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Audit Office report prompts changes at the top of Motability

MP questions accuracy of information given on chief executive's salary at earlier inquiry

By Gareth Roberts

Motability Operations has made changes to its senior management team after the charity car lease provider was criticised in a new report.

Motability chief executive Mike Betts will step down after a National Audit Office (NAO) report highlighted concerns over governance and executive pay (fleetnews.co.uk, December 7). Its chairman, Neil Johnson, will be replaced when he retires in April.

The report acknowledged that Motability Operations, which operates a risk fleet of some 600,000-plus cars, provided an "excellent" service to customers.

However, it said executive pay was "generous" and linked to performance targets that were "easily exceeded".

For example, a long-term incentive plan, implemented in 2008, enabled five executive directors to receive £15.3 million over seven years, for hitting targets set below levels already being achieved when they were introduced.

Furthermore, the NAO says that Motability Operations – which administers the scheme on behalf of the Motability charity – has made high levels of unplanned profit and holds more in reserves than other car leasing companies.

Amyas Morse, head of the NAO, called on the Government to consider the scheme's future following its findings.

He said: "Motability Operations' management deserves credit for having turned the business around and investing in features that have enhanced benefits for customers. However, it has taken an unnecessarily conservative view of risk, holds more in reserves than arguably it needs and has also made large unplanned profits. On top of which there has been an internal view of executive performance as being 'consistently extraordinary', with the reward to match, despite pressures from the charity."

"There is much to be proud of, but we think that stakeholders, including Government, need to give far-reaching consideration to the scheme as it now stands, and to its future, in particular, whether its governance and accountability arrangements are robust enough."

The NAO investigation follows a highly critical report from MPs on the Work and Pensions, and Treasury committees, which labelled senior pay at the charity as "unacceptable".

Published after a two-month joint inquiry, it called on the NAO to carry out the value for money review earlier this year (fleetnews.co.uk, May 21).

It said it was difficult to square the high levels of executive pay and significant financial reserves of Motability Operations with the scheme's charitable objectives and the wider context of pressures on welfare expenditure.

At the time, Work and Pensions Committee chairman Frank Field MP said the organisation needed to "get a grip" and realise the "privileged position in which it trades".

However, the fact that the NAO report now says that the joint inquiry was not given the full facts about a bonus scheme for Betts could have further implications for the charity.



"Motability Operations has serious questions to answer about the information they provided to Parliament"

Frank Field MP



Between 2010 and 2015, the chief executive benefited from an additional five-year long-term incentive scheme, designed to ensure his retention in post.

Motability Operations, says the NAO report, had only disclosed the initial £258,000 to the public through its annual report and accounts – the minimum disclosure required.

Payment of the scheme's value, which was actually worth £1.86m in September 2018 and is likely to be worth around £2.2m by 2022, can be released at any time.

Field has now written to the chairman of Motability Operations to question the evidence he provided to Parliament, and also to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Amber Rudd, pressing for action to match the scale of the NAO's findings about the state of the scheme's governance.

He said: "We knew already that executive pay at Motability Operations was out of control, but the NAO has now uncovered its full extent."

"Despite a joint select committee inquiry earlier this year, this is the first time these figures have been out in the open. Motability Operations now has serious questions to answer about the information they provided to Parliament."

The organisation could be called to appear before the panel of MPs again and be charged

with contempt, if it failed to provide the full details of salary packages during the committees' joint inquiry.

Motability Operations generates income from vehicles, both from its receipt of mobility allowances and through selling the vehicles at the end of the lease. Income in excess of costs results in a profit, which, in turn, bolsters its reserves.

However, from 2008 to 2017, the NAO report shows that Motability Operations made £2.19 billion profit against a plan of £1.14bn – an unplanned profit of £1.05bn.

In fact, the organisation has made more profit than it planned to in every year over the past 10 years. This was even the case even in 2008, where the value of used vehicles dropped sharply following the UK recession.

Its remarketing operation is significant. Last year, one in five three-year-old cars sold in the used car market came from Motability, with some 240,000 cars sold each year.

