant, then they can't get any money out of the system: it's impossible to get round it. Grey fleet is always that anomaly where you've got the least control, and we can exert more control by doing this. Also, all our grey fleet drivers are treated exactly the same as our company car drivers and do everything, such as risk assessments, our company car drivers do.

Luke Stanbridge, marketing director, Z-Tech Control Systems: Have you capped what they can drive for grey fleet as well?

Alison Moriarty: Yes. Cars need to be less than seven years old and we have a CO₂ limit of 130g/km. Drivers also need to have eyesight checks as well.

David Millar, procurement manager, Advantage Smollan: When we were looking at the insurance certificates people were giving us when registering grey fleet cars, quite often we were finding certificates for vehicles belonging to their spouse or partner. Basically, they were saying 'I'm registering a Fiat Punto with you, but actually I like to go around in my Ford Capri'. I'm picking cars out just to illustrate a point, but there is the risk drivers may be using something completely different to the vehicle they tell you about.

Graham Telfer, fleet manager, Gateshead Council: I can see

“There is the risk drivers may be using something completely different to the vehicle they tell you about”

*David Millar,
Advantage Smollan*

a point not so far ahead where grey fleet will be frowned on as 'why did you ever do it?'. If they are driving for you, put them in something that you're in control of.

FN: Are you adopting electric vehicles?

Rory Morgan: We've got five electric Nissan vans on order for the UK which will be used in London simply because there isn't the infrastructure anywhere else. We've got a Nissan in Amsterdam and the driver of that plans his route so he knows he can arrange to have his lunch break somewhere where he can stop and plug it in to charge it. Ten minutes on a fast charge will give 35% battery charge apparently. I recently went to lunch in an Amsterdam business park while I was over there: nice café, two electric charging points. So if you are popping out and taking somebody for a business lunch, you can charge while you eat and all the business parks are exactly the same.

Robert Whitmore, engineering (fleet and equipment) manager, London Fire Brigade: The infrastructure in the UK is the issue, isn't it? If there's going to be an increase in the uptake of electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, the infrastructure has to be there. We were lucky that our organisation had the foresight to take advantage of the Government grant and put 78 dual type fast charging points on our fire stations about three years ago which has facilitated us taking on our 57 EVs. Without them it's a hopeless policy. However, if you are taking the analogy of a business lunch, if everybody is driving to the same place in an electric vehicle and it has only got two charging points, then the system is falling down.

Stewart Lightbody, head of fleet services, Anglian Water: I'm preparing a business case at the moment to put charging points in at five sites, such as our main offices and recreation sites like Grafham Water, where we have got a plug-in hybrid already. Some of the feedback is 'why are we doing that?' and the answer is that it's the right thing to do.

IN A WORLD OF HYBRIDS, SOME FOLLOW, OTHERS LEAD.



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| GOVERNMENT GRANT REDUCTION | £2,500 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 |
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| CO ₂ EMISSIONS G/KM | 41 | 179 | 156 | 133 | 129 |
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Outlander PHEV range fuel consumption in mpg (ltrs/100km): Full Battery Charge: no fuel used, Depleted Battery Charge: 51.4mpg (5.5), Weighted Average: 166.1mpg (1.7), CO₂ emissions: 41 g/km.



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4. Outlander PHEV qualifies as low CO₂ emissions vehicle for the purpose of Capital Allowances. 8% write down allowance used for comparison. 5. Savings achieved due to lower Profits Chargeable to Corporation Tax (PCTCT). 6. Class 1a NI only payable on 9% of list price compared to 30% average for other models shown. 7. 9% BIK compared to 30% average. 9% BIK rate for the 2017/18 tax year. 8. Congestion Charge application required, subject to administrative fee. 9. Domestic plug charge: 5 hours, 16 Amp home charge point: 3.5 hours, 80% rapid charge: 25mins. 10. Offer may be withdrawn at any time. For full terms and conditions, visit Mitsubishi-cars.co.uk/chargepoint 11. Prices shown include the Government Plug-in Car Grant and VAT (at 20%), but exclude First Registration Fee. Model shown is an Outlander PHEV 4hs at £38,999 including the Government Plug-in Car Grant. On The Road prices range from £32,304 to £43,554 and include VED, First Registration Fee and the Government Plug-in Car Grant. Metallic/pearlescent paint extra. Prices correct at time of going to print. For more information about the Government Plug-in Car Grant please visit www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants. The Government Plug-in Car Grant is subject to change at any time, without prior notice.

'I WAS A NERVOUS WRECK'

Nigel Grainger was compelled to act when presented with a home-to-school transport challenge. It's just one of his many new initiatives, reports *Andrew Ryan*

"This is not a normal fleet. This is a long-term project," Nigel Grainger says when asked to recall his early impressions of the Vertas operation.

That view was formed eight months ago following his appointment as the facilities management company's head of fleet.

His evidence? Vertas runs a pool and allocated car fleet, not company cars, and had a number of operational quirks, such as fuel card invoicing to multiple departments which resulted in excess paperwork and admin.

Grainger has moved quickly to implement smoother processes and new initiatives, saving significant money, cutting CO₂ emissions and increasing professionalism.

So far, he has changed fuel card provider, switched from multiple leasing companies to just one, cut rental costs, introduced a sophisticated pool car scheme and – arguably his biggest achievement – developed an innovative home-to-school transport model for pupils with special educational needs.

Despite making so many changes in a short period, Grainger is keen to point out that the

Vertas fleet was not badly run before his appointment: it was fit for purpose, compliant and operated sufficiently well for the company to grow rapidly.

"I didn't find any non-compliance, but with a skilled set of fleet eyes on it, the opportunities were there for significant improvements," says Grainger.

He speaks from a position of strength having worked in a variety of roles within fleet for around 30 years. Immediately before joining Vertas he ran his own risk consultancy and is also a former member of trade body ACFO's national council.

So why move back into fleet management? "There were a number of life-changers and I kind of missed getting my hands on the vehicles," he says.

"Vertas was looking for a fleet manager, it had never had one before, and it was a huge opportunity for me and for the company."

Ipswich-based Vertas (formerly Eastern Facilities Management Solutions) was formed from the Traded Services arm of Suffolk County Council in September 2011 as part of a divestment programme.

Owned solely by the local authority, it was set up to trade independently but they remain closely linked through the work Vertas

undertakes on the council's behalf. It specialises in a large range of building and facilities services including school, commercial and hospitality catering, cleaning grounds maintenance and design, energy management, mobile and static security, courier and postal, and equipment maintenance.

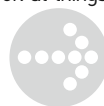
Growth in recent years has been rapid, and Vertas now has an annual turnover of £44 million, as well as around 2,300 employees across more than 400 sites.

This growth – and anticipated expansion – was one of the major reasons it decided to employ a specialised fleet manager.

"The board realised they were missing opportunities," says Grainger. "Before I came, fleet had been managed by procurement mainly, and energy before that. Then they got somebody in from outside from one of their clients to help out and then I came along and grabbed hold of it."

After assessing the fleet, Grainger immediately started introducing changes.

"It's the simple skills you pick up as a fleet manager," he says. "You can look at things and go 'that's not right', and with your experience you know you can do it better, so you work out how."





Vertas head of fleet Nigel Grainger uses his experience to look at the operation and say 'that's not right'

FACTFILE

Name Nigel Grainger

Role Head of fleet

Organisation: Vertas

Vehicle fleet 100 vans, 83 pool cars, 17 allocated vehicles, 15 minibuses

Average CO₂ emissions fleet – 132g/km, pool cars – 95g/km

Funding method Leasing

Replacement cycle cars three years/30,000 miles; vans five years/50,000 miles



He adds: "I am changing huge parts of the business, all of which are either providing better service, better cost or reduced emissions."

Grainger's first action was to reduce the number of vehicles being rented.

"Departments would hire vehicles as they needed them, so there was little or no control," he says. "I wanted that control, so one of the first things I did was pull all the hire vehicles through my desk because I need to know what I'm hiring and why."

Grainger discovered that Vertas had between 25 and 30 vans on long-term hire, but he has cut this to just four, resulting in "significant savings".

Another change has been to switch fuel card suppliers. Under the old system, separate invoices were sent to eight different departments, leading to a significant amount of paperwork.

Under the new agreement with Shell, the company will now receive just one invoice, have an improved choice of filling stations and receive greater discounts on fuel.

While this was being done, Grainger was also working on his first major project: transforming the company's pool car fleet.

Vertas does not have any company cars, but instead operates 100 vans, 83 pool cars sited around its area of operations and 17 'allocated' cars.

These 17 vehicles are for certain staff members to use but are always left on school sites near that employee's home at the end of the working day. They are not allowed to take them home at night.

"When I joined, the pool car fleet had a complete mishmash of vehicles – a mix of Vauxhall Corsas, Astras, Škoda Fabias, Citroën Berlingos, Peugeot 208s etc. – from multiple suppliers, all on contract extensions, with little or no control over cleaning or maintenance," says Grainger.

"You had to get the keys from security, find the car, check it over, fill it with fuel: it was just a mess.

"I looked at the costs to see what we were spending and I looked at the emissions and thought we can do this much better."

Grainger put a proposal to the board to reduce the number of pool vehicles from 114 to 83, that they would be supplied by one leasing company and be fitted with Zipcar's Local Motion technology.

This allows employees to book the cars out



Grainger reduced the number of vans on long-term hire to just four

either online or through an app, unlock and operate them by using their staff ID badges, and gives Grainger visibility on who is using the vehicle, when, and where they are.

"The cheapest option would have been for six different makes of car, so I had to present to the board and say 'this is the cheapest option, but the problem is that the drivers are not car people, so they will jump in one make of car on a Monday, and on the Tuesday they may be in another and the controls will be the other way around,'" he says.

"I wanted to go with one manufacturer because the controls are generally the same."

"I looked at the costs to see what we were spending and I looked at the emissions and thought we can do this much better"

Nigel Grainger, Vertas

Grainger was also looking for a partner who could offer hybrid technology as well as diesel and petrol to reduce CO₂ emissions.

"The only manufacturer that could offer us a good hybrid across the range was Toyota, so we did a deal with them," he adds.

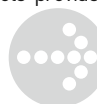
The pool car scheme was launched on March 6 with a mix of Yaris, Auris and Rav4 models, and so far "in the main, everybody loves it", says Grainger.

The initiative reduced the average CO₂ emissions of the pool cars from 99g/km to 95g/km. The overall fleet average CO₂ is now 132g/km, down from 143g/km when he joined the company.

This is the first part of a three-phase plan for the pool car fleet. The second will allow employees to rent the cars for personal use outside office hours, and the third will be for members of the public to use them.

As part of the initiative, Grainger has also taken on a member of staff whose role is to look after the pool cars, making sure they are clean and in good working order.

He has also recruited an administrator who will focus primarily on the next major fleet project: an innovative sole-provider travel solution for pupils with special educational needs attending the Priory School in Bury St Edmunds.



