News HMRC FIGURES SHOW **BIG INCREASE** IN BIK TAX REVENUE

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Mercedes-Benz Vans

Changing the focus from selling vans to selling services

Supplier relationships

Fleet chiefs reveal how they get best value from their partners

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Fewer paying company car tax, but Treasury takes extra £360m

Average figure paid per employee increases by 27% year-on-year, says HMRC

By Gareth Roberts

The amount of cash collected by the Treasury in company car tax has increased by more than 24% year-on-year – some £360 million – yet the number of employees receiving the benefit fell by 20,000 over the same period, newly-released data shows.

The provisional figures, from HMRC, highlight how the Government is raising record revenues from the company car market by imposing higher taxes on drivers.

The data shows that there were 940,000 employees paying benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax on a company car in 2016/17 – a 2% fall on the 960,000 recorded the previous financial year.

NATIONAL INSURANCE UP

The amount of national insurance contributions (NICs) paid by employers on company cars also increased. Employers paid £630m in 2016/17, compared to £600m the previous year – up 5%.

BIK tax and NICs were collectively worth £2.48 billion to the Treasury, compared to £2.09bn in 2015/16 – an increase of 19% or £390m.

Compare that to 2012/13, when BIK and NICs were worth £1.75bn to the Treasury – some £730m less – yet the number of employees with a company car was exactly the same at 940,000.

The record figure of £2.48bn means that the average annual tax yield on a company car was £2,638 in 2016/17, compared to £2,166 in 2015/16, a 22% or £472 year-on-year increase.

> *"BIK tax and national insurance contributions were collectively worth £2.48bn to the Treasury"*

At the start of the decade (2009/10), a company car was worth, on average, £1,680 in BIK and NICs revenues to the Treasury, some £1.63bn (£850m less).

The higher tax take between 2015/16 and 2016/17 can, in part, be explained by the increase reported in the taxable value over the same period.

The taxable value of the company car benefit was worth £4.57bn, up from £4.32bn the previous year, according to HMRC figures.

However, the vast majority on the revenue increase has been down to the annual two percentage point increase in BIK rates, first introduced in 2015-16 (in previous years there had typically been a one percentage point increase).

Furthermore, these higher incremental increases in BIK would have been decided in combination with the removal of the three percentage point diesel supplement, which was announced in the 2012 Budget and expected to take effect from April 2016.

However, shortly before it was due to be axed, the then Chancellor, George Osborne, announced he was delaying its removal until 2021 "in light of the slower-than-expected introduction of more rigorous EU emissions testing" (fleetnews.co.uk, November 25, 2015).

Two years later, current Chancellor, Philip Hammond, announced he was raising it to 4% from April this year (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22, 2017).

Analysis of HMRC data for 2016/17, when the diesel supplement should have been removed, shows that the annual average company car tax paid by drivers was £1,968 (£164 per month). That was 27% higher than the £1,552 (£129 per month) paid in 2015/16.

Even the fact that company car drivers are choosing cars with lower CO_2 values has failed to thwart the increase in revenues.

In 2015/16, the last year for which figures are available from HMRC, 83% of company cars emitted 134g/km of CO_2 or less, an increase from 77% of cars in 2014-15.

There is an established strong reducing trend in the level of emissions. In 2002-03, 58% of company cars had emission values in excess of 165g/km; in 2015-16 this had reduced to just 3%.

The emission-dependent scale of appropriate percentages for company cars is one of many factors incentivising the manufacture and purchase of low emission vehicles, says HMRC.

WLTP IMPACT ON CO_2

The impact of the new emissions testing regime suggests Treasury coffers could be swollen even further.

All cars are being transitioned to the WLTP (Worldwide harmonised Light vehicle Test Procedure), with newly type-approved models subject to the test since last September, while all other new cars must be rehomologated by this September.

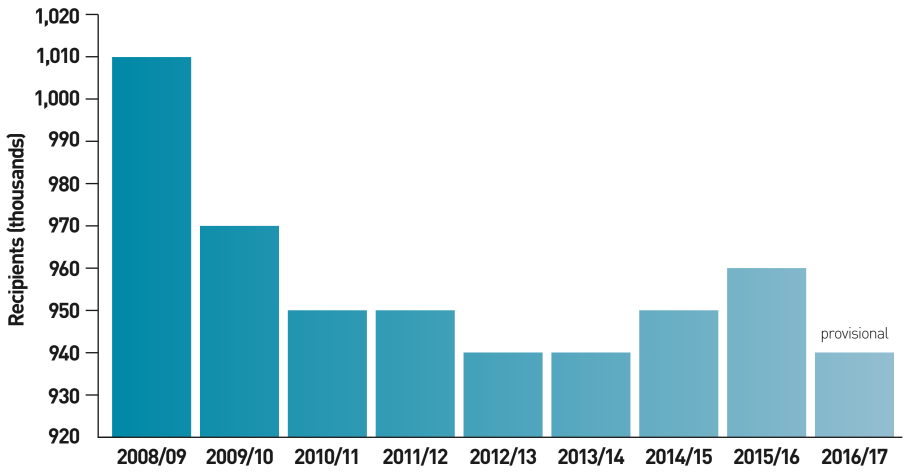
WLTP replaced NEDC (New European Drive Cycle), which had been criticised for failing to represent real-world fuel consumption.

Industry analysts are predicting CO_2 figures derived from the more stringent test could be up to 30% higher than those produced under the old regime.

These figures will not apply to first-year vehicle excise duty (VED) and company car tax until April 2020, while the Government has promised to reveal how it will help fleets mitigate the expected increase in November's Budget.

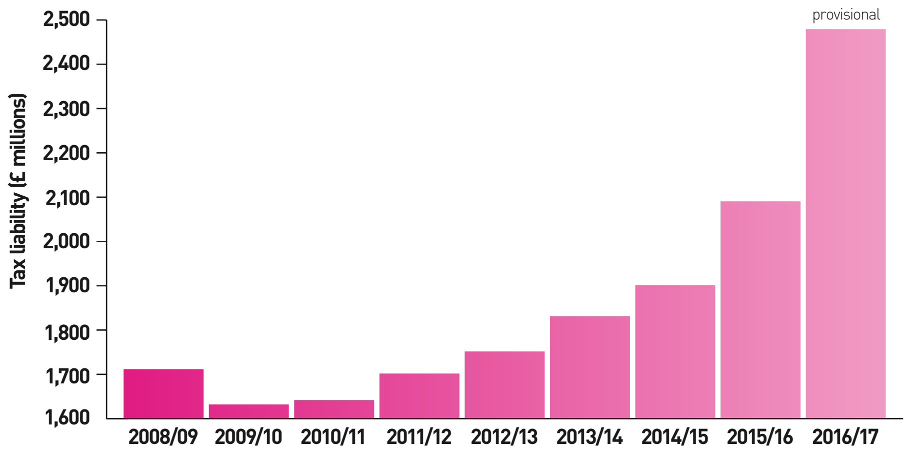
However, fleets are already seeing vehicles that have undergone the new test being given a new 'NEDC-correlated' value for tax purposes that is, on average, 10% higher, putting some cars into higher BIK tax brackets (*Fleet News*, May 31).

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES PAYING COMPANY CAR TAX



Source: HMRC

TOTAL COMPANY CAR TAX TAKE



Tax revenues shown are a combination of benefit-in-kind tax paid by employees on company cars and national insurance contributions paid by employers.

Source: HMRC

'FREE' FUEL NUMBERS DOWN

Drivers receiving excess mileage allowances and 'free' fuel has again declined, according to HMRC data.

An excess mileage allowance is a payment which exceeds the approved mileage allowance payment (AMAP) rate for staff reclaiming business mileage in their own cars, the so-called grey fleet.

The number of recipients of taxable excess mileage allowance payments held steady until 2009/10, with a slight fall in 2010/11 from 550,000 to 510,000 and then a much larger fall (to 380,000) in 2011/12.

The numbers receiving a mileage allowance in excess of the approved rate reduced in 2011/12, following an increase in the rate that year.

The number of recipients has continued to decrease, falling to 210,000 in 2015/16. The last year when figures are available for, 2016/17, shows a new low of 180,000.

Since 2007/08, the taxable value has also fallen steadily from £200m to £50m in 2016/17. This will have been partly down to the public sector revising its rates to bring them in line with what is accepted by HMRC.

However, separate research conducted by *Fleet News* last year, showed that one in three councils paid employees who drive their own car for work above AMAP rates in 2016-17 (fleetnews.co.uk, November 14, 2017).

The number of employees receiving 'free' fuel has also fallen, with 160,000 employees receiving the benefit in 2016/17; 20,000 fewer than the previous financial year. HMRC says that the reduction in car fuel benefit is likely to reflect rising fuel prices.

For example, the Mercedes-Benz E 220d saloon AMG Line that *Fleet News* has on test has increased by three BIK tax bands since delivery, with CO_2 emissions rising from 112g/km to 127g/km. A 40% taxpayer will pay an additional £478 per year, with a business paying £165 more in NICs.

FUEL DUTY INCREASE

The fleet industry has also been subjected to a volatile fuel market, while seeing company car tax revenues rise.

Fuel duty has not risen since January 2011, when it was increased from 58.19p per litre to 58.95p per litre. It was cut by 1p per litre in the Budget two months later, and has been frozen since.

However, while the freeze has cost the Treasury approximately £7bn in lost tax revenue, pump price volatility has still seen fuel duty yields increase year-on-year.

The Government received £26.6bn in fuel duty in 2012/13, increasing by £300m each year for the next two years before reaching £27.6bn in 2015/17. The latest figures available, for 2016/17, show revenues increased again year-on-year to £27.9bn.

Fuel duty receipts could increase further still, with reports suggesting that the Government is considering ending the fuel duty freeze (fleetnews.co.uk, July 4).

In terms of fuel type, 81% of company cars in 2015/16 used diesel, with 19% using other fuel types, predominantly petrol. In 2002-03 only 33% of company cars used diesel.

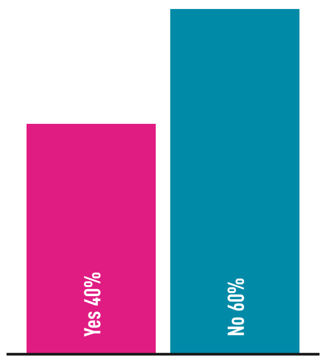
The fuel type figures HMRC publishes next year, for 2016/17, are expected to show a shift away from diesel in the wake of the VW Group emissions scandal and mounting concerns over air quality.

Meanwhile, company cars powered solely by electricity were reported by 2,500 individuals in 2015-16. A provisional estimate for the number pure EV company car drivers in 2016-17 is 3,100.

FLEET FACTS AND FIGURES

OPINION POLL

Is your organisation considering removing company cars in favour of cash, regardless of whether job-need or perk?



FleetNews view:

Our poll suggests the lack of clarity over future company car tax rates is forcing a significant number of fleet operators to consider removing company cars in favour of cash. Our view is the company car remains an attractive employee benefit, but Government must provide information on the future tax treatment of vehicles sooner rather than later.

This week's poll: If you have a hybrid car, how often do you drive it in electric mode?
fleetnews.co.uk/polls

MOST COMMENTED ONLINE

Decline in drivers prosecuted for using their mobile phone behind the wheel

fleetnews.co.uk/news

UK AVERAGE FUEL PRICES

Diesel (ppl) 129.18↑
Unleaded (ppl) 126.16↑

fleetnews.co.uk/costs/fuel-cost-calculator

The WLTP test is intended to provide emissions figures that are more realistic

Zenith opts to suspend non-WLTP vehicles from its quoting system

Leasing provider 'decides to make a stand' over confusion on car availability

By Stephen Briers

Zenith has removed all cars that are not yet approved under the new World-wide harmonised Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) from its quoting platform.

The move means fleets are no longer able to request quotes or place orders on a wide range of models, with all manufacturers affected to some degree.

The UK's eighth largest leasing provider has taken the decision due to "all the confusion" around the new testing regime. In recent weeks, it has been unable to place around 70% of vehicle orders due to manufacturers suspending production while they move to model-year 19 vehicles that need to undergo WLTP testing.

"We've seen a material drop in the number of vehicles available to order over the past two-to-three months, and now have around 40% of the vehicles normally available that are WLTP-approved," said Ian Hughes, managing director of Zenith.

"We expect this percentage to increase quickly as manufacturers complete their testing and launch compliant models. As soon as new model data is released, we will add it to our systems."

He added: "We believe this approach is the most transparent way to ensure that our drivers order with confidence and receive the car they're anticipating. It's really important that we do the right thing by our customers.

"No one is giving us the clarity we need, hence us deciding to take a stand."

Where a driver is unable to complete the order process before their contract end date, Zenith is offering an informal extension while they wait for a WLTP-approved model to become available.

Hughes said: "We've identified that there is an issue and quickly taken action to minimise any further impact on our customers and drivers. We will be updating drivers on WLTP by placing a notification on their quoting platforms and will encourage them to talk to their account manager if their choice of car isn't available to order."

"As soon as new model data is released, we will add it to our systems"

Ian Hughes, Zenith

All new-launch cars have been tested under WLTP since September last year, but every new car registered from this September will need to be approved (notwithstanding the 10% deroga-tion allowance announced by Government).

Manufacturers are racing to get vehicles approved in time, but some are further ahead than others, with hundreds of models still not tested. In some cases, such as the BMW 330e, they have decided to suspend production.

WLTP is intended to provide a more realistic fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions figure than the outgoing New European Driving Cycle (NEDC) test. This will be recalculated back to an 'NEDC-correlated' amount using the European-approved equation CO2MPAS until 2020 for benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax and vehicle excise duty (VED) purposes after which the full WLTP figure will be used.

In cases where vehicles have been re-tested between order and delivery, drivers are receiving cars with a higher level of CO_2 emissions than expected, which puts them in higher BIK bands.