It has developed an online sales platform, which generates around 80% of its sales. This allows it to arrange sales before the vehicle is handed back by the customer for 20% of its fleet. Between January and July 2018, the value of its used car sales had outperformed the wider used car market by 2.2%.

The biggest drivers of unplanned profit were higher than expected profit on the sale of vehicles due to inaccurate forecasts on residual value (RVs). This, says the NAO, contributed £826m, 79% of total unplanned profit.

Furthermore, it says Motability Operations' forecasts of the RV of vehicles at the end of lease agreements have been more pessimistic than wider market averages since 2009.

Overall, underestimating the forecast value of cars means customers were charged £390m more in lease agreements than was required.

Generating unplanned profit also compromises the ability for either Motability or Motability Operations to plan effectively for how best to use this profit in the longer term.

Between 2010 and 2017, Motability Operations donated £345m to support Motability's grant activity and announced a further £400m donation in September 2018. Motability also expects to receive ongoing donations of at least £100m a year.

However, Motability does not have a long-term strategy and it is not clear that it can absorb the donations it has received as a result of Motability Operations' unplanned profit in a way that can maximise their effectiveness.

Neil Johnson, the outgoing chairman of Motability Operations, defended the scheme's operation and said measures were already being introduced to address concerns.

He said: "Our business model has allowed the company to return more than £500m in payments directly back to customers over the past 10 years. Moreover, efficient running of the scheme has ensured that prices are consistently 44% cheaper than any alternative."

However, he said: "We will continue to work with the charity to invest to improve our service and value for money while supporting the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in their efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the scheme."

Johnson was also quick to defend his chief executive, Betts, who will step down from his role by May 2020 at the latest. "I would like to set on record my appreciation for the dedication and passion that Mike has brought to the business," said Johnson. "Under his guidance, Motability Operations has become an outstanding enterprise which delivers the highest levels of customer service."

The NAO concluded in its report that careful consideration is needed relating to the scheme's governance and Motability Operations' executive remuneration.

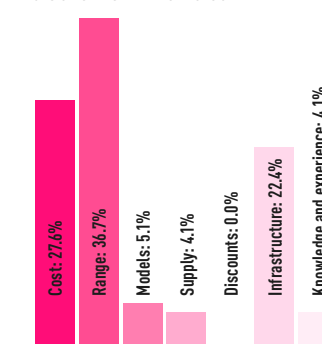
The Government, it said, also needs to regularly review the value of the support it provides, in light of its objectives for mobility allowances.

FLEET FACTS AND FIGURES

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This week's poll: When will you personally be making the switch to a full EV vehicle?