Grainger has developed a bespoke travel solution for special needs children attending the Priory School



Currently, the children are transported to the special academy in around 40 vehicles operated by as many as 20 taxi providers, some of which are travelling more than 50 miles each morning.

The need to provide a more efficient and consolidated service to parents and the children was identified by the council in a review of the current arrangement.

As part of the process, Grainger visited the school to see how the system worked and it alarmed him.

"I stood there one day to watch the children leave. The taxis started arriving at 2.30pm, blocking the access to the school," he says.

"They would pull in and sit with their engines running until they could get into a parking bay. They would then enter the parking bay and someone from the school would ask the driver who they were picking up, then radio into the classroom to send 'Child B' out.

"Child B would come out, get in the car and away they went.

"There were children walking around vehicles as they were reversing and I was a nervous wreck."

Together with the council, Vertas has developed a bespoke package which will see the 40 taxis replaced by 15 Peugeot mini-buses and two Auris cars.

The initiative goes live on May 22, and all the vehicles will be tracked, so school staff and parents can be kept up-to-date with where the pupils are and whether there are any hold-ups on the road, reducing the potential for worry.

"My job is to deliver the pupils to school in the morning in a mindset fit for learning and deliver them home at night in a mindset fit to be part of the family, which is a massive ask for some of these pupils," says Grainger.

"The biggest thing for an autistic child is change. Even the slightest change can be a massive trauma for them. Under the existing system the taxi can change, the driver regularly changes, and the colour and make of the vehicle can change because it depends on which taxi is available to do the school run, which is a complete nightmare.

"Our vehicles will all look the same, the uniform will be the same. The driver may change, but it will be just the face and body-shape that will be different. The rest will be consistent."

Despite making considerable improvements to the fleet in the short time he has



been with Vertas, Grainger has many more changes in the pipeline.

All vehicles will feature new liveries, data from the telematics which is already installed in the vehicles will be utilised further, while a fully-electric vehicle will also be introduced.

With the company set to expand rapidly in the future, he is looking to introduce company cars for around 20 employees, a salary sacrifice scheme, and an affinity scheme to give other employees access to discounted vehicles.

"We're just about there on all of those, it's just knocking the last couple of dominos over," says Grainger.

"There are only so many of hours in the day, but I'm comfortable with what I've achieved so far: we've achieved a lot as a fleet and as a business.

"Do I want to do more? Yes. Are there things I want to get done tomorrow? God, yes. Are there things that I want to get done tomorrow that I know I'll never manage to achieve by tomorrow? Absolutely, but it's a question of priorities."



For more fleet profiles, visit:
fleetnews.co.uk/fleetprofiles



LAW AND ORDERS – VOLVO STILL TICKS POLICE BOXES

Volvo takes retail-ready cars off the end of the production line then adapts them to needs of police forces in UK and worldwide. *Andrew Brady* reports

Police fleets operate at the extreme end of vehicle management. Every type of fleet operation faces the challenges of minimising breakdowns, portraying a good business image, reducing the risk of accidents and keeping drivers happy – not to mention controlling costs.

But nowhere is this more pronounced than on bluelight fleets, where cars aren't just used around the clock, they are also expected to cope with high speeds, carry heavy gear and even be tough enough to make tactical contact with other vehicles.

Volvo has been providing police cars worldwide since 1929, but it wasn't until the mid-1990s that the Swedish saloons and estates became a common sight on UK motorways. In a time before budget cuts and the spread of average speed cameras, pairs

of traffic officers patrolling in Volvo 850 T5s frequently struck fear into motorway drivers who refused to obey the law.

Today, the number of traditional high-profile police traffic cars is decreasing.

"Enforcement is now mainly done by camera," explains Ian Reger, Volvo special vehicles manager.

"Sweeping up following incidents is carried out by Highways England."

Reger is the man responsible for sourcing police cars from Sweden and selling them to police forces in the UK.

"A lot of the patrol cars [we sell] tend to be unmarked. That's been a major change, particularly in traffic enforcement, with a move away from the visible Volvo," he says.

"Another big growth area has been armed police. Armed officers have exacting standards about the kind of vehicle that can do the job. It needs to have a one-tonne payload, perform at speed, stop at speed. It's a different set of demands... police are the only

motorists allowed to go in excess of the speed limit on a regular basis. When it's an armed response, they're also carrying 700kg of additional equipment."

So, how does Volvo prepare its cars for police work? We visited the manufacturer's special vehicles department, close to its production line in Torslanda, near Gothenburg. Here, staff are preparing V90 and V90 Cross Country models for bluelight work.

They take retail-ready cars from the end of the production line and begin the process of turning them into vehicles capable of police duties. One of the biggest changes is to the suspension, where bespoke springs and firmer dampers are fitted to cope with the extra weight carried by traffic cars.

By the time two traffic officers take a seat and all their equipment is in the boot, a V90 will typically weigh around 2,400kg – around 600kg more than the standard car.

The steering remains "more or less the same", and you might be surprised to

discover the standard D5 turbodiesel engine remains untouched under the bonnet. With 235PS and a 0-62mph time (in the standard car) of 7.2 seconds, it's quick enough for most police pursuits, while also being relatively economical. It returns official fuel economy of 57.6mpg and emits 129g/km of CO₂.

"One of the big changes we'll start to see over the next couple of years is the switch back to petrol," says Reger. "Traditionally, we supplied the T5, then moved to diesel, with police vehicles being diesel-only over the past eight years. Suddenly diesel is seen as poisonous, so there's going to be a change."

Volvo is set to introduce a T8 'twin-engine' hybrid powertrain to its V90 in the near future, and it already has an XC90 T8 police demonstrator. It's fair to assume, then, that a V90 T8 police car is likely.

"There's a lot of pressure on air quality in London and other major cities," adds Reger. "Police, ambulance and fire are at the top of the list to cut down on diesels. Hybrids are seen as an opportunity. Operational requirements are such that response times are key. If a hybrid can fulfil that role, then it will."

Volvo is known for its excellent safety record, which is partly why its cars are popular with police forces. If your employees spend all day in their cars and regularly (legally) exceed speed limits – sometimes going well into three figures – it's important they're in the safest cars possible.

Safety-related modifications for police V90s include a steel net behind the rear seats to act as a barrier between luggage in the boot and the car's occupants. Think of it

"One of the big changes we will see over the next couple of years is the switch back to petrol"



Ian Reger, Volvo

as a hardcore dog guard and you're on the right lines. Along with this, a bespoke boot frame has been designed to cope with extra luggage weight. In the case of a rear-end crash, it'll break and push its contents out through the rear window, rather than forward into the passenger compartment.

For Sweden, Volvo is unique in offering 'off-the-shelf' police cars, right down to the blue lights, reflective decals and radio.

It stops short of carrying out this level of completeness for the UK, however – instead, doing the heavy preparation work before selling cars to individual forces who then commission third-party converters to make the finishing touches.

One of those third-party converters is Liverpool-based company Jack Hodson. It offers various bluelight packages as well as bespoke conversions for forces across the UK. While it is able to convert standard

production cars into police cars, it is contracted to put the finishing touches to Gothenburg-built Volvos in the UK.

Sales director Peter Hodson explains that this might not be as simple as you'd expect.

"A lot of time is spent predominantly dealing with the cockpit," he says. "You don't want things in there that are going to obstruct an airbag's deployment. Everything you do requires keeping away from safety features."

"Cars may have curtain airbags, for example, and you can't run cables across them."

"A lot of our time is spent designing rather than simply building. When we're doing a design for the cockpit area, everything has to be within easy reach, but not where it would be a distraction for the driver."

Hodson explains that Volvo allows his company early access to vehicles – he's been working on an S90 for a couple of months.

"I'm looking forward to getting stuck into the V90," he says. "It has excellent weight capacity and is built in such a way that makes our installation easier. It's well-built, robust and has more space for us to use."

"We have some exciting innovations planned for the V90 in time for this year's exhibition season."

Ahead of going on sale, Volvo has spent more than 500 hours testing its V90 and V90 Cross Country police cars in a variety of conditions – from well below freezing in the Arctic Circle to extremely hot temperatures. It's all live, with no simulation.

Volvo says if the vehicles can handle this, they can handle anything. Reliability is obviously a huge concern for police – especially as, in the UK, budget cuts means smaller forces are holding onto traffic cars for as much as five years.

Swedish police have already tested the V90 and given it a rating of 9.2 out of 10 – the highest score ever awarded. That's across five areas: a brake test, obstacle course, evasive action tests with and without braking, plus high-speed emergency driving.

Volvo is hoping to get the V90 on the crown commercial service agreement later in 2017, which will allow police forces to place orders.

With the V90 already proving popular with fleet and retail buyers, as well as the Swedish police, it's hoped it will follow the V70's success with police forces in the UK.



No significant changes to the steering from the model anyone can buy

Experts line up to reveal secrets of fleet efficiency



Advice on key areas such as funding, telematics, the law and driver management at FML event in Birmingham

Advice and information that will drive fleet efficiencies for years to come is being offered at this year's Fleet Management LIVE. A range of sector experts is being brought together for the two-day show on October 3-4 at the NEC in Birmingham to provide best practice guidance in core business areas critical to effective fleet operations.

The sessions are designed as an integral part of the visitor experience, offering advice that can be implemented in the long-term to provide a strategic benefit for fleet operators.

Topics will include funding best practice for every vehicle type, covering cars, vans and trucks.

The sessions will include the range of funding options available to companies and assess their suitability for different business environments.

A best practice session on the role of telematics in fleet will provide guidance on how to turn the increasing amount of fleet data available into actionable insights, ensuring there is clarity for managers and on-road compliance from drivers.

With companies under constant pressure to meet a wide array of legislation, another best practice session will cover the vehicle rules affecting companies and provide guidance on auditing and reporting.

The role of employees in running a safe and efficient fleet can't be ignored and this is covered in a best practice session on driver management, which will set out the duty of care responsibilities companies have to their drivers, including those in grey fleet.

Alternative sources of vehicles that are cost effective will be covered by a best practice session on vehicle rental, which will explore traditional alternatives to fleet acquisition and how rental can help businesses to drive efficiencies.

Advice and information isn't restricted to the best practice sessions, as suppliers will be offering fleet expertise to visitors in their own specialist areas.

This includes areas as diverse as vehicle sourcing and in-life tyre management.

For example, tyre management issues are becoming more important as a wealth of providers now supports the UK car and van fleet market.

More than 300 brands from throughout the world are on sale in the UK, covering the three main categories of premium, mid-range and budget.

For many fleets, tyres can be the second largest cost after fuel. Experts will be on hand at FML to discuss tyre replacement choices and the potential impact on costs and replacement cycles.

For more about tyre management, see page 39.

More than 150 exhibitors

Fleet Management LIVE has moved to a new, larger hall at the NEC as part of a record-breaking year for the event.