Some leasing companies are taking their own actions to address the issue. Marshall Leasing, for example, has added a disclaimer to its order form, warning drivers that the CO_2 value cannot be confirmed until after delivery of the vehicle and that it is the figure on the V5 registration document that will be used for BIK tax, "the impact of which is beyond our control".

Fleets and franchised dealers have privately told *Fleet News* that the Volkswagen Group is lagging behind other manufacturers, with hundreds of models yet to be tested. Dealers, in particular, expect to have fewer cars to sell in the final quarter of the year.

Volkswagen has said it anticipates interrup-tions to production as it attempts to get its vehi-cles through WLTP.

GOINGS AND COMINGS AT ZENITH

Zenith has closed the former Leasedrive office in Crowthorne, Berkshire, with the loss of 61 jobs. The company took on the site, as well as one in Solihull, following its merger with Leasedrive in 2014 and established it as its rental hub.

Ian Hughes said customer relationships would now be handled by its Solihull and Leeds offices, while the rental operation also transfers to Leeds. Both moves have resulted in the creation of 54 new jobs.

"We took the decision to close Crowthorne to optimise our office locations," said Hughes.

Zenith employed a work placement specialist to help staff with writing CVs, preparing for interviews and coaching for job applications. Around three-quarters have already secured new employment, while Zenith has pledged to continue supporting the remaining former employees in their search for jobs.

BP buys Chargemaster to ensure rapid progress in EV capabilities

Deal mirrors that of fuel rivals eager to expand and diversify forecourt offering

By Gareth Roberts

Fuel giant BP says its £130 million acquisition of Chargemaster is an important step in scaling up and deploying an ultra-fast charging network on its UK forecourts.

Founded in 2008, Chargemaster established Polar, the largest public charging network in the UK, with more than 6,500 charging points serving 40,000-plus customers.

The company, which will now be rebranded as BP Chargemaster, is also a leading supplier of home charging points and has strong links with manufacturers as the charging partner for a number of car brands in the UK.

Tufan Erginbilgic, chief executive of BP Downstream, said: "We believe that fast and convenient charging is critical to support the successful adoption of electric vehicles (EVs).

"Combining BP's and Chargemaster's complementary expertise, experience and assets is an important step towards offering fast and ultra-fast charging at BP sites across the UK and to BP becoming the leading provider of energy to low carbon vehicles, on the road or at home."

The number of EVs is anticipated to increase rapidly in coming decades. By 2040, BP estimates there will be 12 million EVs on UK roads, up from around 135,000 in 2017, and the deal will allow EV charge points to be rolled out much more quickly to its network of 1,200 petrol stations.

The move mirrors a deal made by rival Shell in October last year, which bought car charging company NewMotion, with more than 30,000 private home charge points as well as 50,000 public sites.

BP had also recently invested $20m (£15m) in ultra-fast charging battery company StoreDot, which has developed a lithium ion-based battery technology that enables ultra-fast charging for the mobile and industrial markets.

Using this technology, StoreDot is also developing a new type of electric-car battery that will aim to achieve a charging experience that is comparable to the time spent to refuel a traditional car (fleetnews.co.uk, May 23).

Erginbilgic said: "Ultra-fast charging is at the heart of BP's electrification strategy. StoreDot's technology shows real potential for car batteries that can charge in the same time it takes to fill a gas tank."

Chargemaster's Polar network has more than 6,500 charging points

The total number of locations which have a rapid public charging point installed in the UK currently stands at 1,099, with the number of rapid devices at those locations 1,631, giving access to some 3,600 connectors, according to Zap-Map.

Overall, it says the total number of locations that have a public charging point installed is 5,907, with 9,916 devices giving access to almost 17,000 connectors.

To give an idea of how quickly new charging points are brought online, Zap-Map said that there have been 418 new connectors added to its database over the past 30 days.

The development of convenient and innovative EV charging technologies and networks is a key part of BP's strategy to advance the energy transition. It says it is committed to developing new offers to meet changing customer demand and growing new businesses and supporting opportunities for customers to reduce their emissions.

For David Martell, chief executive of Chargemaster, the acquisition of his company by BP marks a milestone in the move towards low carbon motoring in the UK.

"I am truly excited to lead the Chargemaster team into a new era backed by the strength and scale of BP, which will help us maintain our market-leading position and grow the Polar network to support the large range of exciting new electric vehicles that are coming to market in the next couple of years," he said.

Harminder Singh, director of power at Global Data, told *Fleet News* that the growth in charging infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth in EVs.

"This highlights the need for major players to enter the space, and the fastest way for them to do this is through merger and acquisition," he said.

"As EV penetration increases, consumers will be using different ways to charge their cars – some using the public infrastructure, while others preferring to have charging points at home. This presents a risk of stranded infrastructure for pure-play EV charging companies, which is why merging with a large energy retailer is an increasingly attractive proposition.

"Oil and gas retailers have the inherent advantage of an established network of filling stations, which they can easily leverage to get into a dominant position in the EV charging market to remain competitive."

Upon completion of the transaction, Chargemaster employees will continue to be employed by BP Chargemaster or its subsidiaries. BP Chargemaster will operate as a wholly-owned BP entity.

"Ultra-fast charging is at the heart of BP's electrification strategy"

Tufan Erginbilgic, BP Downstream

Diesel still has role says minister in apparent Government about-face

Demonised fuel remains a 'perfectly sensible option' for at-work drivers

By Gareth Roberts

The Government has launched a staunch defence of diesel, insisting the fuel has a valuable role to play in the future, especially for company car and van drivers.

Maligned by many, diesel has faced a perfect storm. The VW emissions scandal, air quality concerns and consumer confusion have all combined to damage the market.

However, transport secretary Chris Grayling ditched the anti-diesel rhetoric, choosing instead to give the beleaguered fuel his backing.

"If you're driving long distances and are out and about on the road for work, diesel is a perfectly sensible option," the transport secretary said.

The Government, according to Grayling, has set an "ambitious and achievable" target of every new car being 'effectively' zero emission by 2040. But, he stressed, it wanted that 'road to zero' to be industry- and consumer-led, and technology neutral.

"Diesels can still play a valuable role in reducing CO_2 emissions during that transition period to a low-emission future," he said.

"They can play and will continue to play an important role."

However, he told delegates at the annual summit of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) that diesel engines must continue getting cleaner.

It remains to be seen whether the Government's softening of attitude towards the fuel type will be reflected in the tax regime.

The promised removal of the then 3% diesel company car supplement, from April 2016, was reversed in the wake of the VW emissions scandal, and subsequently increased to 4% from April 2018 (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22, 2017).

Ian Robertson, who focuses on political issues affecting the auto industry in the UK for BMW Group, said: "Diesel has been somewhat demonised, I think, completely wrongly and politically it has become an agenda here in the UK, in Germany and in France. It has a definite part to play, particularly in the reduction of CO_2 and the 'road to zero'."

Doug Hyett, national fleet sales manager at

"They (diesels) can play and will continue to play an important role"

Chris Grayling, DfT

Volkswagen UK, said that the manufacturer was spending some €50 billion (£44bn) on battery technology in the next two years and €20bn (£17.6bn) on electric vehicles, with an expectation that by 2021 plug-in vehicles will account for 10% of UK brand sales.

However, amid "a lot of fuss in the press and chat around diesel", according to Hyett, Volkswagen's investment in Euro 6 engine emission technology was "immense".

"Fleet fuels are changing with a shift towards battery electric vehicle and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, but diesel is still a huge part of the mix," he told listeners to a webinar organised by fleet representative body ACFO (fleetnews.co.uk, June 25).

"The modern diesel engine is an indispensable part of the solution as it has improved dramatically over the years in terms of efficiency and environmental performance."

Nevertheless, diesel new car sales have been hit hard over the past couple of years, with a decline YOY of 219,309 units in 2017 – a fall of 17.1%.

Academics have suggested that sales could fall further, with diesel's share of the UK market falling from a high of around 50% to just 15% by 2025.

A new study, from consulting firm Alix Partners, suggests diesel's market share across Europe could be as little as 5% by 2030. It has already fallen from 52% to 45% between 2015 and 2017, the firm says.

Diesel's decline has already affected carbon tailpipe emissions, which rose last year for the first time since 1997. New cars averaged 121.04g/km, up 0.8% on 2016 (fleetnews.co.uk, January 10).

Some manufacturers, swayed by the negativity surrounding the fuel, have already decided to pull the plug on future models. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), Toyota, Nissan and Volvo have all outlined global plans to end production.

Marten Levenstam, senior vice president for product strategy and business ownership at Volvo Cars, acknowledged the debate over diesel was a "complicated issue".

"It's a trade off," he said. "[Diesel] is low on CO_2, but it is higher in NOx."

It is also becoming much more difficult to deliver further air quality improvements from diesel engines, explained Levenstam, adding it was also "extremely costly".

According to SMMT figures, some 2% of the new car market is currently plug-in, while just more than 0.5% is pure electric.

The Government is due to publish its 'Road to Zero' strategy soon.

DVSA will allow manufacturers just 10 days to issue safety recalls

Agency has clarified powers in wake of tardiness shown by Vauxhall and BMW

By Tom Seymour

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will now give manufacturers a 10-day deadline before it legally forces them to recall vehicles or face prosecution.

The clarification on the DVSA's powers has followed in the wake of investigations into Vauxhall's Zafira model B fires and BMW's recall of 312,000 vehicles due to an electrical fault caused by a B+ battery connector.

In terms of the BMW recall, fleet operators are unlikely to be affected as the vehicles hit with the problems were built between 2007 and August 2011, although it could still create an issue for any grey fleet vehicles.

BMW first issued a recall of 36,000 vehicles in April 2017 after the death of Narayan Gurung, a former Gurkha soldier who was killed when his car crashed into a tree after he swerved to avoid a broken down BMW.

A further 312,000 vehicles were recalled on May 9 this year, the same day the BBC *Watchdog* programme exposed the issue.

The DVSA now has a different process when approaching manufacturer safety-critical recalls driven by clarity over what powers it has.

DVSA chief executive Gareth Llewellyn told a Transport Select Committee meeting on June 26 the process needed to change as "there have been occasions like with Vauxhall and BMW, where the flow of information wasn't the same as it was with other cases".

He said: "We now send a letter to a manufacturer to say the DVSA will be legally forcing a recall within 10 days, which will be made public unless the manufacturer can prove why the recall isn't necessary.

"It then triggers the potential for the DVSA to prosecute the manufacturer if it doesn't issue a recall and fails to respond adequately within the 10 days.

"The DVSA can also write to all of the affected customers to tell them about the fault and to say that it has asked the manufacturer to recall affected vehicles, but it has failed to do so."

Furthermore, the DVSA wants more influence and involvement with manufacturers' initial risk assessment of a fault to determine whether a technical or safety critical recall is necessary.

However, Llewellyn said there are hundreds of recalls a year in the UK, the majority of which are not safety-critical.

He said: "With most manufacturers, the vast majority of recalls work really well.

"But we want to be very clear that there's reputational damage if I, as a regulator, force you to undertake a safety recall on what can be a large fleet."

"DVSA can also write to all of the affected customers"

Gareth Llewellyn, DVSA

FLEET RECALL PROTOCOL

Once a safety recall is issued, data is released by the DVSA so any vehicle can be checked on its website. For fleet owners, operators and businesses that provide fleet services, a vehicle with an outstanding recall would see insurance voided.

Failure to check a car for an outstanding safety recall could also lead to a fine of up to £20,000 and up to three months in prison.

Recalls can sometimes be missed when the vehicle is defleeted and sold into the used market. The BVRLA was working on a free safety recall notification system called ReCare back in 2013 for the leasing industry but the project did not gain sufficient support from manufacturers and was later closed.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) has since launched its Vehicle Safety Recall Service which allows fleets and leasing companies to monitor outstanding recalls. Results are usually returned within an hour but there is a charge for the service.

Jim Hannah, Ogilvie Fleet operations director, said leasing companies usually deal directly with manufacturers and communicate their recall strategy to manage the repair process with fleets.

Hannah said: "We have been trying to get recall data handled through the 1Link platform as this is where more than 95% of manufacturers and leasing companies do their day-to-day work."

In the absence of that option, Hannah said in Ogilvie's case, recall data is taken directly from the manufacturer and then a notice is sent to the relevant fleet manager.

The recall progress is then tracked through an email trail and once the repair work has been completed it is shown as complete in a vehicle's history file within the fleet management system.

Plumber Gary Smith (not pictured) won a worker's rights appeal against Pimlico Plumbers

Union calls for law enforcement after plumber wins court appeal

Latest verdict not expected to prompt reaction from 'gig economy' companies

By Tom Seymour

A landmark verdict in the Supreme Court for a 'gig economy' worker is not expected to spark wider changes among companies using self-employed drivers.

A plumber working solely for Pimlico Plumbers for six years was ruled by the court to be entitled to workers' rights to get sick and holiday pay, despite being VAT-registered and paying self-employment tax.

The employment tribunal on June 13 ruled that Gary Smith was a worker, rather than self-employed. Charlie Mullins, chief executive and founder of Pimlico Plumbers, said the decision "can only lead to a tsunami of claims".

However, while individual tribunals are being heard and cases have been won against companies including Uber, Hermes, Addison Lee and DX Delivery, the companies themselves are not making wholesale changes to their employment business models.

Uber was recently given a probationary licence to continue operating in London for 15 months, although Transport for London's main issue was with passenger safety, rather than the working rights of drivers.

Uber has introduced an insurance policy to cover sick pay and maternity leave, but maintains it is an app, not an employer or taxi company.

The GMB union is taking legal action against Lloyd Link and Prospect Commercials, delivery companies used by Amazon. *Fleet News* contacted both to ask if the Pimlico ruling would prompt changes to how they employ drivers, but they declined to comment.

Addison Lee and Hermes also would not comment on whether they were considering changing their approach to how they use self-employed driver contractors.

However, a Hermes spokesperson said: "We will carefully review the decision, but in the meantime, it's business as usual."