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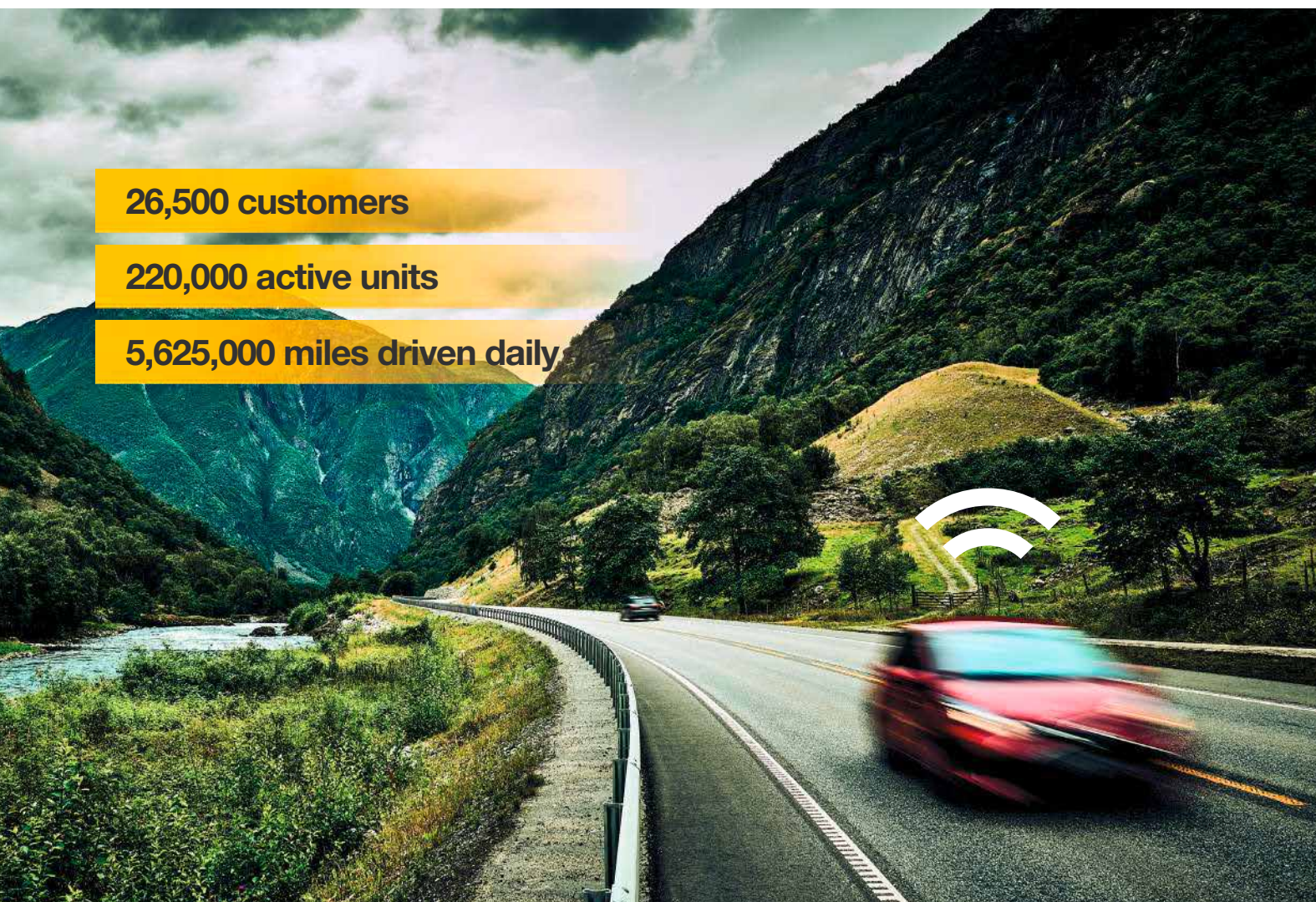
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Government and industry take up the EV charge point challenge

Millions of pounds invested in discovering ways to address switch to electricity

By Stephen Briers

Government-funded and commercial-backed ventures are seeking to identify solutions to some of the most pressing concerns around electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.

The Government set aside £40 million as part of its Road to Zero strategy for two charging competitions: one to develop and trial low-cost wireless charging for back-to-base fleets; the other for on-street charging technology for the third of UK homes without off-street parking.

Wireless charging options are being assessed by 14 programmes, while 16 are looking at public charging solutions for urban environments.

Among these are local charging hubs, for example at shopping centres and cinemas, transport hubs and street-side parking.

The Department for Transport (DfT), which has factored in a 10% reduction in vehicle use by 2030 to hit its emissions targets, has also allocated £30m to a vehicle-to-grid (V2G) programme with 20 projects taking place over the next couple of years.

Mark Thompson, head of energy at Innovate UK, the non-governmental public body, told the Energy Saving Trust Fleet Heroes conference: "We expect many of these to become business as usual."

He believes speed of EV uptake will depend on "diversity", with key drivers including patterns of use, battery size and urban circumstances.

"There is no silver bullet; diversity is the way of the future," Thompson said. "If you want a car to charge as quickly as refuelling, yes that will come, but it will be more expensive. But if you want rewards for helping the grid and to keep your costs down, you want to be plugged in all the time to maximise the opportunities."

He dismissed naysayers who claimed the grid would not have capacity to charge millions of EVs, pointing to the diversity of work charging, smart charging (such as solar panels) and V2G charging.