It has grown to incorporate the *Commercial Fleet Van & Truck Show* to cover every area of the industry, with space for more than 150 exhibitors in total.

The expansion to a new 10,000 square metre home at the NEC reflects the wishes of vehicle operators, many of whom operate both cars and commercial vehicles.

Managers with a combined fleet of more than 500,000 vehicles are expected to attend this year's show.

Fleet Management LIVE has been designed for fleets by fleet experts and covers car, van and truck fleets, both large and small.

It is also intended to deliver value to managers from every area of the fleet sector, including fleet management, HR, finance, risk management, procurement and mobility management.

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FLEET MANAGEMENT LIVE



Industry partners in show of support

Fleet Management LIVE has the support of a range of industry partners.

These include key organisations that sit at the heart of the fleet market.

Fleet operators' association ACFO, the body which represents fleets running hundreds of thousands of vehicles, has announced its backing.

The show also has the support of industry training body, the Institute of Car Fleet Management.

Reflecting Fleet Management LIVE's importance for commercial vehicle fleets, it also has the support of the Freight Transport Association (FTA), one of the UK's largest trade associations, whose members operate hundreds of thousands of vehicles.

For the 2017 show the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce has also returned as a partner for the NEC-based show.

With the emphasis on insight and strategy, Sewells Research & Insight will also be supporting the event on October 3-4.

Media partners reflect the wide range of roles that will benefit from the show, including fleet, finance, procurement, transport, business travel, corporate mobility and HR.

The partners include *HR Grapevine*, *Commercial Fleet*, *Driving Business*, *Fleet Leasing* and *Fleet News*.

For further information on show partners, visit the website at www.fleetmanagementlive.co.uk.

Sessions confirmed for Discover Fleet Theatre

Expert briefings for decision-makers in HR, finance and procurement, along with executives at every level in SMEs, have been confirmed for Fleet Management LIVE.

A total of six sessions will run over two days at the event, offering a value-added element to the show for visitors.

The SME session will cover fleet essentials, offering a blueprint for running vehicles that saves time and money.

Finance executives can attend a seminar on funding a cost-effective fleet, offering flexible strategies to enhance ROI in vehicles.

HR managers who are involved in fleet will benefit from a session on balancing risk and reward, which looks at how to maintain an attractive choice list and develop strategies to keep drivers save.

Finally, decision-makers in procurement will be briefed on how to drive efficiencies in purchasing.

Exhibitor listing so far

BMW
Honda
Jaguar
Land Rover
Lexus
MINI
SEAT
Toyota
Vauxhall
Volvo
AA DriveTech
Agility Fleet
AID Fuel Oils Group
ALD Automotive
Alphabet
Appy Fleet
Arnold Clark Vehicle Management
Arval
AssetWorks
Autoglass
Bott
BP Oil
BT Fleet
Carbaya
CC Keys
Chevin Fleet Solutions
CVM Fleet Management Solutions
Daimler Fleet Management
Dash Witness
Drive Software Solutions
Enterprise Flex-E-Rent
FleetCheck
Fleetcor
Fleet Evolution
FORS
Fourways Vehicles Solutions
Fuelmate
GEFCO
Inchcape Fleet Solutions
Interactive Fleet Management
Jaama
Keytracker
Lex Autolease
Licence Bureau
Lookers Leasing
Marshall Leasing
Nexus Vehicle Rental
O2
Parksafe Automotive
Probuild Transport Systems
Reflex Vans
RingGo Corporate
Scorpion Automotive
Selsia Vehicle Accident Centres
Sortimo
TCH Leasing
The AA
Total Motion Vehicle Management
Venson Automotive Solutions
vGroup International
Vindis Group Fleet
Volkswagen Financial Services | Fleet
Zenith

READY FOR ACTION - MANUFACTURERS GET IN GEAR FOR **CCIA 2017**

THE UK'S PREMIER DRIVING EVENT



The fleet industry is gearing up for CCIA 2017 with 16 manufacturers and a total of 26 key brands set to appear at the UK's most important drive and decide event.

Together, manufacturers will bring around 300 cars for an exclusive test drive experience in a unique environment at Millbrook Proving Ground, Bedfordshire, on June 13-14 this year.

At the heart of the event is the iconic 'steering pad', where fleet managers can choose from a wealth of the latest cars ready to receive their expert appraisal.

The pad sits at the centre of CCIA, with an array of models set in a ring so every vehicle is within easy reach to take out on the challenging test routes.

The closed roads of Millbrook are the perfect environment for testing, with purpose-built routes that are designed to help assess the performance of the latest models.

Decision-makers can choose from four unique road routes including a testing city circuit, high-speed oval, a challenging hill route and an off-road course.

Each one is designed to leave a lasting impression, so fleet managers can get under the skin of each car and deliver a reliable, expert verdict on its suitability for choice lists.

CCIA is the essential drive and decide event on the fleet calendar because it offers the widest range of choice, but also some of the most important new models which will define fleet choice lists in the coming years.

Manufacturers are still finalising their model lists for the event, including exclusive new models where details are still under wraps, but confirmed new test drives include the new BMW 5 Series, Mini Countryman, Seat Ibiza, Renault Captur, Vauxhall Insignia Sports Tourer and Crossland X.

There are also scores of models making their CCIA debuts, giving hundreds of fleet operators their first chance to put them to the test.

To reserve your place at the drive and decide event of the year, visit www.companycarinaction.co.uk and secure your place behind the wheel of the latest fleet vehicles.

BMW/Mini



Fleets can cast a critical eye over the new BMW 5 Series, which recently received a glowing first drive in *Fleet News*.

The model has been the benchmark for excellence since 1972, with more than 7.6 million sold around the globe, including more than 100,000 in the UK alone, with 60% going to fleets.

In addition to the 5 Series, fleets can choose from models including the Mini Countryman and a range of plug-in hybrid models.

FCA Group



A packed line-up offered by Alfa Romeo, Fiat and Jeep includes the chance to take five of its key SUVs off-road. The Jeep Wrangler, Grand Cherokee Overland and Renegade will be joined by the Panda Cross and 500X Cross on the off-road course.

On the steering pad, more than 20 models will be available to drive, including the critically-appraised Giulia in a variety of specifications and the Fiat Tipo which targets the heart of the company car sector.

Ford



Ford is the backbone of many of Britain's fleets and the sheer breadth of choice available reflects its connection to the corporate sector.

Key models available for test will include its growing SUV line-up covering the Kuga and Edge. For more rugged fleet roles, the Ranger pick-up is on offer.

The commercial sector will also get a CCIA first drive of new automatic versions of the Transit, while the heartland of fleet operations is catered for with the Focus and Mondeo.

Infiniti



Records are tumbling at Infiniti as demand for its models rockets, with sales doubling at the start of this year, making it the fastest growing premium brand in the UK. Many of the models behind the brand's recent success will be at the show.

These include the Q30, Q50, Q60 and QX30. The Q60 two-door coupe will make its CCIA debut.

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Jaguar Land Rover



Fleet managers will have an exclusive first look at the Range Rover Velar at the show. The new model will be making its UK car show debut at Company Car in Action as a static display so visitors can view it in the metal for the first time.

Also at the event will be the Jaguar F-Pace, which was recently named World Car of the Year, along with other key fleet models including the XE and XF.

Kia



Kia will be offering five CCIA first drives as it rolls out its full model range for fleets to test.

Among the key new models will be the new Optima plug-in hybrid, which slashes emissions to an official average of 37g/km. The low-emission theme will be supported by the Soul EV.

Also making their show debut will be the new Picanto, Rio, Niro and Optima SW.

Other key models will include the C'eed, Sportage and Sorento.

Nissan



Fleets will be able to review the new Nissan Micra as it makes its CCIA debut and see how it claims to redefine the small car sector.

It is longer, wider and lower than the previous model and is targeting a place among the top 10 sellers in its segment.

It offers a number of technological innovations to test, including Nissan's acclaimed Intelligent Around View Monitor camera system.

PSA Group



Key models available from PSA Group for test at CCIA will include the new Peugeot 3008 and Citroen C3.

Decision-makers will be able to see for themselves why the 3008 SUV was named Car of the Year by a judging panel comprising 58 European journalists.

Fleets can also discuss the safety benefits of the in-car camera fitted to the new C3.

Renault



Fleets will be offered an exclusive first on the Renault stand as it offers a first drive of the new Captur.

Due to go on sale in the summer, it will sport a higher level of specification, refreshed styling and upgraded interior.

Other models on show include the all-new Renault Koleos, Kadjar and all-new Megane Sport Tourer.

Seat



Fleets will be treated to a CCIA first drive of the new Seat Ibiza, with factory-fresh models being offered at the event in left-hand drive format.

There will also be CCIA debuts for the new Ateca, the brand's first-ever SUV, and the new Leon.

Other key models on test include the Alhambra.

Tesla



Fleets will be able to gain real-world experience of electric motoring by visiting the Tesla stand.

Models available to drive include the Model S saloon and Model X SUV, featuring Falcon Wing doors.

Experts can also answer questions on charging options and running costs.

Suzuki



Suzuki is making its CCIA debut and will be offering its full range for test.

This includes the new Swift, along with the Baleno, Celerio, Ignis, S-Cross and Vitara SUV.

Senior members of the team will also be attending including Graeme Jenkins, head of fleet.

Toyota/Lexus



The Toyota C-HR will be the star of the stand in a packed line-up from the manufacturer.

In addition to the eye-catching crossover, fleets can also choose from the hybrid models of the Yaris, Auris, Prius (including a plug-in version) and Rav4.

The Lexus stand will be an all-hybrid affair, with models including 300h versions of the CT, GS, NX and RC.

Vauxhall



In addition to a range of other key models from the Vauxhall range, fleets will be treated to two first drives on the Vauxhall stand as the Insignia Sports Tourer and Crossland X make their debut to UK fleet managers.

Fleets will also be able to discuss the new RoadTrip app from Vauxhall, which is designed to make it quick and easy for drivers to log, submit and track business mileage.

Volkswagen



Volkswagen will be focusing on the core models that keep fleets moving on its stand.

The iconic Golf will be there in a range of specifications, including a plug-in hybrid version, while the Passat will be available to test as a saloon or estate with a range of engines, including a PHEV option.

Also on show will be the new Tiguan R Line.

Volvo



Volvo is making its mark on the fleet market by showcasing its new models including the XC90, S90, V90 and V90 Cross Country as part of a line-up covering its full range.

Its fleet experts will be on hand to provide a briefing on the multitude of new technology fitted to its cars which is designed to improve safety and reduce running costs.

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TIME FOR CHANGE

Determining the optimum time to replace tyres can have significant cost, safety and compliance implications for fleets. *Ben Rooth* reports

Safety, cost and compliance are three of the major factors fleets need to consider when determining when to replace tyres.

Each has an impact on the others: for example, set a higher minimum tread depth for when tyres are changed for safety reasons and costs increase, but if a fleet waits until they are close to the 1.6mm legal tread depth limit then they run the risk of breaking the law.