Addison Lee said it was committed to "maintaining a flexible and fair relationship with more than 3,800 drivers".

Alan Lewis, partner at employment law specialist Irwin Mitchell, said the Pimlico Plumbers case was not a game changer for the wider industry.

He said: "The court did not take the opportunity to provide clarity around the difficult concepts of mutuality of service. This means that cases will continue to be argued on their specific facts and, for businesses that rely on self-employed contracts, that means further uncertainty."

He said it is not necessarily a 'win' for gig economy workers in industries with self-employed drivers seeking to challenge their employment status.

Lewis added: "Pimlico's plumbers do not operate a gig model and the implications for Uber, City Sprint, etc. may be limited, although the publicity around this case may encourage other 'self-employed' contractors to challenge their legal status."

While companies may not be moving away from the self-employed driver model, Mullins remains convinced many drivers will challenge employment terms as a result of his company losing the appeal at the Supreme Court.

Mullins said: "This was a poor decision that will potentially leave thousands of companies, employing millions of contractors, wondering if one day soon they will get a nasty surprise."

Mick Rix, GMB national officer, said the decision by the court vindicates what the trade union has been saying for some time. He said: "It's not new employment laws that are needed. It is enforcement. The Government can sort this mess out by instructing HMRC to class individuals as workers unless companies can prove otherwise. It should not be up to individuals to take on powerful companies."

HR specialist Human Capital Department said businesses claiming employees are self-employed as a tactic to avoid tax and national insurance will start to fall into line as prosecutions continue. Managing director Peter Lawrence, said: "The case has set a precedent on whether or not someone is an employee or self-employed."

Seb Maley, Qdos Contractor chief executive, concluded: "The Pimlico verdict is a reminder of just how important it is for companies to be confident of a worker's employment status, regardless of whether they are engaged as an employee, a gig economy worker or a self-employed contractor."

"What matters is clarity, and that each party in the contractual chain has a mutual understanding of the worker's employment status and the rights he or she is entitled to before the arrangement begins."

"(It) can only lead to a tsunami of claims"

Charlie Mullins, Pimlico Plumbers

THE BIG PICTURE

By Stephen Briers, editor, *Fleet News*

After a couple of years of growth, the number of people paying company car benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax has fallen – provisionally at least.

HMRC is notoriously slow to issue data. The provisional figure is for 2016/17, one year ago. Think that's bad? It has only just released company car CO_2 emissions and fuel type figures for 2015/16!

How Treasury can set strategy on such outdated information, heaven only knows.

While the number of people paying BIK has fallen from 960,000 to 940,000, the amount they contributed to Treasury has risen from £1.49 billion to £1.85bn.

"No indications from Government that it will be resetting BIK thresholds"

Despite forecasts of tax take falling as cars become more efficient, it seems Treasury is working the BIK thresholds to its advantage (this period is the first to include the 4% diesel supplement). And, thanks to WLTP, official CO_2 emissions are set to surge, further swelling its coffers.

It shouldn't, of course. The European Commission made it clear that CO_2 rises caused by WLTP tests "should not negatively impact vehicle taxation by increasing costs" during the transitional period (until 2020).

In other words, national Governments should take corrective action to offset any increase in emissions – typically 10-15%.

We'll know more in November's Budget, but so far there have been no indications from Government that it will be resetting BIK to take WLTP into account.

It means drivers will be hit with the double-whammy of a rise in BIK and CO_2.

In 2016/17, the average monthly BIK paid by drivers was £164, up from £129 in 2015/16 (as an aside, the monthly average for those who receive free fuel is £135, or £31 per week, the equivalent to almost 14,000 private miles a year in a 50mpg car, or 16,500 at 60mpg).

Unless Treasury starts listening, the average BIK paid by company car drivers could reach £300 by 2020. Fleets take note; let's ramp up the lobbying!

YOUR LETTERS

EMISSIONS TESTING

Lobby Government over company car tax increase

EDITOR'S PICK

Nigel Boyle wrote:
Having read 'New correlated CO_2 values push company cars into higher tax bracket' (fleetnews.co.uk, June 18), the Government is not playing ball.

The EU has dictated that any CO_2 increases due to WLTP (Worldwide harmonised Light vehicle Test Procedure) should not cost the consumer any more in tax (until WLTP values are used for taxation purposes from April 2020) – as it is the same vehicle with the same outputs.

It says that member states must adjust their taxation model so no more tax is paid. However, the UK Government has not done this so far.

Can everyone lobby the Government ahead of the Budget as it is in breach of EU guidelines? CO2MPAS – the EU equation used to convert a WLTP value to its NEDC equivalent – is wrong as it does not return the vehicle to the pre-WLTP CO_2 figure. An adjustment is needed for this to correct the situation.

Please can everyone speak up as 'no more tax until 2020' is the EU guideline. By then manufacturers will be producing lower CO_2 vehicles to combat any tax increase, rather than us having to buy petrol with a few miles of electric, to trick the taxation models while still costing so much more in fuel.

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

AIR QUALITY

Scrapping diesel and petrol simply 'not an option'

Guido wrote:
Having read 'UK cities call for ban on new petrol and diesel car and van sales from 2030' (fleetnews.co.uk, June 19), these people need to get out of their offices and get into the real world.

Electrification of the motorway networks will take longer than these people realise.

Scrapping petrol and diesel car sales is not an option, at least not a real-world one.

MOBILE PHONES

Custodial sentences should be mandatory

Gordy wrote:
Having read 'Decline in drivers prosecuted for using their mobile phone behind the wheel' (fleetnews.co.uk, June 21), I don't believe mobile phone use behind the wheel is reducing as I regularly see people offending when I commute.

It's almost obvious – one hand or both hands off the wheel, hand down the side of the driver, driver staring at phone for seconds at a time, texting, emailing, phoning. Every one a potential death waiting to happen.

A custodial sentence should be mandatory.

Nigel Coupe added:
As a cyclist commuting through slow moving traffic on a daily basis I see increasing numbers of motorists using telephones while at the wheel of slow-moving vehicles. Yesterday, I counted 10 motorists using phones within a quarter of a mile.

Penalties for use of a mobile phone should be more severe.

After all, a driving licence is a privilege, not a right.

ROAD PRICING

Don't price people out of their cars

Peter Roberts wrote:
Having read 'The route to road charging' (fleetnews.co.uk, July 2), road pricing would be one of the most intrusive and regressive taxes.

It relies on tracking every move you make, your speed, location, time and a host of other information related to charging for road use.

The roads on which we are driving were built over generations and they are not for the Government to tax poorer people off them.

Only an out of touch policy adviser would even consider road pricing and, fortunately, such a policy would lose politicians their seats. So it won't happen anytime soon.

Clean air zones in cities and harsher emissions tests are the way to reduce emissions, not road pricing. As for any loss of revenue due to ultra-low emission vehicles, recover it with a small increase in general taxation or maybe stop spending so much money. The overseas aid budget would be a good place to start.

CRASH FOR CASH

Fit dashcams as standard

Maria Cole wrote:
Having read 'Fraudsters found guilty in second part of major "crash for cash" investigation' (fleetnews.co.uk, June 19), at last some good news regarding the identification of insurance fraudsters.

Well done to all those involved. Keep up the good work and continue to identify and prosecute these idiots that cost the honest, hard-working, decent policyholder £350 million a year.

Surely it's evident that changes need to be made. All new vehicles should come with dashcams and telematics equipment, so driving can be monitored and recorded.

Older vehicles should be offered cheaper insurance if they agree to install a dashcam and telematics.

It is time now that we stop being hit with high insurance premiums because of the stupidity and greed of others.

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Burning question:
What's the craziest thought you've had?

Editorial
Editor-in-chief
Stephen Briers 01733 468024
stephen.briers@bauermedia.co.uk
That it was a good idea to go on a rope swing over a river. It wasn't; I got soaked
Deputy editor
Sarah Tooze 01733 468901
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Thinking it would be a good idea to climb a rock face in Cornwall aged six
News editor
Gareth Roberts 01733 468314
gareth.roberts@bauermedia.co.uk
England could win the World Cup (submitted after the Colombia match)
Features editor
Andrew Ryan 01733 468308
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I used to think my Lego men came alive at night, but I've grown out of it
Head of digital
Jeremy Bennett 01733 468261
jeremy.bennett@bauermedia.co.uk
Thinking about the starving civilians in the siege of Leningrad in WWII while I sliced vegetables
Web producer
Elizabeth Howlett 01733 468655
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That if we were all a bit more like Homer Simpson, the world would be a better place
Staff writer
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Trying to get somewhere without a sat-nav
Photos Chris Lowndes

Production
Head of publishing
Luke Neal 01733 468262
I once jumped off the garage roof with an umbrella to see if I would float down
Production editors
David Buckley 01733 468310
That I would one day be good enough to play for England in any sport
Finbarr O'Reilly 01733 468267
Britain will never be stupid enough to vote for Brexit
Designer
Erika Small 01733 468312
What would I do if earth was hit by an asteriod?

Advertising
Commercial director
Sarah Crown 01733 366466
B2B commercial manager
Sheryl Graham 01733 366467
Account directors
Lisa Turner 01733 366471
Stuart Wakeling 01733 366470
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Karl Houghton 01733 366309
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Project managers
Niamh Walker-Booth 01733 468327
Kerry Unwin 01733 468578
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Chris Lester
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Sandra Evitt 01733 468123
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Managing director
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01733 468295
Office manager
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FLEET OPINION 1

FLEET AND HR

More collaboration needed with human resources

Peter Golding, managing director, FleetCheck

By Peter Golding

Fleet and HR (human resources) departments need to work closely together. That needs no debate.

They have shared interests and responsibilities in many areas – from how company cars are used to attract employees to how to deal with issues that arise from those same employees mistreating company vehicles.

Yet, anyone who works in fleet will tell you that, all too often, there are poor relationships.

These occur for all the reasons that arise in corporate environments such as lack of time, poor communication and ill-defined responsibilities.

This was crystallised for me recently when we came across an instance where an employee in possession of a company car had been banned from driving.

The employee had informed HR, but that department failed to tell the fleet manager for several months because the view was taken that this constituted confidential information.

Clearly, this is quite an extreme example, but lower level issues of this type arise often.

What is the answer?

Well, a good solution is to construct a framework for collaborating more closely in the future.

Like any good framework it should involve sitting down and working out an agreement that covers all the major areas where the two departments are likely to need to work together.

A standard agenda could look at employee attraction and retention, the driver's responsibilities to the company, the company's responsibilities to the driver, plus driver communication.

"HR had failed to tell the fleet manager for several months (that a company car driver had been banned) because the view was taken that this constituted confidential information"

Much of this should already be covered in your standard fleet policy document but what you may not have done is work out how responsibilities for implementing its measures are handled by fleet and HR.

This is the nub of the matter. Clear lines need to be drawn up covering who should take the lead on issues ranging from how cars are chosen to how employees are disciplined.

Crucially, there should be absolute agreement on how and when information is shared, which we often facilitate through fleet software.

It is all about minimising ambiguity.

In our experience, where this kind of agreement is made, the issues that arise between fleet and HR can be avoided – and the whole operation of company vehicles should improve.

FLEET OPINION 2

DATA ANALYSIS

Don't gamble with your fleet

Martin Evans, managing director, Jaama

By Martin Evans

Fleet is the second biggest expenditure item (after people) for most companies so it makes absolute sense that robust data analysis is critical to make informed strategic decisions.

Fleet managers are faced with many perennial decisions regarding the make/model composition of their fleet and they include:

- Changing fuel type and switching to what is becoming a more common 'balanced' approach to powertrain choice rather than an all-diesel policy.
- Buying or leasing more vehicles to cut reliance on vehicle hire.
- Reducing the size of the fleet because of vehicle underutilisation.
- Changing vehicles models because of either good or bad maintenance experiences.

Absolute visibility of data is essential when making such 'big' decisions, as it is in respect of compliance – whether relating to vehicles or drivers.

For example, policing pre-journey vehicle defect checks is imperative particularly in respect of commercial vehicles. Equally, companies should also consider the monitoring of driver behaviour behind the wheel as best practice.

The raft of technology available – telematics and apps, for example – with 'real-time' data feeds from vehicles into fleet management systems that can immediately be accessed by fleet decision-makers means that there is no excuse for a lack of information, or compliance.

Yet, it remains the case that too many companies are gambling with their fleet operations.

Decision-makers' ability to make informed choices means robust systems are a prerequisite to efficiently collect and analyse data.

"Making choices without good processes is like playing roulette with an organisation's money and compliance"

Additionally, the explosion in the amount of fleet-related data is increasing as we witness the adoption of the 'connected car'.

The arrival of so-called 'big data' – a term that describes the large volume of data, both structured and unstructured, that can potentially inundate a fleet chief on a day-to-day basis – means businesses must have good systems in place that will digest vehicle, driver and journey information and make it meaningful.

In turn, that will enable fleet managers to make informed decisions as they will have a holistic picture resulting in operational efficiencies that will maximise compliance and deliver cost savings.

Making choices without data, good systems and processes in place to aid the decision-maker is like playing roulette with an organisation's money and legislative compliance.

For regular opinions from the industry, visit fleetnews.co.uk/blogs

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5 COMPELLING REASONS TO ATTEND FLEET LIVE

Expert speakers will address issues central to successful fleet management at Fleet Live 2018, the unmissable event for those involved in fleet decision making

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FUTURE OF FLEET ZONE:

- MOBILITY ZONE
- TECHNOLOGY HUB
- LOW AND ZERO EMISSIONS HUB

1 Put a cap on your fuel costs

As pump prices continue to surge, the pressure intensifies on fleet managers to control and cut costs.

Armed with robust data and a coherent plan, fleets can typically save more than 15% from the fuel bills by accurately reimbursing drivers only for business miles, encouraging them to refuel at cheaper filling stations, eliminating mileage claims abuse and gamifying better driving techniques, says Paul Hollick, ICFM chairman and managing director of fuel management specialist TMC.