The public infrastructure received a boost this month with the announcement of a joint venture between Volkswagen and Tesco to introduce more than 2,400 EV charging bays across 600



Charging while parked on the street is just one of the methods being examined

stores nationwide within three years. Powered by Pod Point, the bays will offer free 7kW charging or use of a 50kW rapid charger for a small fee based on market rates.

Critics pointed out the agreement amounted to just four charge points on average at each site, but it still represents a 14% increase in the number of public charge bays in the UK.

Thompson said the UK needed a portfolio of solutions that matched different lifestyles: "Airports, for example, could be ideal for V2G – it could be high value for both parties with discounted parking."

However, as batteries increase in size and range increases, people might only need to charge once or twice a week, reducing demand on the infrastructure.

In what is being described as the world's biggest electric vehicle trial, Royal Mail, Centrica and Uber are to run 3,000 EVs over the next three years, helping to test Thompson's theory that grid capacity will not be an issue.

Optimise Prime is a three-year project involving UK Power Networks and data business Hitachi Vantara, supported by SSE and Hitachi Capital

Vehicle Solutions. It will test and implement the best options for EV rollout for commercial operators. Funding of £16.6m will come from Ofgem, with £18m from the project partners.

The project will identify practical ways of overcoming the infrastructure concerns that are one of the biggest barriers to success, according to Paul Gatti, Royal Mail fleet director.

"When deploying our first 100 vans, one of the key factors guiding the decisions was grid resilience," he said. "For tackling air pollution, it is essential that EVs are deployed in areas with the worst air quality, rather than those with the best connections to the electricity grid."

Gatti added: "Electric vehicles will play a key focus for our business moving forward, alongside a programme of initiatives that will ensure we can deliver letters and parcels efficiently and in as eco-friendly manner as possible."

Ian Cameron, UK Power Networks head of innovation, told Fleet Heroes delegates that Optimise Prime would "develop solutions to enable fleets to charge at home, depot or en route with least disruption".

He forecast that the number of plug-in vehicles across the UK Power Networks region would rise from 55,000 today to more than four million by 2030, with 70% of charging taking place at home, 20% at work and 10% while travelling.

Local grid capacity is an issue, but could be resolved by utilising flexible (smart charging/dispatching) and smart connection (timed/profiled, which give a power boost outside of peak hours) solutions rather than private companies funding extra substations/transformers.

■ An extended version and the views of Centrica head of fleet Steve Winter is on the FN website.



"For tackling air pollution, it is essential EVs are deployed in areas with the worst air quality, rather than those with the best connections to the electricity grid"

Paul Gatti, Royal Mail

DfT sets up a new policing unit to examine dashcam evidence

Scheme is part of a two-year plan to improve safety for vulnerable road users

By Tom Seymour

The Department for Transport (DfT) has announced that it will create a new police unit to analyse dashcam evidence of dangerous driving.

The new back office team, which is being given £100,000 in Government funding, will handle video evidence submitted by drivers.

It comes after a pilot scheme, called Operation Snap, was carried out by North Wales Police in October 2016. Police dealt with 129 cases as a result of footage submitted and said it had helped reduce case times by 12 hours each.

The DfT said it showed an increase in detection rates "without significant extra enforcement cost". It also said there had been a positive reaction from the public to what is seen as community policing.

ACFO chairman John Pryor welcomed the initiative in terms of improving road safety but questioned whether fleet operators, who have dashcams fitted to company vehicles, would want to incorporate processes or procedures for submitting footage to police in their policies.

He said: "I would suspect a lot of fleets may not want to get involved with proactively submitting video footage as part of any policy in cases where a driver may have witnessed an



Drivers wishing to report bad practice must be willing to submit footage of whole journey

incident due to the time and effort of doing this."

Any driver uploading footage to the secure police online portal must be willing to give a statement and go to court to support the video evidence if needed. Footage has to be unedited and include the whole journey, not just the incident.