"As always, it's a balance between operating costs for a fleet and the operational needs of the fleet," says Lee O'Neill, operations manager at Venson Automotive Solutions.

Fleets typically operate a policy of 2mm, although organisations such as safety charity Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and the National Tyres Distributors Association call for tyres to be changed at 3mm.

So how can a fleet manager decide when is the optimum time to replace tyres on their vehicles? Here we look at the factors they need to consider.

27%
of tyres in a survey were below the legal limit

■ Tyre experts will be at Fleet Management Live on October 3-4 at Birmingham NEC to discuss replacement choices and cycles. Register at fleetmanagementlive.co.uk

COMPLIANCE

New tyres typically come with 8mm of tread, and staying on the right side of the law means a minimum depth of 1.6mm in a continuous band across the central three-quarters of the tyre width around the entire circumference of the tyre.

Drivers whose tyres fail to comply with the law risk a fine of up to £2,500 and three penalty points for each illegal tyre, while there may also be a risk of prosecution for the employer if it is a company vehicle.

The regularity of tyres wearing below the legal limit was highlighted by a survey of more than 340,000 replaced tyres carried out by TyreSafe in partnership with Highways England at 819 retail outlets last year. Of these, 27% were found to have less than 1.6mm of tread.

"Our research suggests that the concern arises not just from the number of illegal tyres





at the point of replacement, but also the proportion which were below 2mm," says Stuart Jackson, chairman of TyreSafe.

"These have just 0.4mm left – which is half the thickness of a bank card – before they reach the 1.6mm legal minimum.

"While a tyre is legal at this point, the amount of distance it can cover and remain within the law is difficult to predict."

However, Lee O'Neill, operations manager at Venson Automotive Solutions, adds: "Typically, we change tyres at 2mm which provides a leeway for drivers, reducing the risk of them going below the legal limit.

"But the key to replacing tyres is flexibility. For example, if a driver has a tread depth of 2.4mm and is having the vehicle for another year, it might be practical to change the tyre early.

"But if the driver is replacing the vehicle at the end of the month it's unlikely, unless damaged, the tyre would be changed."

SAFETY

Tyres have a vital role to play in the safety of a driver. "Too often tyre management is overlooked and there is a tendency to forget that the only thing keeping the car on the road is the palm-sized contact patch of the tyre," says David Howe, fleet and retail channel manager for Goodyear Dunlop.

Mark Lovett, head of commercial vehicles at LeasePlan UK, adds: "The best brakes in the world are only as good as the contact and grip the tyre has."

Key to this grip is the tread which, on wet roads, channels away water so the tyres can grip the road surface beneath.

If the tread wears too low then cornering, performance and braking suffers, while the risk of aquaplaning dramatically increases.

"In the wet at 70mph, the stopping distance of a car fitted with a new tyre with 8mm of tread is calculated to be almost 100 metres; with 3mm a car's stopping distance increases to 150m; and with 1.6mm a car's stopping distance is 200m – double that of a vehicle fitted with a new tyre," says Andy Fern, fleet sales director at Kwik Fit.

"With just 1mm of tread remaining a car's stopping distance is 250m. If tyres are not changed before they wear to 1.6mm drivers may be compromising the safety of themselves and other road users."

But Jamie McWhir, customer engineering support manager at Michelin, believes fleets fitting premium brand



CASE STUDY: WATES



Ted Sakyi, group fleet manager for Wates, believes that every tyre should be replaced "without delay" when they get to a depth of 2mm.

"You cannot put a price on a colleague's safety – and this has to be the overriding issue when it comes to tyre tread depth," he says.

The Surrey-headquartered construction company has a fleet of 1,033 light commercial vehicles, 300 company cars and 1,300 cash allowance drivers.

Each of the three leasing companies Wates works with – Lex Autolease, Arval and Alphabet – also ensures that all vehicles have their tyres changed

when they reach a 2mm tread depth.

"It's something that we place a premium on," says Sakyi. "For example, all of our company car drivers have tyre gauges to assist them to carry out their own checks which we encourage them to do regularly.

"In addition, our leasing providers work with either Kwik Fit or ATS Euromaster who visit our offices and depots nationwide to carry out tyre checks on a monthly basis."

Sakyi maintains this is the most effective way to minimise downtime as it allows drivers to get on with their jobs while tyre professionals ensure that everything is as it should be.

He adds: "Because the fast-fits know what tyres we use on specific vehicles they tend to bring replacement tyres that can be fitted on a like-for-like basis when they arrive."

tyres give themselves a definite safety advantage.

"Braking distances depend on a wide range of factors," he says. "The braking system, ABS sensors, road surface texture, weather – both humidity and temperature – as well as tyre pressure and temperature and the driver's actions all play a significant part alongside the tyre's intrinsic qualities.

"When new, tyres can already exhibit large differences in performance between brands and manufacturers, models and dimensions.

"For example, premium tyres may, with a tread depth of 1.6mm, be more efficient than a new budget tyre.

"At Michelin, we ensure all our tyres offer a high level of performance across all criteria to the wear indicator at 1.6mm and this equates to several years and tens of thousands of miles."

COST

Changing tyres too early can have massive cost implications for fleets, says McWhir.

"Replacing tyres as soon as the tread depth reaches 3mm or 4mm inevitably means doing so more frequently which represents a significant increase in running costs," he adds.

"This is unacceptable at a time when the opposite should

CASE STUDY: RHODAR



Asbestos removal specialist Rhodar changes tyres when they reach 2mm tread depth because it ensures there is no uncertainty when it

comes to demonstrating full legal compliance.

"It's all about making 100% certain that colleagues are using the safest possible tyres," says Steve Haigh, group transport manager.

"By implementing a policy that ensures all tyres are changed at 2mm, I've got peace of mind that those tyres are never likely to be anywhere near the minimum depth of 1.6mm."

Haigh has placed an emphasis on tyre safety since he joined Rhodar in 2010 and the company's 190 vans and

85 cars are fitted with Michelin tyres through ATS Euromaster.

The company requires all van drivers to carry out a daily inspection of tyres prior to taking the vehicle out while also stipulating that all company car drivers carry out monthly checks.

"When it comes to ensuring that your fleet's tyres are as safe as possible, I think it's essential to fit a premium brand," says Haigh.

"Premium brand tyres last far longer than cheaper alternatives and are integral to demonstrating that you've placed a premium on duty of care when it comes to the safety of colleagues driving those vehicles.

"What's more, they simply don't degrade as quickly as cheaper alternatives which lessens the likelihood of them being near the 1.6mm threshold if your organisation's policy is to change them at 2mm and you carry out regular inspections to achieve this."

"I've got peace of mind that those tyres are never likely to be anywhere near the minimum depth of 1.6mm"

Steve Haigh, Rhodar

be true as a result of the progress made in tyre technology, even before improvements to the vehicle itself are considered."

He says research carried out by Michelin shows that changing a tyre with 3mm or 4mm of tread remaining – instead of 1.6mm – equates on average to an extra tyre per company car every two years.

"That's a scenario that most fleets would not be prepared to entertain," adds McWhir.

"It would also have a notable impact on fleets as a result of the higher total cost of ownership.

"The monthly payments associated with contract hire and leasing schemes could rise."

Fern agrees the cost implications are potentially "significant". "New tyres typically arrive from the factory with just less than 8mm of tread, so, with a 2mm tyre tread policy, there is close to 6mm of usable tread," he says.

"Moving replacement from 2mm to 3mm will increase tyre costs by one-sixth.

"As tyres account for perhaps one-third of a fleet's maintenance budget – and in some cases even more – a policy switch can increase costs significantly when extrapolated across a vehicle fleet."

According to Michelin, the rolling resistance of tyres also needs to be considered. This is responsible for 20% of a car's fuel – or electric power – consumption and the figures improve when tyres aren't new.

"Michelin considers that replacing tyres prematurely would see annual fuel consumption rise by 900 million litres, and CO₂ emissions by three million tonnes – or nine million if we were to add the loss of material caused by premature tyre replacement," says McWhir.

"This is equivalent to the annual carbon emissions of the city of Birmingham."



900m

litres of extra fuel used if
tyres are replaced early

1.5m

tonnes of raw materials
wasted annually

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Jonathan Layton, head of fleet, Michelin



Clean transport and road safety should be everyone's concern.

You wouldn't scrap a car or van when it's got many more miles still to run – and the same should be true of the tyres fitted to that vehicle.

Many manufacturers play the card of 'programmed obsolescence', that is to say an ever-shorter life of their products. Michelin has made the opposite choice, the one of 'programmed longevity'.

For us, the statutory minimum of 1.6mm is perfectly suited to modern motoring – especially given that the latest generation of premium tyres can offer maximum on-road performance, safety, and longevity from the first mile to the last.

Removing a vehicle's tyres early means more frequent replacement, which, in turn, increases costs, downtime and hassle – precisely what fleet operators and their drivers don't want.

Choosing to change a tyre at 3 or 4mm equates to purchasing approximately one extra tyre per vehicle every two years – and the bigger the fleet, the more that additional cost starts to add up.

Removing a vehicle's tyres early means more frequent replacement, which, in turn, increases costs

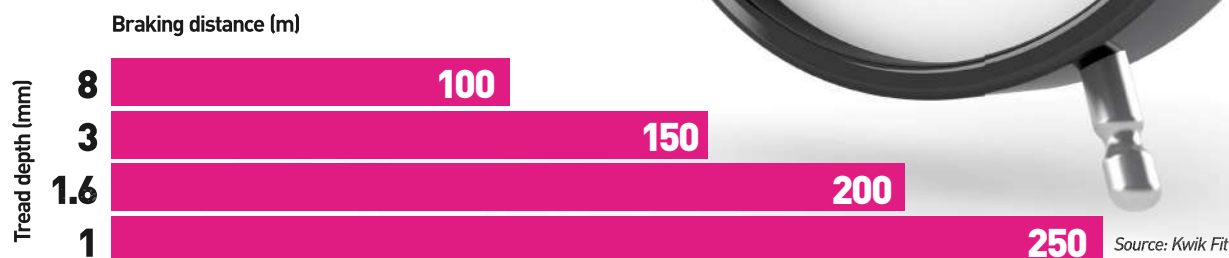
Plus, removing a tyre so early risks fleets missing out on the period of the tyre's life when fuel efficiency is at its peak and the wear rate has reduced to a minimum. This will most likely increase a fleet's fuel bill, at a time when businesses are doing everything they can to make their cars and vans as fuel-efficient as possible.

We believe it makes little sense to remove tyres that have thousands of potential miles still to run, and Michelin will work to protect its customers' best interests.





WET BRAKING DISTANCES FROM 70MPH



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Increasing the frequency with which tyres are replaced can also have a significant environmental impact, which companies with a strong corporate social responsibility may take into account.