"Most businesses budget for fuel based on last year's spend plus 2% or 3%, so as soon as the pump prices rise, a lot of fleets will be over budget. This means managers will be under pressure to reduce the miles travelled. But that's not the right way to go, they need to look for different, smarter ways to manage their costs."

■ Paul Hollick will be speaking at Fleet Live on 10 October

2 Prepare to be a mobility architect

A revolution in corporate travel is turning traditional business models on their head.

Rather than solutions being focused around transport providers, the Mobility as a Service (MaaS) concept designs solutions around users, including business customers.

This means, for example, that buses collect passengers where they wish to be collected and deliver them where they want to go, when they want to go, rather than operate within the confines of fixed stops and timetables.

The same convenience is being applied to ride-hailing services like Uber, e-bike hire and car pooling, to offer alternatives to private car travel.

Piia Karjalainen, senior manager, MaaS Alliance, says: "If you are making in-house mobility planning decisions, you should seriously consider MaaS as one of the solutions."

■ Piia Karjaleinen will be speaking at Fleet Live on 10 October

3 Get data protection right for GDPR

If you believe alarmist internet stories, then the The Information Commissioner's Office was poised to pounce on any business failing in its data protection responsibilities from the May 25, with the power to impose massive fines.

Six weeks after the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation, there does not appear to have been any penalties issued, but GDPR remains a serious consideration for departments such as fleet, which hold significant volumes of personal data about employees.

"The regulation requires businesses to tell individuals a lot more about what they do with their data, the reasons they hold it, the justifications for holding that information, and that is all part of the transparency principle to the GDPR," says solicitor Christine Jackson, partner at Wright Hassall.

■ Christine Jackson will be speaking at Fleet Live on 9 October

4 Enhance safety of your fleet

Silver bullet solutions are hugely tempting for any fleet operator tasked with reducing the accident frequency of their drivers, but the difficult truth is that isolated interventions rarely work in practice, according to risk management specialist Andy Price, managing director of Fleet Safety Management.

He advises that fleets need to adopt a proven risk management process to achieve sustainable improvements in their accident records, rather than investing in one-off initiative.

A comprehensive risk management strategy demands effective safe driving policies that dovetail with operational practices, to ensure "that employees are working in an environment in which they can, should they choose to do so, drive safely", says Price.

Find out more about how to create a safe driving culture at Fleet Live.

■ Andy Price will be speaking at Fleet Live on 9 October

5 Discover new companies

The world of fleet constantly demands new products and services to contend with developing scenarios.

Nowhere is this more apparent than the development of connected and autonomous vehicle systems, an area of focus for Irdeto.

The company is a new exhibitor at Fleet Live, but has two decades of experience in developing software protection systems.

Its Cloakware for Connected Transport solutions help fleet operators protect their vehicles against cybercriminal threats.

Niels Haverkorn, general manager, Connected Transport, Irdeto says: "The more fleet and heavy vehicle operators rely on connectivity, the more vulnerable they become to cyberattacks and this makes the fleet sector a key audience for Irdeto as we work with partners and customers to protect the industry against cybersecurity threats."

■ Irdeto will be demonstrating Cloakware solutions at Fleet Live

EXHIBITORS BOOKED SO FAR

Abax Agility AID Fuels Group Alphabet Aquarius IT Arval Ashwoods Lightfoot AssetWorks AutoGlass Autoserve Axle Weight Technology BMW/Mini Bott BP Oil UK Cap HPI CanTrack Chevin Fleet Solutions Chevronshop Crystal Ball DAC Beachcroft DriveTech, part of The AA Enigma Telematics FleetCheck Fleetcor Fleet Operations Fleetondemand Free2Move Lease FuelGenie Gefco Halfords Haynespro Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions Honda Intellidrive Interactive Fleet Management Irdeto Jaama Jaguar Land Rover Joyce Design KeySafe LeasePlan Lex AutoLease Licence Bureau Licence Check Marshall Leasing Masternaut Matrix Telematics Mercedes-Benz Financial Services UK Mileage Count MINIEYE National Salvage Nexus Vehicle Rental NFE Group Pertemps Reflex Responseable Solutions Ltd RingGo Corporate Scorpion Automotive Selsia Vehicle Accident Centres Telogis TCH Leasing Tevo Toyota & Lexus TTC Group Venson Automotive Solutions Vision Track VMS Fleet Management Volkswagen Financial Services Volvo Zenith

DRIVEN FROM THE TOP

Senior management buy-in has been essential to Nationwide Window Cleaning's risk management programme, which has reduced accidents by 23%, says fleet boss Stuart Wiseman. *Sarah Tooze* reports

Nationwide Window Cleaning (NWC) has reduced its accident rate by 23% for the first six months of the year compared with 2017 thanks to a combination of vehicle technology, communication and, ultimately, cultural change.

The impressive results come on the back of further savings the year before which led to NWC being named most improved fleet at the 2017 Commercial Fleet Awards.

Key to success was fitting the entire fleet of 257 vans with telematics and speed limiters (set at 62mph to help deliver fuel savings as well as safety benefits).

NWC group fleet manager Stuart Wiseman says: "Telematics was something I felt we required because we needed to get a handle on the fleet itself. What was it doing? Where was it? How was it working?"

Wiseman joined the company two years ago when business growth meant NWC needed an experienced fleet manager. He has been in fleet for 30 years and his CV includes managing vehicles for large distribution companies, housing associations and local authorities.

Latterly, he worked for Yorkshire Housing (see *Fleet News* January 10, 2013) but says he got "comfortable" and wanted to take on a bigger fleet with more responsibility so he moved to Andrew Page in 2014 and then to NWC in 2016.

"I enjoy something that is going to challenge me as an individual, something I can get my teeth into and see through. I don't like to get comfortable," Wiseman says.

Since his appointment, NWC's fleet has trebled from less than 100 vehicles to 290 (29 cars, 257 vans and four HGVs) through a combination of business mergers and contract wins.

The cars are used by area managers, regional directors and the senior management team, with an average annual mileage of 25,000. The vans are used for three types of operation:

- the retail sector – window cleaning for banks, chemists etc.
- commercial work – such as supermarkets and large buildings in the centre of London and Birmingham, and airports
- technical work – graffiti removal, gutter cleaning and work at fuel stations, etc.

In performing these tasks, they clock up 17,000-20,000 miles a year.

NWC has recently merged with High Access, which specialises in high-level window cleaning and has a fleet of 150 vehicles. However, there are no plans for those vehicles to fall under Wiseman's remit.

"We're going to keep the two (fleets) separate," he says. "High Access has a fleet manager who operates from a different depot. All the vehicles come back to base and it's easier for him to manage. All mine are based at home addresses, spread throughout the UK. But we'll work together and look at the systems he's got and I've got that could benefit both."

High Access's vehicles are all contract hired and Wiseman is considering moving all of NWC's vehicles to the same funding method.

"We have a mixture of contract hire, lease purchase, hire purchase and outright purchase – as we've grown different things have come into play," Wiseman says. "What we're possibly looking at is the potential for a full contract hire fleet."

The car fleet is already leased on a three-year replacement cycle. The cars (bar one) have been replaced over the past year with a switch from diesel to hybrid, lowering the fleet's carbon footprint.

"The company is serious about its footprint," Wiseman says. "When we're tendering for work, all the clients want to know 'what is your carbon footprint? What are you doing to lower it?'"

Stuart Wiseman does not like to get too "comfortable" in a role

CHANGING FUEL CARD PROVIDERS SAVES £21,000

Nationwide Window Cleaning has saved £21,000 in six months after changing from a pump price fuel card to a fixed price card for its van fleet.

"We did a tender process and we came up with Key Fuels with BWOC," says Stuart Wiseman. "There have been some savings although the cost of fuel has gone up recently."

Wiseman has found that the network is sufficient and drivers can use a smartphone app to locate their nearest station.

He also values the reports, which enable him to track how much fuel has been drawn and where to pick up anomalies.

"It gives us a bit more control of the fleet usage," he says.

"We get a weekly price, every Friday, and I keep a record of how fuel prices are going and I can forecast."

FACTFILE

Company: Nationwide Window Cleaning
Group fleet manager: Stuart Wiseman
Time in role: two years
Fleet size: 290 – 29 cars, 257 vans and four HGVs
Operating cycle: cars – three years, vans – four years
Brands on fleet: cars – Audi, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, Volvo; vans – Ford, Peugeot, Toyota, Nissan
Funding method: cars – contract hire; vans – various

NWC employees are window cleaners. But they are also professional drivers and should be treated as such, says Stuart Wiseman

Wiseman has looked at electric vans but the range isn't sufficient and the drivers would need to spend too long charging the vehicles between jobs.

He is proposing that all of the vans move from a four-year replacement cycle to three years. How much that could save is difficult to measure because of the varying funding methods.

"We'd be giving all that risk possibly to someone else, i.e. the contract hire company, which helps our budgeting and because of the synergy with the merged company, there are some benefits to be had there," Wiseman says.

He also knows from experience that using an external provider could save time.

When he first took on the NWC fleet he appointed Incident Support Group (ISG) to help gather data.

"They started building all the information for me to work off," he says.

At "almost the same time" he introduced Masternaut's telematics system.

"I wanted something that was easy to use, one platform, and I've got that with them and I can manipulate all the information however I want," Wiseman says.

Getting the senior management team to buy-in to telematics was a case of showing them how much incidents were costing the company – not just the bent metal cost, but all of the associated 'hidden' costs.

The chief executive sent a letter informing drivers that telematics was being introduced and what was expected of them.

Since introducing telematics, Wiseman has brought in a league table system in the past seven months.

"We do it by region so say a region has 20 drivers they have a league, then we have a company one for the whole fleet so there is competition right across the board," Wiseman says. "We separated the league table for speeding and that's had a massive improvement. The benefit of that is fuel economy."

Drivers are able to monitor their own performance through an app on their phone, and "more and more drivers are taking it up", Wiseman says.

He adds: "The most important thing about this is it's been driven from the top. I give the managing director a list of the 10 worst drivers and she will write to them personally. So buy-in is right from the top. It goes straight to the end-user and then we follow it on from there."

Telematics has proved "invaluable" in a number of areas, according to Wiseman. It has exonerated drivers for speeding and complaints from members of the public and helped NWC recover five stolen vehicles.

"It has got a lot of benefits that people can see," he says. "It's about protecting them, it's duty of care. We can see what's going on, they weren't speeding, they weren't in that area so it's beneficial for more than just driver behaviour. That's something I've had to get across to the drivers. It's not a spy in the cab, we're not trying to catch you out.

"It's our vehicle, we want it to be looked after and driven correctly. Also, when you leave home in the morning, I want you to go home that night. That's what it's about."

However, he adds that telematics will only save a company money "if you use it correctly".

"You can't install it and hope it's going to magically sort everything," he says.

Wiseman has telematics fitted to his own company car.

"It demonstrates to them (the drivers) how seriously I take it and the benefit is my driving style has changed. I'm more relaxed. I'll drive down the inside lane and watch all the other people that are in hurry speeding down the outside lane," he says.

Wiseman believes that other drivers can be the cause of stress behind the wheel and he favours in-vehicle assessments rather than online risk assessments so he can judge how his drivers cope "in real life".

In-vehicle assessments proved successful at Yorkshire Housing and at Andrew Page so Wiseman was keen to introduce them at NWC.

Currently, Wiseman and three area managers are trained assessors. He would like all 16 area managers to become assessors but it "won't happen overnight" as it requires a week's training with RoSPA.

> *"I say to them (drivers) 'the first thing you've got to do is relax, take your time, you'll get there just as quick' and it takes the stress away"*
>
> Stuart Wiseman, NWC

All new employees undergo an assessment because "they might have been driving a car for years but now we're going to put them in an LCV with a load in the back. It's different, it doesn't stop as quick, it doesn't handle as quick", Wiseman says.

He also assesses drivers after an incident as part of the investigation.

"If I'm going to assess somebody I want them in a vehicle that they're going to drive on a daily basis with a load of water or whatever in the back and see how they handle that in real life situations," he says.

"I do a lot in London. As you can imagine that's not the best place to do any assessment but you get to see how people handle pressure situations because it is pressure driving, it's very stressful and you've got to see how they handle that stress.

"When they do it (an assessment) online they're sat at home. There is no stress. When you get them in the van you can talk them through it. I say to them 'the first thing you've got to do is relax, take your time, you'll get there just as quick' and it takes the stress away.

"Once they learn how to deal with that then driving can actually become a pleasure but it's taking away that stress, not trying to race other drivers."

He adds that it is "pressure from other drivers that causes the issues" as his drivers were frequently being tailgated and NWC had to put stickers on the vans to show they were fitted with speed limiters.

Driving assessments also enable Wiseman to set a benchmark performance for each driver.

He has, on occasion, given vouchers for exceptional driving and NWC is considering a rewards system that would pay for itself through the savings made from better driving.

A rewards system worked well when Wiseman was at Yorkshire Housing.

"I took two guys to the Fleet News Awards and they loved it. Word spread and everybody came on board with it and we were getting them tickets to this and tickets to that. It was something to say 'well done'."

However, at NWC the stick is used as well as the carrot. A penalty for an at-fault incident of up to £500 was introduced in February (previously it was £250). This penalty figure is deducted in weekly amounts.

Wiseman expected a backlash when it was introduced but "we never had one" as drivers understood why it was necessary and that incidents would be investigated thoroughly. Wiseman looks at the vehicle data, the driver's history, the service history of the vehicle and interviews the driver if necessary before a penalty is imposed.

Getting NWC's insurers and road traffic police officers to talk to the drivers has also had an impact.

"The insurers did a talk on how insurance works, the impact of an accident, who it impacts. You might have run into the back of somebody, you've got the injuries they will claim, the downtime, all the credit hire, all these costs. What might have been a broken bumper at the back is suddenly going to cost you £30,000."

Wiseman said it came as a shock to the drivers. "They didn't realise," he says. "I think the attitude used to be 'well, we're insured' so there has been a culture change going on in the company."

So far police have given one talk to NWC's south-west team but Wiseman is in touch with various road traffic teams to arrange talks for other areas.

The talk covered speeding and the impact of speeding and what the police officer has to do, including going to see bereaved parents.

"The drivers thought it was good to hear a different perspective on it, that touch of reality," Wiseman says. "I can stand in front of people and tell them until I'm blue in the face but there comes a point when it starts going over their heads, they get fed up of it so they need to hear it sometimes from a different voice, a different manner, a different uniform. That helps get the message across."

Wiseman likes to remind employees that they are professional drivers. "I go to meetings and I say 'what's your job?' They say 'window cleaner'. 'How much time a day do you spend cleaning windows and how much time do you spend driving, I ask? 'I probably spend more time driving' is the common reply.

"What you've got to recognise is you are, without doubt, a professional driver. You drive for a living because without your vehicle, without driving, you can't do your job'. But, likewise, we've got to treat them like professional drivers," he says.

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

'WE ARE LOOKING AT THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE'

There are no fixed rules about what services Mercedes-Benz Vans will, or won't, supply. It's all about meeting customers' needs. *Stephen Briers* reports

Andy Eccles is a man on a mission; one that at first glance seems at odds with the normal responsibilities of someone in his position.

Appointed to the newly-created role of head of fleet at Mercedes-Benz Vans, Eccles wants to transform the business away from a company fixated with selling vans to one focusing on meeting customers' needs, whatever they may be.

"Do we sell a piece of metal? No, we should sell whatever the customer wants," he says.

How does this fit in with the fundamental *raison d'etre* of a vehicle manufacturer to, well, make and sell vans? Does Mercedes-Benz Vans want to be a fleet management company?

"No, we are a vehicle manufacturer," replies Eccles firmly. "But we will also be a provider of services, such as licence checks, PCN management, driver defects – everything is fair game. That's why my role has been created."

Eccles has been in the light commercial vehicle sector since leaving university, initially on the contract hire and leasing side, working with end-user fleets.

He joined Mercedes-Benz four years ago in a business development role targeting SMEs (defined as fleets with 25-250 vehicles), but also with direct sales responsibility for rental companies.

"There were relationships, but it was very transactional," he says. "I'm more about customer relationships and meeting needs."

His new position, reporting to MD Steve Bridge, plays to those strengths, but it's been a while coming. Discussions have been ongoing within the business ever since Eccles joined.

"My role has been created around that. We already do it (have those types of relationships) with our larger customers but the knowledge we have doesn't roll down to the smaller customers," he says. "Now I have responsibility for both. So if a company wants something other than a van, let's work out what that is – for example, they might just need (additional) space on a Friday."

Historically, Mercedes-Benz Vans would have those service conversations with larger fleets for the first three weeks of a month and in the fourth week it was "sell, sell, sell – everything else went out the window", Eccles says.

"Now, we will go to the rental companies and not destroy what we are trying to do with customers – in other words, we don't push metal for the sake of it."

What does all this mean in practice for end-users of all sizes?

"We will say 'give us your wish list and let's see which ones we can tick off for you,'" Eccles says. "It might be vehicle-related, it might not. We don't know what they might say but at Milton Keynes (Mercedes's UK head office) we have departments for everything, such as IT and finance.

"Some SMEs are paying a fortune to third parties; but we can offer those same services. We are looking at the art of the possible – there are no rules."

Eccles puts it another way. If a customer needs a vehicle, he will always sell them a Mercedes-Benz. However, if they only think they have a requirement for a van, "hopefully we will not sell them one if we believe they don't need it".

This comes down to fleet utilisation, which can only be achieved by really understanding a customer's business. Eccles is determined to rid them of those 'just in case' vehicles.

For a business traditionally based on volume bonuses, this requires a complete mindset change: for Mercedes's staff and its retailer network.

"We have teams of sales people and they are slowly being moved across to this way of thinking," Eccles says. "It's our fault; they are bonused on volume so we motivate that behaviour, but we are training them to sit with a customer and not push a vehicle.

"It's a challenge but the market is changing; the way that we sell is changing."

Ultimately, of course, the goal remains to sell vans, just when they are actually needed: "If we can start selling services such as funding (Mercedes has its own leasing business), insurance or licence checks, then when a customer needs a van, they will buy one of ours rather than another brand."

Rental poses an interesting opportunity. Northgate is Mercedes's biggest customer, but Eccles believes "we should be their biggest customer".

He explains: "If a customer wants a (short-term) vehicle they will go to a rental company. Currently we don't have the facilities to be a rental provider, but we should have the ability to solve the problem; for example, by sending the customer to Northgate. But they would have to put the customer into a Mercedes van.

"Then we become a one-stop shop for solving fleets' problems, rather than just selling new vehicles."

One consequence of deepening its relationship with Northgate would be a greater volume of 12-month old vans returning to market, which could prove disruptive to residuals. Eccles is one step ahead.

"We will create a used vehicle sales platform," he says. "We will insist the vehicles come back to us to create a second-hand market."

Target buyers will be franchisees of larger businesses, such as delivery operators, who might not be able to afford a new Mercedes-Benz. Once exposed to the brand, Eccles believes he will capture their future business.

An enabler to the Mercedes-Benz view of the future is connectivity. It transforms insight and understanding – of the vehicle and of drivers.

Fleets will be able to see mechanical defects, view vehicle activity, monitor routes and assess driver behaviour. Eventually, the vehicle will be able to identify service requirements and book itself into a dealership.

Here, Eccles sees further opportunities to deepen Mercedes-Benz's relationship with customers.

"Some fleets will manage all the telematics information themselves, others might get bored with it and stop using it," he says. "But if they tick a box, we can take it on and use the information on a consultative basis for driver performance and advice. We can be proactive with the driver and the vehicle."

THE TREND AWAY FROM PURCHASING

One-in-three Mercedes-Benz vans are now leased rather than bought, a proportion that has "grown massively" over the past few years, according to Andy Eccles.

He believes it will continue to move in that direction, echoing a broader cultural trend driven by millennials who "don't buy any more and change all the time – they don't even know what they pay because they want the latest technology on a contract".

Mercedes-Benz is moving to satisfy differing demands for vehicles with Van2Share, which is undergoing trials with a handful of customers. The service consists of fully kitted vans kept at a customer's premises that are hired by the hour on a pay-on-use basis.

"You go on the website, see a calendar and allocate the vehicle to the driver. The driver's mobile phone will be the key to open the vehicle," Eccles says. "They might use it for three or four hours and we bill them for that time."

The service is intended to improve utilisation and reduce downtime. A courier might use the vehicle during the day and another business could use it at night.

The challenge is checking the vehicle prior to handover. In Germany, Mercedes-Benz is working on a solution. It has opened a drive-through defect machine at a central hub where multiple cameras photograph the vehicle and record any damage.

"Ownership could disappear," Eccles says. "We would still have the same number of vehicles per year, they just might not be sold – we might sell the space instead."

The pay-on-use pricing is based on leasing costs, but profit per unit for Mercedes-Benz might increase because there will be more users per van and it will be used for more hours a day. Ultimately, the cost to users could fall.

Andy Eccles says Mercedes-Benz vans will not just sell metal for the sake of it

FACTFILE

Company Mercedes-Benz Vans
Head office Milton Keynes
Head of fleet Andy Eccles
Annual sales (2017) 33,889 (up 5.8% YOY)
Market share (2017) 9.36%
Sales YTD (end June) 12,501 (↓16.7%)
Market share YTD (end June) 6.92%
Model line-up Citan, Vito, Sprinter, X-Class

CULTURE SHOCK: FIVE REASONS FOR CHANGE

1. **Existing customers won't leave; retention rates will increase**
2. **Mercedes-Benz will own the vehicles**
3. **Mercedes-Benz will measure itself on value and service, not simply sales**
4. **It will win more customers by coming up with the right solutions**
5. **More customers will want to be sole-supply as a result of changes**

DOES THE SUPPLIER MATCH UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

Fleet chiefs advise being flexible and always keeping your eyes and ears open to ways of performing tasks better. *Sarah Tooze* reports

How confident are you that you have the right supply chain and the right manufacturers on your company car choice list?

Do you have a leasing or fleet management company that can guide you through the myriad changes happening in the market from company car tax to WLTP (Worldwide harmonised Light vehicle Test Procedure) and clean air zones?

Are you getting the maximum value from your suppliers? Are they helping you to reduce fleet costs?

Do your manufacturers offer the right products now and in the future? Will they help you to lower the emissions of your fleet and meet employee demand?

Do you know what else is available in the market?

These are all questions you need to consider if you are to run an efficient fleet.

David Oliver, procurement manager at Red Bull, who is a responsible for a fleet of 218 vehicles, regularly reviews the marketplace and isn't afraid to change suppliers.

No waiting

"We tend to have a rolling review of everything," Oliver says. "We know the world is changing so we need things to be agile. We'll be honest and if there is a feeling that something isn't fit for purpose or someone has come along with something better then it's not a case of saying we need to wait 18 months before we can do something.

"It's a tightrope to walk in terms of the flexibility we want and the longevity that they want but we manage it."

Attending fleet events helps Oliver to assess what products and services are available.

He realised at Fleet Management Live (now Fleet Live) in 2016 that another licence checking provider offered Red Bull "a far quicker and simpler solution" and decided there and then to change.

"It is a case of what's out there in the market. Is it better than what we do? Yes, let's move," he says.

Similarly, in 2015 he decided to appoint a new fleet management company to reduce the administrative burden.

"I'm not a dedicated fleet manager, I've got other responsibilities, so I needed a trusted partner that would pick up the reins and be my professional advisor as well as my administrative assistant, allowing the drivers to contact them first, not me," he says.

Red Bull buys its vehicles so around half of the 26-to-30 suppliers Oliver works with on a regular basis are vehicle manufacturers and dealers.

Position of driver

His starting point when reviewing manufacturers is always the driver position.

"With job-need it's about the best car at the lowest cost per month for tax and the best car for the organisation to own and run as well," he says.

Oliver uses wholelife cost software to compare vehicles and takes into account fuel economy, safety and whether the manufacturer's brand image fits with that of Red Bull.

"We have a massive wish list of things and it's how many you can satisfy," he says. "Some manufacturers generally satisfy more than others, so there are a few safe choices but, equally, we like to shake it up now and then."

Red Bull recently added Seat to its choice list because "it was a brand we had ignored for too long and it could offer something quite compelling, especially from a P11D perspective compared to our traditional approach of Audi, BMW and VW", Oliver says.

Lorna McAtear, head of supply and internal accounts at Royal Mail, keeps an open mind about vehicle manufacturers.

"You still have to keep the relationships with those that aren't necessarily providing you today because they may tomorrow," she says.

Like Oliver, she believes it is worth doing "a continuous review" of the market.

"You have to always see what's out there even if you've got a contract," she says.

"You may get to the end of that and decide you've still got the best thing so you'll just extend or you may get to the end and think 'no, I've got to change because we're changing direction'.

"It's not always about the supplier and its performance because it could still be performing brilliantly, it just doesn't suit your business model any more."

Royal Mail recently unbundled a number of services, including hire, breakdown and recovery, and glass because "it fitted our change of direction", McAtear says.

"We could achieve more by going direct," she says.

She believes it is good for fleets to audit and assess their supplier relationships because "familiarity" can creep in.

"You'll get used to doing things a certain way and forget other things are there or could be done. So, it's always good to just have those conversations," she says.

"You may both quite happily be plodding along in one direction but discover that actually the market has shifted and over here everybody is doing something slightly different so is that better for you or not?"

"You'll get used to doing things a certain way and forget other things are there or could be done"

Lorna McAtear, Royal Mail

"We tend to have a rolling review of everything. We know the world is changing so we need things to be agile"

David Oliver, Red Bull

Driver 'noise'

For Stewart Lightbody, head of fleet services at Anglian Water, the level of driver "noise" is the best indicator of whether a supplier relationship is working or not.

"If things aren't going right we'll know really quickly; nothing is as emotive as a company car," he says.

Anglian Water is about to tender for a leasing provider having decided to switch from outright purchasing its cars from two manufacturers (Vauxhall and Mitsubishi) to giving drivers a huge choice list.

The new policy will allow ultra-low emission vehicles and pure electric vehicles onto the choice list and give drivers flexibility to have the car they want.

Anglian Water opened up the choice list for its 50-60 senior managers last year as a 'proof of concept' and found 45% of drivers opted for a sub-50g/km plug-in hybrid.

The change of direction has meant Anglian Water will need to adopt the leasing model as the fleet team don't have the experience or systems to handle enquires from 700 drivers.

"Once we open that door it will encourage a whole new world of questions," Lightbody says. "I need a leasing company to help the driver navigate their way round all this new choice and to be almost an extension of my team."

WHAT TO DO IF A SUPPLIER IS FALLING SHORT

1 BE HONEST

David Oliver says: "Firstly, be honest and say 'how much of it is them and how much of it is you?' Have you communicated with them? Have you shared your plans and strategy? Have you kept them at arm's length?"

2 FIND OUT WHY THERE ARE PROBLEMS

"I'm fairly optimistic and I always like to think nobody fails deliberately," Lorna McAtear says. "If they're always late in delivering you've got to understand why and it could be that something has changed in the supply chain for them.

"Actually, is that a huge stumbling block for me? If I change a process here then we can work together. So it's trying to come up with a mutual solution to get you both on track."

But the supplier may have over-promised in the original contract to win the bid. If so, go straight to step five.