"Numerous materials and a certain amount of energy are required to make a tyre," says Michelin's McWhir.

"The more material used, the greater the impact will be on the environment.

"Tyres should therefore be replaced as late as possible to avoid overconsumption of raw materials and the energy used in manufacturing them."

Recycling is also heavy on energy consumption, he adds, and the more materials manufacturers have to recycle, the lower their overall sustainability performance.

"Increasing the legal minimum tread depth Europe-wide from 1.6mm to 3mm would amount to 1.5 million tonnes of raw materials wasted annually, equating to an energy demand of 290 million tonnes of crude oil," says McWhir.

"That is to say, more than the annual production of Mexico and Venezuela combined."

VEHICLE DOWNTIME

When it comes to minimising the downtime linked to changing tyres, industry analysts agree that drivers need to



"The best brakes in the world are only as good as the contact and grip the tyre has"

Mark Lovett, LeasePlan

take personal responsibility and utilise mobile support fitters whenever possible.

"There are several ways drivers can ensure downtime is managed efficiently, including using mobile tyre fitters, booking fittings outside of the organisation's peak work time and phoning ahead to ensure the supplier has the correct tyre available," says Lovett of LeasePlan.

O'Neill of Venson Automotive Solutions adds: "We encourage drivers to behave proactively, pre-ordering tyres rather than waiting until absolutely needed or illegal.

"By doing so this means that when they do go to have tyres changed the process is quick and has them on the road as soon as possible, ensuring vehicle downtime is kept to a minimum.

"If for any reason they aren't able to attend a branch then we have the ability to use mobile tyre fitment, again limiting the impact on the driver's time."

Fern of Kwik Fit stresses the benefits of mobile repair support. "Reducing fleet vehicle downtime is critically important to fleet operators as they continually seek to reduce operating costs," he says.

"As part of Kwik Fit's range of services focused on assisting customers meet compliance, our mobile technicians undertake vehicle health checks.

"A visual inspection of the tyres is followed by a more in-depth check with tread and pressure levels taken and findings recorded.

"Authorisation will then be obtained for any rectification work to be carried out."



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"We have to replicate the success of the Astra by bringing new product to market that optimises BIK and also specification"

James Taylor, Vauxhall

£2,500

price cuts introduced to new Insignia

FACTFILE

Total sales (Q1 2017) 66,733

Fleet sales (Q1 2017) 30,434

Fleet market share 7.63%

WINNER: VAUXHALL ASTRA

Astra leads way in true fleet as Vauxhall gears up for transition

New product launches in 2017 will plug some of the gaps in the carmaker's offering with special emphasis on SUVs

By Stephen Briers

James Taylor describes 2017 as a "transition year" for Vauxhall as it brings to market the new Insignia Grand Sport in the summer, followed by the Insignia Sports Tourer and then the Crossland X compact SUV and Grandland X mid-size SUV towards the end of the year.

Amid the host of new product launches sits the uncertainty caused by PSA's acquisition of Vauxhall/Opel. However, Vauxhall's fleet director brushes aside such questions, suggesting it is "more of an interest than a concern".

He points to his settled fleet team that has worked with customers for a long time, including when General Motors went through Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the USA eight years ago, adding the well-worn phrase – "it's business as usual".

Vauxhall's strategy, he insists, remains unchanged: best in class wholelife cost, balance the sales channels and focus on the company car driver.

Fleet News: Vauxhall introduced a strategy of reducing its penetration into rental six years ago, yet last year your registrations through this channel increased by 5%. Has the strategy changed?

James Taylor: No, this is about timing year-on-year. This year, rental will be significantly below 2016, especially on Insignia. We have been very disciplined in sticking with that – we have lost market share year-on-year – and we are committed to the strategy. We have also seen a growing proportion – now more than 95% – of rental cars on buy-back going through Network Q which protects the brand and residual values.

What's clear is that we have seen market segmentation move away from traditional cars, brands and segments with an increase in premium, SUV and crossovers. We have nothing bigger than the Mokka today so that hurts us.

We are number one in true fleet for Astra, Zafira Tourer and Mokka and number two for Corsa but our total share went backwards last year because those segments are smaller. The Crossland and Grandland will put us into those (growing) segments.

FN: What are your expectations for the new Insignia and are there any concerns that you do not have a car below 100g/km?

JT: We have reduced pricing by up to £2,500 across the range [on the road] and have good rational benefits with low BIK (benefit-in-kind) and high specification. We want to get back to being number one in the segment like we were in 2015. We want to significantly outsell our competitors – and that's our expectation. We also expect our diesels to be 10% better than the outgoing engines [on CO2 emissions and fuel efficiency]. The last car was set up to perform well on the NEDC test and this car is set up for the WLTP test so we feel we are in a better place when it comes to those tests. My feeling is that the Insignia will look very good when all cars are on the WLTP testing in 2018. It will be a talking point that we have to explain [the lack of sub-100g/km diesel] but we have set up the value low enough so that it isn't an issue with BIK.

FN: Two years ago you took on more account managers to target the 25-99 vehicle fleets. How successful has this been?

JT: We have restructured our baseline SME fleet team. The 25-99 team worked okay but it didn't deliver what we hoped for. We have learnt that the market is serviced by



James Taylor, fleet sales director, Vauxhall (left), collects the award from Elliot Scott, fleet director, Thrifty Car & Van Rental



James Taylor (seated, centre) celebrates the win with members of the Vauxhall team

the leasing companies and we are better focusing our resource into smaller territories. So we have disbanded the team and given them smaller territories with fewer customers so they can understand their needs and work closer with them.

FN: Where do you feel Vauxhall has made most progress in recent years?

JT: We have reinvigorated our restricted badge business with lots of new business wins and we have to replicate that success with the Insignia. Our website visits are up 15% and our order take was okay for the first quarter as we are without the Insignia, which gives us a solid platform to build for the second half of the year. The three-day test drive remains a big call to action and we have more than 1,000 requests already for the new Insignia [deliveries start in June].

FN: ...and where do you have most still to make?

JT: We have to work hard at the small car end of the market – Viva, Adam and Corsa. It's a fantastic offering but we have to fine tune and get them working harder. It's a big part of the market and it has moved towards petrol but we haven't picked up the petrol mantle quickly enough. We also have to work hard on Mokka; we've not been aggressive enough in the sector so that will be a focus in the second half.

FN: In the van sector you got off to a great start in 2016, but then registrations tailed off to leave you down year-on-year. What are your expectations for 2017?

JT: Last year was a tale of two halves. We started strongly but through the transition to Euro 6 we lost momentum.

We had a squeeze due to lack of production because we were building to satisfy demand. So we couldn't take advantage where fleets were trying to beat the transition to Euro 6. This year we have predicted a small market downturn due to that Euro 6 pull forward, but we've not seen that so far. We have to get back on stream with core corporates and SMEs, and we will be doing slightly lower volume in rental for vans for residual values and the business case.

FN: After getting ahead of the game with the Ampera, Vauxhall is now falling behind in alternative fuels. What are your plans for electric vehicles?

JT: We were ahead of our time with the Ampera but it was not practical at its price point as a main family car. We are bringing some Ampera-es over to assess the opportunity for a right-hand drive model [the new car, a version of the Chevrolet Bolt in America is currently planned only for left-hand drive markets]. But no one is making money on electric vehicles and while it stays a small part of the market, our priorities will be in our core product offering.

With Vauxhall widening its core product range to penetrate more deeply into the SUV and crossover segment, Taylor is looking to build on the foundations created by the Astra with the new Insignia Grand Sport.

"We are on the front foot," he says. "We have to replicate the success of the Astra by bringing new product to market that optimises BIK and also specification. We have to satisfy both the job-need and user-chooser markets."

JUDGES' COMMENTS

The Astra has a wide range of engines that balance performance with good real-world economy. It is a great all-rounder for fleets, with good looks, strong driver appeal and the latest technology combining with robust residual values and low running costs in a job-need dominated category.

MAZDA CX-5

All-new CX-5 offers fleet drivers excellent refinement and class-leading handling but at the expense of higher CO₂ emissions



NEED TO KNOW

- Sharper looks and more refined drive
- Higher levels of standard equipment
- Disappointing CO₂ emissions from 132g/km

By Matt de Prez

It's difficult to stand out in the crowded SUV sector. A good crossover needs to tick a lot of boxes – fuel economy, driver appeal, practicality, ease of driving and low running costs are key criteria for fleet operators.

The Mazda CX-5 has always been a stand-out car for the way it drives, thanks to its 'Jinba Ittai' driver-and-car-as-one ethos. This extends from the powertrain through the chassis set-up to the interior and driving position.

In the new model, particular focus has been put on improving refinement, to give the car a more premium

£2,000
lower in price compared
to close rivals



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feel. The original CX-5 was designed with a youthful image but the new car takes on a sportier demeanour.

New luxury features are available including heated rear-seats, a powered tailgate, head-up display and adaptive cruise control with stop and go function.

Enhancing the driving experience has impacted emissions. The most frugal CX-5 now emits 132g/km of CO₂, jumping from the old model's 119g/km. This could see it wiped off restricted company car choice lists – where 130g/km CO₂ caps are not uncommon – but Mazda expects sales to remain stable with a 50:50 fleet to retail split.

The extra emissions are largely due to a heavier kerb weight – resulting from increased sound-proofing, thicker glass and extra technology. However, the manufacturer says in real-world economy tests the new CX-5 outperforms the old model by 4.1%.

Customers can choose from a 2.2-litre Skyactiv four-cylinder diesel engine with either 150PS or 175PS. There is also a 2.0-litre petrol engine with 165PS.

The CX-5 goes on sale at the end of June priced from £23,695 for the petrol in SE-L Nav trim, while diesels cost from £25,695. Standard equipment includes LED headlights, auto power-folding door mirrors, dual-zone climate control, digital radio and a seven-inch touchscreen display with Mazda's integrated navigation.

The only other trim on offer is range-topping Sport Nav which Mazda predicts to be the best seller for both retail and fleet customers. It comes with a leather interior, keyless entry, adaptive cruise control and a Bose audio system, plus electrically adjustable heated front seats and heated steering wheel.

Sport Nav models are priced from £28,695 when paired with the 2.2-litre 150PS engine, a manual gearbox and front-wheel-drive. This means a driver should expect to pay around £130 per month in BIK tax (20% taxpayer).

We tested pre-production variants of all the powertrains



Standard equipment includes digital radio and seven-inch touchscreen



The CX-5 is impressively quiet on the road

"In the new model particular focus has been put on improving refinement to give the car a more premium feel"

and found the frugal front-wheel-drive 150PS diesel to be the most impressive all-rounder. It's expected to return 56.4mpg and is capable of accelerating to 62mph in 9.4 seconds.

On the road the CX-5 is well composed and impressively quiet. The engine delivers strong performance from low revs and is complemented by a slick six-speed manual gearbox.