3 CONSIDER CHANGING ACCOUNT MANAGERS

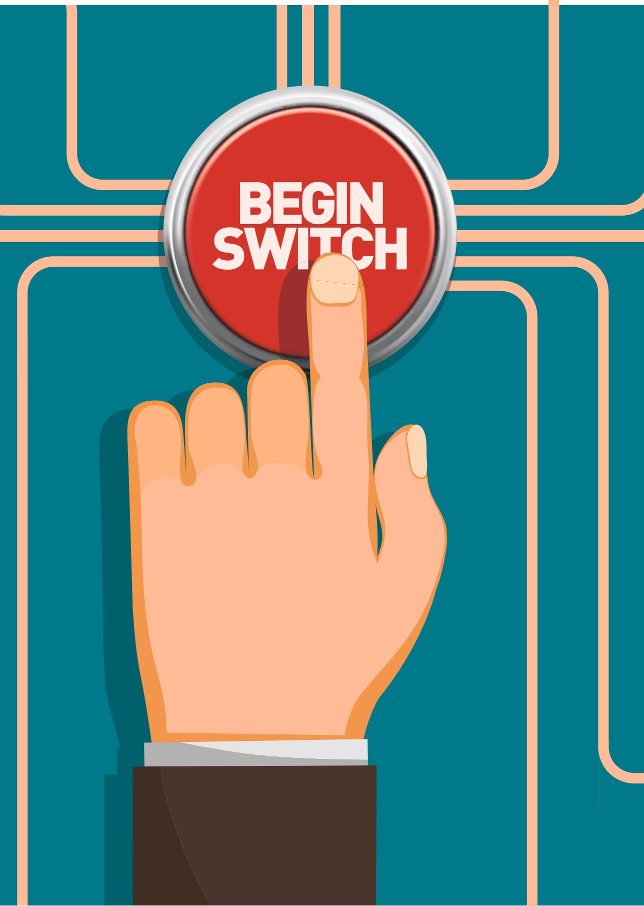
Stewart Lightbody says: "It could be something as simple as a different personality would change the dynamic and make it work. I've done that a couple of times. It's not easy to do but if they're not helping you and you're not achieving what you want to achieve then, really, you have to have that conversation."

4 SET A DEADLINE

"Consider a fixed-term improvement programme for the incumbent supplier," says Oliver. "We've done that a few times. We've said 'look, everyone knows this isn't as good as it can be, how about we give it three months around these key set measures and, if you can prove you can meet them, then we'll stay with you'. Then you review and if they maintain that then you've probably saved yourself an unnecessary tender."

5 EXIT

"If none of these measures seems to be working then you've got to research the market place and have a plan to exit," Oliver says.



COMMUNICATION VITAL WHEN MANAGING THE BIG SWITCH

A change of leasing providers is an opportunity for suppliers to shine, but there are also risks involved for the unwary. *John Maslen* reports

Once a fleet manager has decided to appoint a new leasing company, the hard work begins. The handover process carries reputational risk for both leasing company and client, so it's a critical time for everyone involved.

A successful project will often go almost unnoticed as managers and drivers are focused on carrying out their core roles. There may be some paperwork to sign and a new app to download, but little else.

However, poor planning or badly executed changes can be much more high-profile.

For example, most people ignored the last successful handover at the International Space Station, but everyone remembers when KFC, the fast food restaurant chain, was ridiculed as its new freight supplier couldn't deliver chicken and restaurants were left empty.

Three critical factors can help a leasing supplier avoid experiencing that 'KFC moment' – planning, communication and resource.

At Alphabet, one of the country's biggest leasing companies, Dan Broom, major corporate sales manager, says a detailed implantation plan is key, along with a close working relationship with the client.

He says: "A detailed implementation plan is the bedrock of the relationship. Going forward, the more time you have spent preparing, the fewer issues appear and, if problems do occur, it is much easier to fix them."

Last year, 14% of Alphabet's large corporate fleet customers were new clients.

Ogilvie Fleet, one of the UK's top 20 leasing companies, is managing an increasing number of client wins, which reached double figures within the first quarter.

Although client needs differ, Nick Hardy, sales and marketing director at Ogilvie Fleet, says there are essential common elements.

"The secret of success is in the communication process. Get it right and everyone is on board and it goes smoothly," he says. "The other most important things are time and the level of support from the client. We can provide as much support as is needed, but it's useless if clients can't give information to us."

14%
of Alphabet's large corporate fleet customers last year were new clients

A typical transfer can take four-to-eight weeks, dependent on the complexity of the data involved and whether the groundwork for change has been completed with the outgoing supplier.

It's important to emphasise the need to build in time and resource to support the change, as clients can ignore this during negotiations and allow delays to creep in, before suddenly imposing a short deadline to meet internal targets. If that is the case, the client needs to provide enough employee support to complete key tasks within the reduced timescale.

Although every leasing company has a handover process, no two clients are the same, so it's important for leasing companies to have teams that can adapt to change and problem-solve to keep projects on track.

Alphabet uses a core team, including executives from sales, service and an implementation manager, who then liaise with other parts of the business on ensuring a smooth transition.

Industry consultant Caroline Sandall is a director of ESE Consulting and former fleet manager at Barclays, one of the country's biggest fleets. She feels that getting the incumbent supplier and new supplier to talk to each other is an important factor in a smooth handover.

She says: "I got both suppliers together quite quickly, arranging a meeting to discuss what needed working on and who was responsible for which area.

"I identified processes where interaction was required between the two providers, then made sure the process was rock solid. We would have a weekly phone call where we said what element of the process did not work and how it needed to be fixed.

"My contracts always had a schedule called termination assistance, which showed the role of the supplier if terminated. I have never encountered a poor supplier on exit. There are ways of keeping them incentivised and they know they might be tendering again."

Direct communication can be valuable during legal negotiations about contracts, as a face-to-face legal discussion can swiftly resolve issues that may take much longer by email, Broom adds.

Hardy says smaller fleet operators are less likely to have resource or a high level of expertise, so they may need much more guidance to get the process right.

The solution is often a dedicated account handler, although Sandall prefers the support of a buddy system, where a team of supplier contacts all share information about a client, so there is always someone available who can handle fleet and driver enquiries.

Danielle Tilley, business development director of Venson Automotive Solutions, says: "At Venson, for all new contracts we have an implementation manager who manages the process. This person works with the account manager and other relevant departmental managers to ensure a timely and efficient contract implementation process.

"At the end of every contract implementation Venson asks for client feedback. This is part of our continuous improvement process."

During handover, initial areas of focus for fleets and suppliers are typically split between current vehicles and new orders. New orders should be a smooth process, as drivers effectively have a 'fresh start'.

For drivers, there is a critical time during the handover, when requests for service bookings or other enquiries come in, that needs clearly defined lines of responsibility.

Accident management is typically managed through third-parties, with the current supplier agreeing to handle incidents that occur before the contract ends.

Hardy adds: "You always get hiccups, such as drivers ringing a wrong number. Mostly there will be an auto transfer, or the old supplier will have agreed to update drivers with the new number they need to call."

In addition to clear communication between suppliers, driver communication is important when introducing the new provider for areas such as driver support, app updates, website changes or new services.

This may involve roadshows, email campaigns and letters to ensure employees remain updated.

When Activa Contracts secured a supply contract with Winterbotham Darby, which had previously used a number of leasing providers through a broker, it held roadshows to meet drivers and also educate them about key tax changes under the new Optional Remuneration Arrangements (OpRA).

An essential part of the process to support supplier change is the handover of data, which now has the added complexity of meeting the standards set out in the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Broom says quality data is the foundation of a successful transition, so a focus on verifying information is key.

In some cases, a line needs to be drawn and the process started again, such as with driving licence checks, according to Hardy.

In others, the fleet client needs to be on hand to enable the handover of the required data, particularly to ensure it has the correct permission from employees.

Hardy adds: "It depends what the client wants. XYZ Leasing is never going to be as amenable as saying 'here is a massive data dump'.

"With GDPR, I don't think that will happen again.

"It is an involved process, with spreadsheets and imports,

"The secret of success is in the communication process. Get it right and everyone is on board and it goes smoothly"

Nick Hardy, Ogilvie Fleet

so it's quite a manual process. It is one we are well-versed in, but time and support are critical."

As data processors under GDPR, leasing companies may only process personal data on behalf of a controller (the fleet) where a written contract is in place which imposes a number of terms on the data processor.

Historically, some leasing companies report fleets handing over data that is irrelevant, with employee records including race, gender and other additional information.

The GDPR regulations promote best practice and much closer scrutiny of data that should be shared.

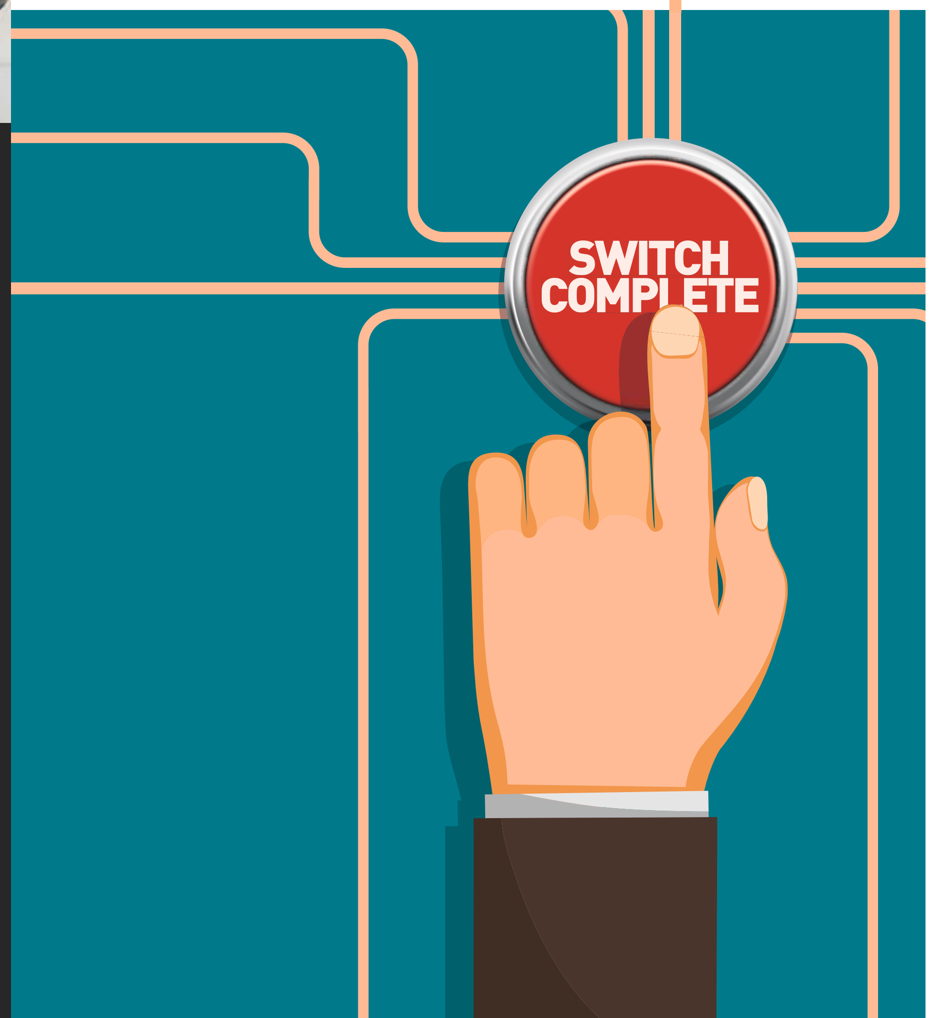
As handovers are a complex and time-consuming, external suppliers are helping to smooth the process.

For example, The Miles Consultancy (TMC) has introduced Transition+ to manage a changing supply chain by consolidating invoices, payroll files and fleet data into a simplified view across legacy suppliers. The service can be provided direct to fleet operators, or through leasing companies to help onboard new clients.

When transitioning to new suppliers, a TMC team combines data from outgoing providers with that of the new contractors. In addition to offering clarity on the fleet, it also helps with benchmarking.

Paul Hollick, TMC managing director, says: "We introduced it following client demand and we can cover leasing, fuel cards and telematics providers. Having an independent supplier in the mix helps when it comes to sharing data. Bringing all the data together provides clear total cost of ownership and helps the fleet manager make better informed decisions."

Hardy adds: "Although we have a well-documented process, there is not a standard procedure and actually I would not expect there to be an industry-wide way of transferring over."



FleetNews AWARDS 2018

"We have seen some fleets hold off, awaiting manufacturers to come forward with their [WLTP] figures, which is frustrating because we have ours"

Brian Cox, BMW Group

WINNER: BMW

It's a time of flux, but registrations are still ahead of the market

Triple award-winner remains bullish even though it expects 2018 to be a difficult year due to internal and external factors

By Stephen Briers

BMW is going through considerable structural and personnel change within its fleet department. It is currently interviewing for a new fleet director – its fourth in the past five years – following the departure of Steve Oliver, while its corporate dealer operations manager Danny Marinovic is transferring to Rolls-Royce.

Meanwhile, national corporate sales manager Brian Cox has been in the role for a matter of weeks, having been promoted from regional sales manager in May.

Cox says the carmaker is constantly looking for the best way to run its fleet operations, for the benefit of fleets, leasing companies and company car drivers, which partly explains the current state of flux.

Not that this is affecting registration figures in fleet, which remain ahead of the market, particularly when measured against rival premium marques.

In the first half of the year, BMW registered 60,915 cars to fleets, up almost 4.5% on 2017. Growth is almost entirely down to three models: 2 Series, 5 Series and X1.

Despite the strong performance, which saw it leapfrog Mercedes-Benz to become the biggest premium seller in fleet, BMW is forecasting a difficult final six months due to all the uncertainty over the WLTP testing regime, future BIK levels and the implications of air quality rules.

WLTP has already taken its first casualty; the plug-in hybrid 330e saloon will cease production at the end of July. "There will be a period where we will won't have it due to WLTP," confirmed Cox, although the the larger 530e is unaffected.

Fleet News: What are your priorities over the next couple of years?

Brian Cox: Our priorities this year are to grow our segment share of the premium sector.

Over the next 24 months, we have a plethora of new models, including new 3 Series and X5. We also have more plug-in hybrids and, by 2025, we will have 25 electrified vehicles, 12 of which will be pure EV.

We have the product portfolio to substantiate that sector growth and we have seen a real increase in the number of conversations we are having with fleets on electric.

FN: What impact is WLTP having on the market, and on BMW?

BC: We have seen some fleets hold off awaiting manufacturers to come forward with their figures, which is a frustration because we have ours.

We have communicated all of our WLTP figures and we know some of our vehicles have higher CO_2, but we also have the 520d xDrive M Sport which actually fell. We believe there will be a short-term impact in terms of taxation and we have uncertainty through a lack of tax figures.

There is a lot of talk about two-year replacement cycles as a temporary reaction to the lack of information on future BIK levels.

We are also seeing fleets change their company car policies, moving from 110-120g/km policies to 140g/km-plus because of WLTP. The cars on choice lists are no more polluting (in real terms), it's just the different figures under the new test regime.

We expect things to settle down after September/October; a number of fleets have said they have put their orders on hold until then, when all the manufacturers will have their figures.

FN: Are fleets more aware of NOx emissions and is this driving different behaviour?

BC: We are not having many conversations on NOx with fleets, but we are very mindful of it. We have seen a significant shift in terms of petrol demand which, to a degree, is across the range, but especially 1 Series and 3 Series. We see that trend continuing for the foreseeable future. It will normalise after another 12 months as WLTP and the tax situation becomes clearer.

FN: What is BMW's view on mobility and how it will affect future travel?

BC: Our strategy is aligned to 'aces': autonomy, connectivity, electric and share services. Autonomy will definitely be coming. We have greater capability in terms of level four and we will continue to develop that. But we will only release it when it is 100% safe and secure.

Connectivity is about integrating the vehicle to your lifestyle, making it easy to react to the outside world and using all the data to make the driving experience as pleasurable as possible, for example, the ease with which you can link mobile phone data.

National corporate sales manager Brian Cox has seen fleets revise their company car policies in the face of WLTP

A hat-trick of awards – members of the BMW Group UK team display their trophies

FN: BMW has already invested heavily in shared services; what can we expect to see in the UK?

BC: This has been one of our key projects in Munich with DriveNow, which is also now in London. DriveNow enables people to make use of any number of BMW, Mini and 'I' vehicles and pay for the benefit of them.

It is a pay-on-use model which includes parking, fuel and insurance, with the cars located in north-east London boroughs. They are parked in specific zones and when you reach your destination, it has to go back into one of the zones (they include the boroughs of Islington, Hackney, Haringey and Waltham Forest, plus London City Airport and Stratford International car park – you can park in virtually any public on-street parking bay in these areas).

Bookings are made via the app – you log in to reserve a car and it holds the booking for a quarter of an hour. You can drive by the minute (from 33p per minute) or book hourly or daily packages. It's ideal from a business point of view if you fly into the city or if you don't own a car. We see it coming to other cities in the UK.

BMW remains reliant on its retail network to deliver expected levels of service to fleets and their drivers. It backs this with regular interaction with leasing companies and additional support for its key accounts.

The carmaker, which has been *Fleet News* fleet manufacturer of the year five times in the past eight years, believes this combination will help it to continue growing in the true fleet sector, buoyed by new products such as the 3 Series and X5, a focus on connectivity and shared services, and future electric vehicle launches.

FACTFILE

National corporate sales manager Brian Cox
Time in role two months
Fleet sales (2018 YTD) 60,915
Market share (2018 YTD) 8.99%

JUDGES' COMMENTS

NEW COMPANY CAR OF THE YEAR

The new company car of the year offers the best driving experience money can buy at this level. Packed with safety technology and innovative infotainment, it has a range of refined engines, which combine power with efficiency. High residuals result in low cost of ownership.

BEST EXECUTIVE CAR

This was a unanimous decision by the judges – the 5 Series is back to its best. Great styling and drive, comfortable, a strong range of engines and drivetrain, low CO_2 emissions for the size of car and packed with technology, it's as close to faultless as any car has come in this category.

BEST ZERO EMISSION CAR

The updated BMW i3 has excellent extended range, which has increased its appeal in the used market, resulting in strong residual values. Fun to drive with standout looks, this electric car is suitable for most types of company car driver.

1.5 TDCI 120 ZETEC

FORD FOCUS

'Best Ford ever' is a touch hyperbolic. Best Focus ever? That's undeniable

By Stephen Briers

It's a headline-grabbing claim: "This is the best car we've ever built."

That's head of fleet Owen Gregory's view of the new Ford Focus. Can the car live up to such a billing?

In many ways, yes, but it does depend on your criteria and priorities. It's certainly the best Ford for connectivity, technology and safety. Arguably, it also offers the best overall package.

Handling, as with all Focuses since the original in 1998, is crisp and precise, ride is smooth and the grip is outstanding. The Fiesta ST is probably a better driver's car, though. Nevertheless, the Focus is agile and responsive, equally at home around town, on motorways or zipping around rural roads.

Styling, as with each previous generation, has undergone a revolution. Some love it, some don't. We think it looks great from the front, but much less so from the rear.

£2,300
reduction on the P11D price of the entry level Style

For full running costs, visit fleetnews.co.uk/running-costs

Great looks on the front three-quarters, but the rear is not so easy on the eye

Interior quality is good – a mix of smooth/hard plastics and soft materials, plus half the number of physical buttons for an improved layout. It's up with the best-in-class.

The Focus makes outstanding use of its space with greater room for front and rear passengers (and boot space) thanks to a longer wheelbase. Shorter overhangs mean exterior dimensions are unchanged.

Away from the passionate proclamations, something more tangible has happened from a fleet perspective. Ford has reduced the P11D price on key models – by £2,300 on the (reintroduced) entry level Style, now from £17,730, and by £850 on the fleet favourite Zetec, at £19,100. The move has positive implications for drivers on BIK and fleets on national insurance/corporation tax.

The Titanium is the same (£21,350), but higher levels of standard equipment offer greater value, says Ford.

All models come as standard with emergency and post-collision braking, lane-keeping warning/aid, intelligent speed assist, hill start assist, electronic stability control and 4.2-inch colour display.

Zetec adds Ford Sync 3 digital radio with 6.5-inch touch-screen, cruise control and front fog lamps with cornering function; Titanium adds LED rear lights, folding door mirrors, front/rear parking sensors, rain-sensing wipers, heated front seats, dual-zone aircon, sat-nav and keyless entry/start.

In addition to the two key fleet trims, the £21,370 ST-Line, with its 10mm lowered sports-tuned chassis, unique grille and body styling kit, will appeal to drivers looking for a sportier model. It is also the residuals champion, so fleets also have something to love.

Topping the range is the £25,250 Vignale, with head-up display for the first time on a Ford in Europe, plus active park assist which can now handle gradients up to 12 degrees and accommodate curb parking where allowed.

As well as price reductions, updated and new engines have lower CO_2 emissions/better fuel efficiency than those they replace – even when comparing their WLTP CO_2MPAS rating to the old engines' NEDC – while residuals are up 25% over three years/60,000 miles (on average from £6,000 to £7,500).

Half the number of physical buttons makes for an improved layout

"Handling, as with all Focuses since the original, is crisp and precise, ride is smooth and the grip is outstanding"

This triple whammy will result in a sizeable reduction in wholelife costs, making the car a highly attractive proposition for fleets, who will account for half of sales.

Pricing guides usually give new cars an RV boost, but underpinning this is the fact that Ford plans to dramatically cut the volume going to rental from 23% to just 8%.

However, it expects total volumes to remain broadly level with the outgoing model, which means more cars going to true fleet and retail.

The Focus will be launched as five-door hatchback this month, with the new 1.5-litre EcoBlue diesel (70% of corporate sales) and the upgraded 1.0-litre Ecoboost (30%).

The 95PS diesel emits 91g/km, the 120PS 94g/km, both on 16-inch wheels. The petrol (85PS, 100PS and 125PS) with cylinder deactivation emits from 107g/km.

The 125PS petrol has bags of power, particularly at higher revs, while the 120PS diesel is punchy at low revs and remains the best option for higher mileage drivers.

Noise levels – engine, road and wind – are noticeably reduced thanks to improved damping and a stiffer body.

Around 20% of the model mix will be the new eight-speed automatic with rotary dial and paddles, a £1,350 premium; the balance will be the six-speed manual.

The wagon (estate) will arrive in October, together with a 2.0-litre diesel (112g/km) and 1.5-litre petrol (121g/km), while the Focus Active, 30mm higher than the standard car with its own grille, is due in early 2019.

A mild hybrid option will follow while plug-in hybrid/electric vehicle versions could come in 2020.

The best Ford ever? Perhaps a touch hyperbolic, but it's undeniably the best Focus ever.

COSTS

P11D price	£20,570
BIK tax band (2018/19)	23%
Annual BIK tax (20%)	£946
Class 1A NIC	£653
Annual VED	£145, then £140
RV (4yr/80K)	£5,450/26%
Fuel cost (ppm)	7.63
AFR (ppm)	10
Running cost (4yr/80K)	30.44

SPEC

Power (PS)/torque (Nm)	120/300
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	94
Top speed (mph)	122
0-62mph (sec)	10
Fuel efficiency (mpg)	78.5

KEY RIVAL

Volkswagen Golf 1.6TDI 115 SE	
P11D price:	£21,690
BIK tax band (2018/19)	26%
Annual BIK tax (20%)	£1,128
Class 1A NIC	£778
Annual VED	£165, then £140
RV (4yr/80k)	£5,850/27%
Fuel cost (ppm)	8.69
AFR (ppm)	10
Running cost (4yr/80k)	31.78

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

THINKING CAP

By Martin Ward, manufacturer relationships manager

cap hpi

Monday I note that Audi boss Rupert Stadler has been arrested and, at the time of writing, was still being questioned by the German prosecutors over the dieselgate scandal, where 11 million vehicles were allegedly rigged to bypass emissions tests.

It's difficult to say much about an ongoing legal investigation, but I guess we haven't heard the last of these matters.

In Germany, all legal letters and documents need to be signed by two senior people, so getting any executive to sign something of substance is going to be a challenge now. For instance, getting WLTP figures signed off will not be easy.

Will anyone want to put their name to official CO_2 and mpg numbers? I certainly wouldn't in the current climate.

"This new pretty two-door (GT) coupe is bound to keep sales strong"

Tuesday Down to Gloucestershire to drive the all-new Mitsubishi Shogun Sport, the company's Thailand-built flagship aimed predominately at the Australian market.

The UK has decided to import it, after a few tweaks and alterations, allowing it to comply with our rules and regulations.

This 4x4 will only be available with a 2.4-litre 184PS diesel engine, connected to a smooth eight-speed automatic.

We drove through pretty countryside, on the motorway, in towns and villages and in a fully working stone quarry. It felt comfortable and not at all lumpy and bumpy as some large SUVs can be.

Prices range from £37,795 to £39,775 with no options and both have seven seats and leather upholstery as standard.

Thursday Down to Bentley's Crewe factory to see the new GT which is improved in every department, especially exterior design.

Strangely, the V8 continues to be produced, so basically two GTs that look different will be on sale at the same time.

Bentley is doing a great job to help exports and this new pretty two-door coupé is bound to keep sales strong.

ALLURE 1.5 BLUEHDI 130 AUTO

PEUGEOT 508

Much to admire, with impressive styling, engaging drive and low CO_2

By Simon Harris

Looking back 10 years or so, the company car choices in the upper-medium sector were fairly dull – with a few exceptions.

Perhaps this, inadvertently, helped increase the popularity of the crossover and the decline of the mainstream family hatchback and saloon.

Despite a marked fall in the sector's popularity, most of the options now couldn't be described as dull. There are fewer choices compared with 2007. No longer available is the Honda Accord, Toyota Avensis, Citroën C5 (on temporary hiatus, we're told), Fiat Croma or Renault Laguna.

A notable exception (to the 'no longer dull' description) is the Peugeot 508. It comes from a long line of elegant saloons, but in its current guise suffers from anonymity.

If Peugeot wants to remain a player in the sector it needs to work much harder to compete with the Škoda Superb, Vauxhall Insignia and Ford Mondeo, all of which are both capable and attractive.

The company's approach has been to look upmarket for inspiration. The new 508 is shorter than its predecessor, but also lower and wider. Peugeot has been prepared to sacrifice interior space for agility and road presence.

The doors are frameless and the roofline is elongated and tapering, more like a coupé – which a lot of car manufacturers try to achieve this days because it's a nice word to put in the marketing material.

It perhaps has more in common with a Volkswagen Arteon than a Passat, although the 508 starts with a 131PS powertrain (which Peugeot calls 130), whereas Volkswagen's least expensive model comes with 150PS.

The entry point to the Peugeot 508 range is another talking point. The 131PS 1.5 BlueHDi diesel offers CO_2 emissions from just 98g/km.

98g/km
the low emissions figure reported for 131PS diesel

For full running costs, visit fleetnews.co.uk/running-costs

In these days of NEDC-correlated data, that figure seems remarkably low. So we asked Peugeot UK representatives to check whether these weren't just showboating NEDC figures that would have to be revised in a few months. Peugeot assured us these were under the latest protocols.

The 98g/km figure applies to the version with the optional eight-speed automatic gearbox – with the smaller of the wheel sizes offered – while the six-speed manual achieves 101g/km on the same wheels.

We await with interest what Ford can do in the Mondeo using the same engine with the updated EU 6.2 emissions class – currently it's 94g/km for a 120PS manual hatchback – while the Škoda Superb 1.6 TDI Greenline at 101g/km has an engine yet to be measured at EU 6.2.

The Vauxhall Insignia has recently been updated and has the lowest CO_2 of 116g/km from the 110PS version of the 1.6 CDTi. The more powerful 136PS version has a low of 121g/km for the manual and with CO_2 emissions above 130g/km for automatics.