Body roll is well controlled making the CX-5 competent in the corners. Mazda has fitted a system called G-Vectoring Control which moderates engine torque when cornering at higher speeds to maximise grip.

The more powerful diesel engine comes with all-wheel-drive (optional on the 150PS) which bumps the CO₂ figure by another 10g/km to 142g/km. It will provide greater confidence in poor weather conditions, but scuppers dry-road handling and offers little extra performance given its increased running costs.

Across both outputs the diesel engines have been fitted with a new noise-reducing Natural Sound Smoother technology, which cuts start-up and idle reverberation. The difference is noticeable and, combined with the increased sound proofing, interior noise levels are low.

The petrol engine is the least efficient, managing just 44mpg with CO₂ emissions of 149g/km. Petrol models accounted for just 16% of previous CX-5 sales and the engine feels gutless in comparison to the diesels. With no turbocharger to boost performance or efficiency it would be a poor choice for fleet customers.

An automatic gearbox is available across the range for an extra £1,500; when fitted to the petrol engine it improves efficiency and performance but on the diesel the figures head north, with CO₂ emissions from 147g/km.

The CX-5 still leads the class as a driver's car but its higher emissions are a significant setback. The only saving grace is its list price which is around £2,000 lower than that of equivalent Škoda Kodiaqs and Volkswagen Tiguan, giving it a company car tax advantage.

COSTS

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| P11D price | £28,495 |
| BIK tax band (2017/18) | 28% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £1,595 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,101.04 |
| Annual VED | £200 then £140 |
| RV (4yr/80K) | £10,350 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 9.62 |
| AFR (ppm) | 13 |
| Running cost (4yr/80K) | 37.37 |

SPEC

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Power (PS)/torque (Nm) | 150/380 |
| CO ₂ emissions (g/km) | 132 |
| Top speed (mph) | 124 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 9.4 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 56.4 |
| Real world (mpg) | 56.4 |

KEY RIVAL

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| Nissan Qashqai 1.6dCi 130 Tekna 2WD |
| P11D price: £27,830 |
| BIK tax band (2017/18) 26% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) £1,447 |
| Class 1A NIC £999 |
| Annual VED £160 then £140 |
| RV (4yr/80k) £7,900 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) 8.85 |
| AFR (ppm) 9 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) 37.99ppm |

Running cost data supplied by KeeResources (4yr/80k)

THINKING CAP



By Martin Ward, manufacturer relationships manager

cap hpi

Monday To Warwickshire for an Audi range driving day. All its models were lined up, in nice neat rows, but not for long as journalists took them out. It is only when you see the range together that you realise just how many cars Audi has on offer, and not a bad one in the line-up, and more to come with the Q8 in 2018 which will be built in Bratislava (Slovakia) and the Q4 from Gyor (Hungary) in 2019.

The all-new A5 in its three body styles was in demand, and, of course, the superb R8. But the whole range got a good work out and no matter which car you chose to drive it was as perfect as the next.

"Will the ever-growing popularity of SUVs put the hatch at risk?"

Tuesday To Gloucestershire to drive the all-new Vauxhall Insignia, which has changed beyond recognition in all aspects: design, style, interior, quality and just has an air of premium look, feel and touch. I drove Grand Sport hatch fitted with a diesel engine, and it did drive really well, so quiet, and refined.

But, like so many manufactures now, Vauxhall is offering a new petrol engine. The Insignia has a 1.5-litre turbo producing 140PS and 165PS, and will be interesting to see what the take-up of this new engine is, high I would think. This coupe-style hatch is certainly a good looker, but will the ever-growing popularity of SUVs put the hatch at risk, or will some customers just stick with the good old traditional five-door?

Thursday Up to North Yorkshire to drive the facelifted Isuzu D-MAX. Isuzu has been brave in reducing the size of the engine from 2.5-litres to 1.9-litres. It drives well though and the 164PS output is more than enough, with no AdBlue needed. It will carry a tonne and pull an impressive 3.5 tonnes. We drove it on- and off-road, and in a river, and it was at home wherever we went – a real good all-rounder. Prices range from £15,749 to £27,999 plus VAT.



Redesigned bumpers help to distinguish the Prius hybrid from the standard model

BUSINESS EDITION PLUS

TOYOTA PRIUS PLUG-IN HYBRID

Giant battery doubles real-world electric range but reduces boot space

NEED TO KNOW

- Electric-only range of 30 miles
- Real-world fuel economy of 70mpg on test
- Price reduced to £29,195 after plug-in car grant

By Christopher Smith

The arrival of plug-in hybrid vehicles has been both a blessing and a curse for many a fleet manager. They've allowed fleets to offer drivers a vehicle with considerably lower benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax than previously, and offer longer distance drivers a partial electric experience.

But the attraction of lower BIK has led several drivers to take a PHEV and never plug it in, which in many cases has left them with an inefficient vehicle with lower fuel economy than the diesel equivalent.

Toyota hopes its plug-in will find favour with drivers seeking a more consistent economy experience, by providing efficient driving whether on battery power or in standard hybrid mode.

The second generation Prius Plug-in Hybrid is loosely based on the normal Prius, with a giant battery in the boot, and some redesigned front and rear bumpers.

The new car pretty much doubles the real-world electric range of its predecessor, from 15 miles to around 30, and drastically cuts CO₂ emissions to 22g/km (from 70g/km).

The car is at its best in pure electric mode, offering a smooth drive in relative quiet. Once the car switches into hybrid mode, however, the loud CVT gearbox screeches through the cabin, and disturbs the tranquillity previously encountered.

If you can cope with the din, the car is economical. In hybrid mode, using some electric range, we achieved a figure of around 70mpg.

It has a few nice features, including an optional solar roof, for £1,500, that can add up to three miles a day of electric range. The battery is also fitted with a warming system to

COSTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| P11D price | £31,640 (£29,140 after PICG) |
| BIK tax band (2017) | 9% |
| Annual BIK tax (40%) | £1,139 |
| Class 1A NIC | £393 |
| Annual VED | £0 then £130 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | 10,675 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 4.79 |
| AFR (ppm) | 14 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 34.11 |

SPEC

| | |
|--|---------|
| Power (PS)/torque (Nm) | 120/142 |
| CO₂ emissions (g/km) | 22 |
| Top speed (mph) | 101 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 11.1 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 282 |

KEY RIVAL

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| VW Golf GTE | |
| P11D price: | £30,420 |
| BIK tax band (2017) | 9% |
| Annual BIK tax (40%) | £1,095 |
| Class 1A NIC | £378 |
| Annual VED | £0 then £130 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £8,575 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 8.11 |
| AFR (ppm) | 11 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 39.56ppm |

Running cost data supplied by
KeeResources (4yr/80k)



All cars come with Toyota's Safety Sense package

allow EV mode to operate at a lower temperature, while a new heat pump allows cabin temperature to be warmed without using the engine.

All cars are sold with Toyota's Safety Sense package, which offers pre-collision warning, adaptive cruise, road sign assist and rear-cross traffic alert.

But in among the niceties, there are other quirks. The car is available in four-seat configuration only, and the batteries take up a significant portion of the boot. It stretches back a long way, but is rather shallow.

The touchscreen is now bigger than the standard Prius, at eight inches, but is slow to update, particularly at roundabouts.

At launch, in Business Edition Plus form, the car was priced at £32,395 after £2,500 plug-in car grant – but less than a week later, Toyota slashed pricing to £29,195 OTR after grant – a significant discount.

The price cut means it's now cheaper than an entry-level BMW 330e, and it closes the gap between the price of this vehicle and a regular Prius.

The brand reckoned at launch it will sell less than 450 models this year in the UK, 60% of those to fleet – but the price cut hints at greater ambitions.

VOLVO S90

Lower list price than key rivals and intuitive technology make R Design a contender



One-third of S90 fleet sales are Pexpected to be R Design

NEED TO KNOW

- New trim gives S90 sporty character
- Firmer suspension still offers smooth ride
- Lower prices mean BIK tax is cheaper than rivals

By Matt de Prez

When the S90 was launched last year it finally opened the door for Volvo to steal executive saloon drivers from BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Audi. However, it was missing the sporty option many customers look for in popular M Sport, AMG line and S Line derivatives.

Volvo has responded with the R Design. This trim already accounts for around half of all its fleet sales on other models and the manufacturer expects it to make up more than a third of S90 sales. To keep running costs at a minimum the engine is unchanged. It's a 2.0-litre four-cylinder diesel with a choice of 190PS D4 or 230PS D5 outputs.

We opted to test the D4. With CO₂ emissions of 116g/km and a P11D value of £35,400 it is the most popular choice with fleets. Company car tax will cost around £295 per month for a 40% taxpayer.

Performance is plentiful and I would question whether the extra power of the D5 is really needed. With more than two tonnes to haul, the D4 still hits 60mph in less than eight seconds and delivers plenty of torque in the mid-range.

All S90s get a nine-inch Sensus Connect touchscreen infotainment system with sat-nav and connected services. LED headlights, heated seats and Volvo's semi-autonomous Pilot Assist also come as standard.

R Design models stand out thanks to redesigned bumpers which give a more aggressive appearance. There are also 18-inch alloy wheels, half-leather sports seats and a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster. Inside, a black headliner and perforated leather trim give a much more Germanic feel than the light, wood-clad, cabins of regular Volvos.

COSTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| P11D price | £35,400 |
| BIK tax band (2017/18) | 25% |
| Annual BIK tax (40%) | £3,540 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,221 |
| Annual VED | £160 then £140 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £11,750 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 8.46 |
| AFR (ppm) | 11 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 43.55ppm |

SPEC

| | |
|--|---------|
| Power (PS)/torque (Nm) | 190/400 |
| CO₂ emissions (g/km) | 116 |
| Top speed (mph) | 140 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 7.9 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 64.2 |

KEY RIVAL

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| BMW 520d Msport | |
| P11D price: | £38,970 |
| BIK tax band (2017/18) | 24% |
| Annual BIK tax | £3,741 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,291 |
| Annual VED | £160 then £140 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £13,675 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 8.28 |
| AFR (ppm) | 11 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 45.87ppm |

Running cost data supplied by KeeResources (4yr/80k)



All S90s have a nine-inch touchscreen infotainment system

To improve the S90's driving experience, Volvo has lowered the suspension by 15mm with new springs and new dampers, giving a firmer ride and better body control. It's still not a match for the 5 Series when it comes to outright driver appeal – but strikes a fair balance between comfort and handling, which should suit most fleet drivers.

There are three driving modes: Eco Drive, Comfort and Dynamic. Without the optional adaptive dampers, the modes only affect the steering and powertrain response. Nonetheless, in the efficiency setting we were able to achieve 61mpg on a motorway run, with mixed driving returning 52mpg.

Despite having larger dimensions than all its key rivals, the S90 is exceptionally easy to live with and once you join a motorway or A road, the Pilot Assist system can be engaged. It's not a hands-off solution but is useful to reduce fatigue on long trips. In traffic it can bring the car to a complete stop then set off again without driver input.

Against rivals, the S90 falls short on CO₂ emissions but makes up for it with a lower list price, making it the cheapest for company car tax by around £150 per year. With a few options added, the S90 R Design is, realistically, a £40,000 car but with excellent rear legroom, great intuitive technology and top marks for safety, it merits serious consideration.

HYUNDAI i30

Attractively designed with many safety features as standard



The hatchback is the first of four body styles to be introduced

NEED TO KNOW

- Single diesel option for new i30 hatchback
- CO₂ from 99g/km
- Long list of safety features as standard

By Simon Harris

Hyundai's transformation from a budget car brand to the mainstream over the past decade means there should no longer be any reason to qualify its shortcomings.

The brand, and especially the new i30, launched this year, has to compete head on with the likes of Ford, Vauxhall, Peugeot, Toyota and even Volkswagen.

The i30 hatchback is the first of four body styles for the third generation of this lower-medium model and, while we drove examples on the European media launch in January, we weren't able to try the diesel version offered in the UK.

Unlike its predecessor, there will be no higher-power diesel engine with 136PS (not the same as other European markets), only a 110PS variant. This can be rationalised by the fact that the core of this sector is in the region of 100-120PS for diesel engines, particularly among fleets.

But perhaps as Hyundai has also marched upmarket



Touchscreen sat-nav comes as standard

"There are some aspects that make it stand out in what is an exceptionally crowded sector of the market"

with the i30, with more sophisticated equipment and technology, the price of a high-spec 136PS diesel might have struggled for appeal against some peers.

We should point out, however, that the i30 has much to recommend it, and there are some aspects that make it stand out in what is an exceptionally crowded sector of the market.

Our Premium grade test car is one step down from the highest, and it lacks a safety kit that's standard on the Premium SE. All i30s come with lane departure warning with lane-keeping assistance, autonomous emergency braking, collision warning and driver attention alert, but the Premium adds blindspot warning and rear cross traffic alert as standard.

The fact that these features are standard on an i30 and available as options on many rivals is difficult for fleet managers to ignore.

And it shouldn't be difficult to persuade drivers to take to the new i30. It's attractively designed both inside and out, with touchscreen sat-nav as standard, digital radio, Apple Carplay and Android Auto connectivity, and a wireless phone-charging pad for compatible smartphones.

The 1.6-litre diesel engine is a refined performer, if perhaps a little lacking in prolonged shove for quick overtaking. We struggled to get within 20mpg of the official combined cycle figure of 74.3mpg from our manual test car (the Equa Index reports a 51.1mpg real-world figure).

For those who prefer automatic transmissions, the i30 is now available with a seven-speed dual-clutch auto, which offers rapid shifts but adds 10g/km to the diesel's CO₂ output.

THE RIVALS

- Ford Focus 1.5 TDCi 120 Titanium
- Vauxhall Astra 1.6 CDTi 110 Elite Nav
- Peugeot 308 1.6 BlueHDi 120 Allure

P11D PRICE

| | |
|-------|---------|
| Focus | £22,040 |
| Astra | £22,040 |
| 308 | £22,370 |
| i30 | £22,390 |

BIK TAX AND CO₂

| | |
|-------|------------|
| 308 | 84g/km/20% |
| Astra | 97g/km/21% |
| Focus | 99g/km/21% |
| i30 | 99g/km/21% |

FUEL COSTS

| | |
|-------|----------------|
| 308 | 6.30ppm/£5,040 |
| Astra | 7.12ppm/£5,696 |
| Focus | 7.31ppm/£5,848 |
| i30 | 7.31ppm/£5,848 |

DEPRECIATION

| | |
|-------|------------------|
| i30 | 20.43ppm/£16,344 |
| Astra | 20.83ppm/£16,664 |
| Focus | 20.93ppm/£16,744 |
| 308 | 22.46ppm/£17,968 |

SMR

| | |
|-------|----------------|
| Astra | 3.13ppm/£2,504 |
| Focus | 3.40ppm/£2,720 |
| i30 | 3.60ppm/£2,880 |
| 308 | 4.30ppm/£3,440 |

RUNNING COSTS

| | |
|-------|------------------|
| Astra | 31.08ppm/£24,864 |
| i30 | 31.34ppm/£25,072 |
| Focus | 31.64ppm/£25,312 |
| 308 | 33.06ppm/£26,448 |

VERDICT

The i30 is a strong contender here, well equipped and desirable. It can't quite deliver a knockout blow to the Vauxhall Astra, but runs it exceptionally close.

Winner: Vauxhall Astra 1.6 CDTi Elite Nav

Running cost: KeeResources (4yr/80k)

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SMART FORFOUR

Sales of electric five-door Forfour expected to overtake its two-door forerunner



The five-door Forfour Electric Drive can be fully charged in 2.5 hours

NEED TO KNOW

- First ever four-seat Smart electric car
- Range of up to 96 miles in official tests
- Expected £500 premium over electric Fortwo

By Simon Harris

Smart is offering a four-seat electric car for the first time with the new Forfour Electric Drive.

It will go on sale alongside the Fortwo Electric Drive later this year, and it's the five-door, four-seater Forfour that Smart believes will be the best-seller in the UK.

Although prices hadn't been set at the time of testing the car, the Forfour should reflect other models in the range and command a £500 premium over the Fortwo, with many customers then recognising the extra value in the additional doors and seats of the Forfour.

The Smart Forfour is a joint development with Renault that also spawned the current Twingo. The Forfour Electric Drive is produced in Slovenia, with the drivetrain manufactured by Renault in France. There is no word on whether an electric version of the Twingo will be launched, but Renault already has a compact EV in the Zoe, so maybe it is unnecessary.

Potential battery range in the Forfour is slightly lower than in the Fortwo (96 miles instead of 100), with maximum power of 81PS from the electric motor and top speed electronically limited to 81mph to avoid wasting charge unnecessarily.

The car will be sold with a standard 7kW charger, meaning the car can be charged in around two and a half hours from empty using a 16 amp socket. Early in 2018, Smart will launch a 22kW on-board charger, which means the Smart could be charge in around 45 minutes using a 32 amp charger.

Smart had considered delaying the launch of the Electric Drive models until this rapid charging system was available, but has decided to introduce it with the 7kW on-board charger.

COSTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| P11D price | £22,000 (estimated) |
| BIK tax band (2016/17) | 9% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £396/£792 |
| Class 1A NIC | £273 |
| Annual VED | £0 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | TBC |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | TBC |
| AFR (ppm) | n/a |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | TBC |

SPEC

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Power (PS)/torque (Nm) | 81/118 |
| CO₂ emissions (g/km) | 0 |
| Top speed (mph) | 81 (electronically limited) |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 12.7 |
| Range | 96 miles |

KEY RIVAL

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Volkswagen e-Up | |
| P11D price: | £25,225 |
| BIK tax band (2017/18) | 9% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £313/£454 |
| Class 1A NIC | £244 |
| Annual VED | £0 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £3,625 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 2.9 |
| AFR (ppm) | n/a |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 31.68ppm |

Running cost data supplied by
KeeResources (4yr/80k)



Top speed is electronically limited to 81mph

The Forfour Electric Drive is nippy around town and eager to take advantage of gaps in traffic with responsive acceleration. Despite being slightly less powerful than a Renault Zoe, it actually accelerates more quickly. The Forfour takes 12.7 seconds to reach 62mph from rest, while a Zoe covers the same benchmark in 13.5 seconds. It isn't as quick as the Volkswagen e-Up, (12.4 seconds) and is also slightly behind on the e-Up's 99-mile electric range.

Like other Smart models, there are three equipment grades: Passion, Prime and Proxy, with power steering and heated front seats standard from Prime, as well as a lane-keeping assistant.

The maximum range of 96 miles is disappointing compared to the latest models coming to market (the new Zoe is up to 200 miles). In winter it wouldn't be surprising if this fell to 60 or so miles, with heated seats and climate control as well as headlamps and windscreen wipers adding to demands on the battery.

We can't help feeling the company should have been a bit more ambitious and given more people a reason to switch to electric.

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The new Swift weighs less and has greater interior width

1.0 BOOSTERJET SHVS SZ5

SUZUKI SWIFT

Whether an emotional buy or a rational one, good things come in small packages

NEED TO KNOW

- New turbo petrol engine and mild hybrid option
- CO₂ from 97g/km, with deliveries from June
- Roomier and more hi-tech than predecessor

By Simon Harris

The Suzuki Swift has been a huge success since its introduction in 2004, with the current model demonstrating strong credentials as a public sector fleet staple or low-cost pool car.

Suzuki's recent strategy of offering two similar-sized cars across its range is intended as a rational purchase for one and a more emotional purchase for the other.

Therefore the Celerio city car is the rational choice, while the Ignis city crossover is the emotional one. The same is true for the more judicious S-Cross and the carefree Vitara, while the Swift is meant to be an expressive foil to the Baleno's cerebral purchase.

We are talking in relative terms, of course, as none of these cars would be terrible choices for fleets, so there's no need to get twitchy over the 'emotional' label for the Swift.

Using a new platform, the Swift has undergone a programme of weight saving, and is now around 100kg lighter than its predecessor. It is also a little roomier with greater width inside, although the car still has a compact footprint, substantially shorter than a Fiesta, Corsa and Clio at 3,840mm.

The 1.2-litre Dualjet engine (producing 90PS) is carried over from the current model, offering CO₂ emissions of 98g/km for the five-speed manual – the only transmission available with this engine.

New to the Swift is a 111PS Boosterjet 1.0-litre three-cylinder engine, which is also available with the SHVS mild hybrid, cutting CO₂ by 7g/km compared with the standard engine, and making it the lowest of the range at 97g/km.

A six-speed auto is available on the Boosterjet engine but

COSTS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| P11D price | £13,700 (estimated) |
| BIK tax band (2017-2018) | 18% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £493 |
| Class 1A NIC | £340 (estimated) |
| Annual VED | £120 |
| RV (4yr/80K) | TBC |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | TBC |
| AFR (ppm) | 11 |
| Running cost (4yr/80K) | TBC |

SPEC

| | |
|--|---------|
| Power (PS)/torque (Nm) | 111/125 |
| CO₂ emissions (g/km) | 97 |
| Top speed (mph) | 121 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 10.6 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 65.7 |

KEY RIVAL

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Škoda Fabia 1.2 TSI 110 SE | |
| P11D price | £14,600 |
| BIK tax band (2017-2018) | 21% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £613 |
| Class 1A NIC | £423 |
| Annual VED | £140 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £3,825/26% |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 9.27 |
| AFR (ppm) | 11 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 26.02ppm |

Running cost data supplied by
KeeResources (4yr/80K)



The Swift comes with either five-speed manual or six-speed auto

without the SHVS system, which puts CO₂ emissions at 114g/km.