So you can see why Peugeot's assurance was necessary when we saw the impressive-looking figures of the new 508.

The entry-level Active grade, only available with the 1.5 BlueHDi engine is likely a daily rental special, with the range proper starting with Allure. GT Line and GT complete the line-up.

Other diesels include an auto-only 163PS 2.0-litre BlueHDi (160 in price lists) on Allure and GT Line, with a 177PS version (180) available on the GT.

Petrol choices are all automatic and include a 181PS turbocharged 1.6-litre, with CO_2 emissions from 123g/km and a 224PS (225) version with CO_2 at 131g/km.

All grades come with the latest version of Peugeot's I-Cockpit, which anyone who has seen a 3008 or 5008 will be familiar with. It means a raised instrument binnacle and lower steering angle, with a flat top and bottom on the steering wheel and fully digital instruments with configurable display.

The dashboard lacks clutter, and has a similar touchscreen with switches below to those on the 3008.

Minimum luggage volume of 500 litres is the same as the outgoing saloon, while rear leg-room has shrunk by 15mm, which isn't enough to be a deal-breaker.

Although the roofline seems to go back a long way, headroom in the rear is still a bit tight for tall occupants, and the shallow rear window angle makes looking out in the rear-view mirror seem like peering through a letterbox.

Overall the driving experience is engaging, with a compliant ride and cabin occupants insulated from all but the worst road imperfections.

Competing in a small sector of talented cars, the 508 stands out for its styling and upmarket feel, and particularly its low CO_2 emissions.

The latter could be the key factor in driving its desirability with fleets.

"Competing in a small sector of talented cars, the 508 stands out for its styling and upmarket feel"

The 508 has a raised instrument binnacle and lower steering angle. Its touchscreen (below) is similar to that found in the 3008

The 508 is shorter, lower and wider than its predecessor

COSTS

P11D price	£27,700
BIK tax band (2018/19)	24%
Annual BIK tax (20%/40%)	£1,330/£2,659
Class 1A NIC	£917
Annual VED	£145 then £140
RV (4yr/80K)	TBC
Fuel cost (ppm)	TBC
AFR (ppm)	11
Running cost (4yr/80K)	TBC

SPEC

Power (PS)/torque (Nm)	131/221
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	98
Top speed (mph)	129
0-62mph (sec)	10.0
Fuel efficiency (mpg)	76.3

KEY RIVAL

Vauxhall Insignia Grand Sport 1.6 CDTi 136 SRi VX Line Nav auto

P11D price:	£25,805
BIK tax band (2018/19)	31%
Annual BIK tax (20%/40%)	£1,703/£3,406
Class 1A NIC	£1,175
Annual VED	£515 then £140
RV (4yr/80k)	£6,775/26%
Fuel cost (ppm)	11.45
AFR (ppm)	11
Running cost (4yr/80k)	39.32ppm

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

1.6 CRDI 136 3

KIA CEED

Kia adds superior handling to its already impressive hatch offering


The Ceed's exterior is now sportier, with sharper lines

By Matt de Prez

It's not often a new car surprises you, but Kia's slogan is "the power to surprise" and the Korean brand has astonished us twice recently; first with the Stinger and now with the new third-generation Ceed.

Kia has set its sights high for the new model and expects it to compete directly with the Ford Focus and Volkswagen Golf as a credible European hatch.

In short, they've managed it.

From the outside, the car is sportier; it features sharper lines and shorter overhangs.

Inside, the cabin quality is up there with the best and there is no shortage of 'toys', either.

An eight-inch touchscreen provides infotainment, smartphone connectivity and sat-nav. There is also a high-power JBL stereo, automatic LED headlights and keyless entry available.

Around 75% of Ceeds are sold to fleets and Kia expects this mix to continue with the new model.

Power comes from a suite of turbocharged petrol and diesel engines.

There is a plucky 120PS 1.0-litre three cylinder petrol unit with CO_2 emissions from 122g/km, and a more potent 1.4-litre with 140PS and emissions from 125g/km. Diesel models consist of a 115PS or 136PS version of the same 1.6-litre unit. Emissions range from 99g/km to 111g/km. All figures are NEDC-correlated.

Kia expects the 1.4-litre petrol to be the best seller.

We tested all but the least powerful diesel, as it wasn't available at the launch event.

The 1.4 offers excellent performance and delivers it in a smooth and relaxing way. The 1.0 requires the driver to work it harder and feels a little lacking in grunt at motorway speeds. We found minimal difference in fuel economy during our testing.

The diesel is the best all-rounder; it can reach 62mph from rest in around 10 seconds and promises upwards of 70mpg. Refinement is strong, too, with minimal noise intrusion.

COSTS

P11D price	£22,000 (estimated)
BIK tax band (2018/19)	25%
Annual BIK tax (20%)	£1,100 (est)
Class 1A NIC	£759 (estimated)
Annual VED	£145 then £140
RV (4yr/80K)	n/a
Fuel cost (ppm)	n/a
AFR (ppm)	10
Running cost (4yr/80K)	n/a

SPEC

Power (PS)/torque (Nm)	136/280
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	104
Top speed (mph)	124
0-62mph (sec)	10.2
Fuel efficiency (mpg)	70

KEY RIVAL

Ford Focus 1.5 TDCi 120 Titanium

P11D price:	£22,320
BIK tax band (2018/19)	23%
Annual BIK tax (20%)	£1,027
Class 1A NIC	£708
Annual VED	£145 then £140
RV (4yr/80K)	£5,775
Fuel cost (ppm)	7.63
AFR (ppm)	10
Running cost (4yr/80K)	32.22ppm

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


An eight-inch touchscreen provides infotainment and sat-nav

A mild-hybrid diesel will launch next year with even lower emissions and better performance.

At motorway speeds, with any powertrain, the Ceed is civilised and covers miles with little effort.

But, the area where Kia's engineers have made the biggest difference is handling.

The new Ceed's steering and suspension set-up is significantly better. In fact, it is among the best in its class for driveability. There is little impact on ride comfort, despite the stiffer set-up and, overall, the Ceed is a car that now has real driver appeal.

Kia hasn't forgotten about safety either. Standard equipment includes lane-keep assist and autonomous emergency braking, plus seven airbags.

Optionally available is adaptive cruise control and Lane Follow Assist, which, combined, give Level 2 autonomy.

Automatic models, which use an excellent seven-speed dual clutch gearbox, also benefit from a Stop and Go system which take care of the brakes and accelerator in traffic jams.

To finish off the package, the boot is now larger at 395 litres and prices will start at £18, 295.

Orders open next month with first deliveries expected in the autumn.

SEAT IBIZA FR

1.0 TSI 115 DSG

Praise all round for fifth generation Ibiza

Impressive looks and plenty of passenger room make the Ibiza stand out

COSTS

P11D price	£17,765
BIK tax band (2018/19)	22%
Annual BIK tax (20%)	£782
Class 1A NIC	£539
Annual VED	£145 then £140
RV (4yr/80k)	£5,250
Fuel cost (ppm)	9.08
AFR (ppm)	11
Running cost (ppm)	27.86

SPEC

Engine (cc)	999
Power (PS)	115
Torque (Nm)	200
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	108
Manufacturer mpg	60.1
Real-world mpg*	n/a
Test mpg	47
Max speed (mph)	120
0-62mph (sec)	9.3
Current mileage	5,762

Running cost data supplied by KeeResources (4yr/80k)
** Data supplied by Equa index*

By Sarah Tooze

It's been a while since we've tested a car that has had the thumbs up from every member of the editorial team that has driven it, but the Ibiza has done just that.

When our head of production Luke Neal handed me the keys to see out its final two weeks with us before it went back to Seat he'd been impressed by its looks and its turbocharged 1.0-litre petrol engine, which can do 0-62mph in 9.5 seconds yet still return 50-plus mpg on long journeys.

The downside for him was that for a family of four it didn't have the luggage capacity he would need for a holiday.

However, the Ibiza has one of the biggest boots in its class with the rear seats up at 355 litres (compared to the Ford Fiesta's 292 litres and Nissan Micra's 300 litres). With the seats folded the Micra and Fiesta offer more space (1,004 litres and 1,093 litres respectively, compared to the Ibiza's 823 litres).

The Ibiza shares the same Volkswagen Group MQB A0 platform as the Polo meaning it has a much longer wheelbase than the fourth generation Ibiza and passengers enjoy more room.

At six foot four inches, the tallest member of our team, head of digital Jeremy Bennett, found the Ibiza had ample space.

On the road the Ibiza's seven-speed DSG gearbox is effortless and while the FR offers a sportier ride than other versions it's still comfortable.

The 1.0-litre engine feels much more suited to the Ibiza than in our previous long-term Škoda Octavia.

When we first took delivery of the Ibiza its fuel economy was a disappointing 40.1mpg, based on urban trips, but by the end of its six-month stint it was averaging a more respectable 47mpg (13mpg below the official combined figure).

It will be interesting to see how our new Ford Fiesta long-termer, which marginally beat the Ibiza in this year's Fleet News Awards, fares (the Ibiza and Micra were both highly commended).

TEST TIMELINE

Start End

VAUXHALL INSIGNIA GRAND SPORT 1.6 CDTI SRI VX-LINE

The Insignia's consistency in regularly achieving more than 60mpg cannot be over-emphasised.

You may be familiar with economy runs where drivers deliberately try techniques that should deliver better fuel consumption than official figures.

This 'who can be the most frugal?' contest is also sometimes played out at car media launches when, given we journalists are so competitive, it's difficult to resist the temptation to deny a writer from a rival publication the glory of winning.

That said, without resorting to this kind of frugal driving, the Insignia Grand Sport has still achieved impressive figures.

Most of my journeys in it have been long – 100-plus miles.

I travel locally occasionally, but it's usually driven to airports or meetings.

Often there is congestion on these routes, with a few miles of slow-moving traffic, so it isn't as if the car and its 136PS diesel engine escapes the challenges of urban driving.

The trip computer on the Insignia's last tank of diesel read 72.1mpg.

We know from an earlier update that the car is a little optimistic about its achievement. But measuring brim to brim, it still achieves 68.5mpg.

With customers deserting diesel for a variety of reasons it's worth pointing out that it would be impossible to achieve fuel economy like this in a similar-sized petrol car in everyday driving.

And, unless every journey was short and urban-based, it would be extremely unlikely in a petrol hybrid, too.

Simon Harris

AT A GLANCE – THE REST OF OUR FLEET

Volvo S90 D4 Inscription

Renault Koleos 1.6DCI Signature Nav

Volkswagen e-Golf

Škoda Karoq 1.6 TDi SE

Mercedes-Benz E220d AMG Line Premium Plus

JOE HOWICK

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER FLEETEUROPE

Given Howick lived near a golf course when he was young it is perhaps unsurprising that the sport is one of his favourites. When not on the long walk it entails, he likes to take long runs

A book I would recommend is *Four-iron in the Soul*. It tells how journalist Lawrence Donegan spent a summer caddying for Scottish golfer Ross Drummond on the 1996 PGA European Tour. It provides a funny insight into the master-servant relationship they had and the characters that make up the golf scene, including the cheats, geniuses and hangers-on.

If I were Prime Minister for the day I would introduce measures to increase the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs). These would include improvements to the charging infrastructure and increasing plug-in grants.

The three vehicles I would like in my garage are a Range Rover SV Autobiography as my family wagon. My sportier option would be an Aston Martin Vantage S and, in terms of the classics, the 1964 Aston Martin DB5 is still a great looking car.

My favourite films are the James Bond franchise. *Skyfall* gets my vote as the best Bond film of all time, not least because it featured the reappearance of my favourite Bond car, the Aston Martin DB5.

The pivotal moment in my life was, in many ways, the sale of Leasedrive. It was career defining for me and I am now using the skills I gained to take FleetEurope forward.

My hobbies and interests are golf, cycling and long-distance running. I regularly take part in fundraising events, including running the Berlin marathon three years in a row for ABF, the soldiers' charity.

My first memory associated with a car was starting my own car cleaning service when I was 10 years old. My best customer owned a day-glo orange Austin Allegro with quartic square steering wheel. The car was better known as the 'All aggro'.

The advice I would give to my 18-year-old self is to follow your passions, don't be afraid to make mistakes, cherish family and distance yourself from people that have a negative influence in your life.

My pet hate is corporate jargon. The phrase "reaching out" seems to have become all too common in recent years. I'd rather people just contacted me.

I want to be remembered as a good father who taught his kids the difference between right and wrong.

First fleet role At 25 as a sales manager for the Leasedrive Group (now Zenith). I spent 18 years there in a number of progressive roles within the rental management division. I was part of the senior management team that helped grow the business from 3,600 vehicles in 2003 to more than 40,000 vehicles in 2013 prior to the business being merged with Zenith.

Career goals at FleetEurope My current goal is the continued focus on FleetEurope's ambitious growth strategy to strengthen its existing service offering, provide additional value to customers and further accelerate the growth of the business.

Biggest achievement in business My biggest achievement to date was being a part of the senior management team at Leasedrive, which was valued at £7m in 2003 and sold in 2013 for £100m-plus.

Biggest career influence David Bird and Roddy Graham, former executives from Leasedrive, took me under their wings when they joined the Leasedrive management team in 2003. They were excellent mentors, developing my knowledge and leadership skills, something I will be eternally grateful for.

Biggest mistake in business Ignoring my instincts. I put my trust in a colleague that my gut told me was untrustworthy. I won't make that mistake again.

Leadership style Transformational – I strive to encourage, inspire and motivate employees to innovate and create change.

If I wasn't in fleet I love sport and leisure, so it would have to be something related to those. I would like to set up a gym for my son who is a personal trainer.

Childhood ambition As a kid I lived next to Blackmoor golf course in Hampshire and wanted to follow in the footsteps of Seve Ballesteros.

Next issue: Chris Miller, country manager, Abax