The entry-level model at launch will be the SZ3, which comes with standard LED daytime running lights, DAB and Bluetooth connectivity, air-con, electric front windows and privacy glass.

The SZ-T (not available with the 1.2 Dualjet) adds a rear-view camera, smartphone link display, 16-inch alloys and front fog lights. The range-topping SZ5 has upgraded audio, sat-nav, LED headlamps with high-beam assist, adaptive cruise control, automatic air-con, keyless entry and start, reach-adjustable steering wheel and rear-electric windows.

We were only able to try the 1.0 Boosterjet SHVS, which was nippy in the 925kg car. The hybrid system is a motor assist and is unobtrusive. It doesn't seem to work very hard, but it certainly pays off with lower CO₂.

The Swift is still a nimble performer around town and is very easy to drive. The interior has been brought up to date, and despite being a small car with a small engine, it is still capable of comfort at high speed.

Prices will be announced in May, but spec-for-spec it will be positioned mid-way between the Ignis and Baleno, putting the entry-level 1.2 SZ3 at around £10,700, and our well-equipped test model at around £13,700.

FleetNews PORTFOLIO

WHAT WE DO IN YOUR INDUSTRY

Fleet News magazine

The leading business publication for the fleet sector, offering insight, analysis, best practice and in-depth profiles of fleets and suppliers every fortnight. But don't take our word for it: 96% of readers say *Fleet News* is the most useful fleet publication (*Fleet News* reader survey). Every issue is packed with information that helps companies to run efficient and effective fleets – and our readership of 16,000 is restricted to named decision-makers, running fleets of 10-plus vehicles.

Commercial Fleet magazine

Commercial Fleet offers insight into the world of light commercial vehicles and trucks to provide operators with detailed analysis on key topics such as operations, safety, remarketing and the environment. Case studies in every issue provide best practice advice to help you to improve your efficiency. The magazine is supported by the commercialfleet.org website and events.



Fleet events

Fleet News events are the biggest and best in the sector. Our annual awards night attracts more than 1,500 people; the FN50 Dinner sees 950 leasing, manufacturer, rental and supplier companies networking and *Commercial Fleet* Summit provide insight into key areas of fleet operation; monthly roundtables enable 10-15 fleets to discuss issues and share solutions.



Driving Business magazine

This quarterly magazine is sent to managing directors and finance directors at 25,000 small to medium enterprises (SMEs) that are running fewer than 50 vehicles. Focusing on the key elements of running cars and vans, *Driving Business* provides practical advice to reduce cost and improve safety with a minimum of time and effort.

Websites and newsletters

The *Fleet News* website is an extensive library of best practice advice, fleet case studies, news and tools. Compare car and van running costs, check how much tax employees will pay and find out which models use the least fuel with our easy-to-use tools. We also send *Ignition*, a monthly newsletter which contains car reviews and interviews not included with our print magazine.

Fleet Leasing magazine

Fleet Leasing provides insight and analysis to board level executives, senior management and regional sales staff at contract hire and leasing companies. Its objective is to inform and educate about fleet trends, new models and technological developments, once a quarter, supported by a website regularly updated with the latest leasing news.

Bespoke publications

Magazines, supplements, brochures and digital products are produced for commercial partners. These bespoke publications inform fleets about companies and topics relevant to their business. They include manufacturer and supplier reports, in which *Fleet News* journalists interview key personnel to unearth the developments of interest to fleet operators.

MAZDA 6

2.2D 150PS SE-L-NAV

Facelifted 6 focuses on better refinement and handling



The metallic Soul Red finish is a £680 option

COSTS

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| P11D price | £24,100 |
| BIK tax band | 23% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £1,109 |
| Class 1A NIC | £765 |
| Annual VED | £140 then £140 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £6,275 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 7.89 |
| AFR (ppm) | 13 |
| Running cost (ppm) | 35.06 |

SPEC

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Engine (cc) | 2,191 |
| Power (PS) | 150 |
| Torque (Nm) | 380 |
| CO ₂ emissions (g/km) | 107 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 68.9 |
| Max speed (mph) | 130 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 9.1 |
| Manufacturer mpg | 68.9 |
| Real-world mpg* | 49.2 |
| Test mpg | 46.5 |
| Current mileage | 1,301 |

Running cost data supplied by
KeeResources (4yr/80k)
* Data supplied by Equi Index

By Leanne Patterson

The newest addition to our fleet brings with it a degree of déjà-vu given that in 2013 we ran the then-new Mazda 6 on long-term test.

Having undergone two facelifts – we thought we'd give it another try to see if it can still shape up compared to competition from the Vauxhall Insignia and Škoda Superb.

Visually very little has changed – our new car even comes in the same shade of metallic Soul Red (£680 option), but that is no bad thing as the Mazda 6 is a fine looking saloon.

The real difference in this model is under the skin. Mazda continues to prioritise driver engagement in its cars, so the focus has been on improving refinement and handling.

Mazda has developed new technology called G-Vectoring Control which moderates engine torque while cornering. It allows the car to optimise its weight balance as the driver steers and ensures the 6 delivers nimble handling.

Two engines are available: a 2.0-litre Skyactiv-G petrol with 145PS or 165PS and a 2.2-litre 150PS or 175PS Skyactiv-D diesel.

Our model is the 2.2-litre 150PS diesel in SE-L-Nav trim costing £24,295. This is the most popular model chosen by fleets and it emits 107g/km of CO₂ with average fuel consumption of 68.9mpg.

By avoiding the trend to downsize, Mazda's diesel is now one of the largest in the sector. Rivals like the Insignia, Mondeo and Superb are all available with much lower-capacity engines. However, in like-for-like comparisons the difference in benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax is marginal. A similarly specced 1.5-litre Mondeo would only save the driver £100 a year.

The advantage of the larger engine is strong performance: 0-62mph takes 9.1 seconds while 380Nm of torque ensures there is adequate pull in all six gears.

Ride quality is excellent and its low driving position gives an engaging drive. Both front and rear passengers have plenty of leg room, while the boot is generous at 480 litres.

MINI CLUBMAN
COOPER 2.0D 150

The Mini Clubman's most distinctive feature is its split

rear doors. They might be popular with Austin Mini fans but I still prefer a traditional boot lid. In a crowded supermarket car park I often have to open one door and put the trolley next to the closed door to load the boot, which isn't ideal.

Boot space is a reasonable 360 litres with the seats up and 1,250 litres with them down, which is bigger than the rival Mercedes-Benz A-Class (341 litres and 1,157 litres) but smaller than the Volkswagen Golf (380 litres and 1,270 litres).

Our Clubman has a number of handy options, including a through-loading system (£200), allowing a 40:20:40 configuration on the rear bench and a luggage compartment separating net (£155) to stop items sliding forward. It also has a variable boot floor (which is included in our Chili pack or as a separate storage compartment pack option for £210). Shame about those doors.

Sarah Tooze

VAUXHALL ZAFIRA
TOURER SRI 1.6CDTI

Interior space has to be a priority when buying a

seven-seater. It's unlikely a driver would choose a people carrier for anything other than practical reasons so leg room and load space are key.

In the Zafira Tourer each of the second row seats slides back and forth independently, enabling rear legroom and bootspace adjustment.

The two extra seats that pop up from the boot floor are a bit cramped, so they're best used for children, smaller adults or short journeys. Access to the rearmost seats is gained by simply tilting the second row outer seats forward.

The Zafira Tourer has a 'seats flat' load space of 1,860 litres which is in line with rivals (Volkswagen Touran: 1,857 and Citroën C4 Picasso: 1,851). Stowing the rear load cover is fiddly as it slides into a recess under the boot floor. But at least there is somewhere to keep it which cannot be said for all people carriers.

Luke Neal

TEST TIMELINE



AT A GLANCE – THE REST OF OUR FLEET

Fiat Tipo



Seat Ateca



Ford S-Max

Land Rover
Discovery Sport

SAMANTHA EARL

GENERAL MANAGER PERTEMPS DRIVER TRAINING & GLOUCESTER RECRUITMENT BRANCH

Work-life balance is especially important for Earl who has created a successful national driver training business and says her five-year-old is the reason she never stops trying

Away from the office and aside from enjoying quality time with my son, I love entertaining my family and friends, and booking weekends away exploring new places, always including a good pub or an afternoon tea.

A pivotal moment in my life was having my son and learning to juggle my career with being a mother. I am consistently learning as I go to create a workable work-life balance but having my son gave me a reason to never stop trying.

My earliest memory associated with a car was my dad buying a new Ford Sierra. I can remember thinking how flash it looked with the blue line around the body of the paintwork.

My pet hate is lateness. I find it intolerable. I don't like the unpreparedness sometimes involved in people's excuses for being late.

The vehicles I'd like most in my garage are an Audi R8, Jaguar XKR and any Maserati.

I think I will be remembered by acquaintances as the 'girl who done good'. However, by my loved ones and people I have worked with I hope they would say 'she was a genuine people's person with a big heart who impacted on my life'.

I read lots of children's books to my five-year-old son, I wouldn't recommend one certain book, I would recommend any parents to take the time to read with their children each night, they are precious moments.

If I was Prime Minister for the day I would look at a child care reform that supports households with full-time working parents from the day they return to work.

I'd tell my 18-year-old self to slow down, enjoy the moments. Life goes quickly enough... it's not a race.

My favourite film is the *Bodyguard*. I love the music and the glitz and glam.



First fleet role My first role relating to fleet was working at a used car dealership at the young age of 16, managing the intake of ex-fleet vehicles for re-sale. I like the fast pace of fleet and logistics and the platform it provides to make positive change.

Career goals at Per Temps I am working towards extending our customer base in our national driver training business, enabling us to invest more in training the next generation of LGV drivers for free.

Biggest achievement in business My biggest achievement so far has been the creation of a national driver training business, which comprises the award and delivery of driver training to the largest fleet in the UK – The Royal Mail Group.

Biggest career influence Director John Poliquin has influenced my career since taking me on as the youngest branch manager, aged 22. He supported my plan to create a national driver training business. I have learnt people management skills from him, and I hope that I inspire my people as he does me.

Biggest mistake in business It was in my first job at 16. A customer who had just bought an expensive BMW had booked it in for repair and requested a courtesy car. I chickened out of telling him the only one I had was a Daewoo Matiz. Needless to say when he came in he wasn't impressed. I learned to always manage customers' expectations and be upfront.

Leadership style I lead from the front and muck in to get the job done. I decided never to have an office of my own so sit out in the main offices with my people. I want my team to enjoy coming to work. Life is too short to wake up each day and not enjoy what you do.

If I wasn't in fleet I would have been a police officer.

Childhood ambition To be a leader.

Next issue: Stuart Burman, managing director, Teletrac Navman



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Model shown is a Transit Custom Limited 270 L1 H1 2.0 TDCi 130PS Automatic.

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the model shown are: urban 37.2 (7.6), extra urban 42.8 (6.6), combined 40.4 (7.0). Official CO₂ emission 182g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.



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