This means that providers cannot remain anonymous and the DfT believes this would deter spiteful or vexatious allegations.

The DfT explained that the video evidence would be used to investigate a range of offences, including dangerous driving, driving without due care and attention and using a mobile phone.

"The new unit will make it more likely that the police can cope with the volume of work that helmet and dashcam footage provides," said a DfT spokesman.

"The proliferation of dashcams in vehicles and cameras on cycle helmets has generated a substantial increase in the number of reports the police receive with evidence of illegal driving.

"Reports are submitted to the police in all sorts of ways and Operation Snap's objective was to establish a streamlined process to deal with them."

Simon Marsh, managing director at video telematics provider VisionTrack, welcomed Government funding for the new police unit and believes it will help aid road safety.

He said: "Fleets that are operated in a safe and responsible way often have dashcams so it provides a regulated and impartial channel for them to escalate evidence of road incidents."

He also believes the new police unit will help encourage more fleets to adopt connected video and telematics technology.

He said: "My hope is that it will be a reminder to all people on the road whether that be drivers, cyclists or pedestrians to ensure that they are alert and aware of the dangers.

"One of the biggest cause of incidents is distraction so it may be a further warning to everyone to be vigilant and act responsibly on the road."

The dashcam scheme, which will apply in England and Wales, was announced as part of the DfT's two-year action plan to improve safety for vulnerable road users (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22).



"It provides a regulated and impartial channel for fleets to escalate evidence of road incidents"

Simon Marsh, VisionTrack



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Bikeability is a three-level course aimed at making drivers aware of the issues facing cyclists

Discounts for passing Bikeability course is news to British insurers

DfT says it will be talking to the insurance industry to explore scheme's potential

By Tom Seymour

Government claims that insurance premiums would be cut if drivers take a cyclist awareness course have come as a complete surprise to the insurance industry's trade body, the Association of British Insurers (ABI). Insurers say they have not been consulted about the Government plan.

The Department for Transport (DfT) announcement suggested there would be vehicle insurance discounts for drivers that take the Bikeability training programme, with a particular focus on business drivers (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22).

However, a spokesman for the ABI told *Fleet News*: "We were unaware of this proposal. There have been no discussions between the ABI and the Government on any proposals around motor insurance premiums and its Bikeability scheme."

"Insurers support improved road safety, but in 2017 less than 0.1% of motor claims involved cyclists, so it is hard to see how this could have any meaningful impact on premiums."

According to Government statistics from last year, 100 cyclists died on UK roads and 470 pedestrians were killed, an increase of 5%.

The DfT called for evidence as part of its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) safety consultation.

Respondents said insurance premiums discounts should be used as an incentive to take cycle training. They also claimed that motorists who are also cyclists are less likely to be involved in motoring insurance claims.

The DfT said it wanted to incentivise Bikeability cycle training, by offering discounts to road users who have passed Bikeability Level 3, with

commercial motor insurers of fleet vehicles, lorries, vans and minibuses a priority. However, when asked to react to the industry's ignorance over the proposal, the DfT failed to respond directly to the question.

Instead, a spokesman said: "At this stage we are simply exploring with insurance providers what opportunities we can offer to help them identify lower risk insurance policyholders."

He added that the department will be engaging with motor insurers and organisations that promote best practice in work-related road safety management over the next two years as part of its action plan.

"In these discussions we will seek to understand whether there is scope for insurance companies to provide incentives to professional drivers and riders to undertake training focused on the needs of cyclists and other vulnerable road users," he said.

The DfT declined to confirm if it has since set up a meeting with the ABI to discuss proposals.

A spokesman for Admiral Insurance said the first they had heard of the Government's proposal was reading it in the news.

He said: "It's too soon to say if we would take part (in offering premium discounts) or who it would be offered to."

"We welcome any initiatives that could reduce the number of accidents involving motorists and cyclists, but we would want any course to make a real difference and reduce the number of cyclists being injured in road accidents, so it's worthwhile."

There are three Bikeability levels, each designed to improve cycling skills.

The Government had said the insurance discounts would be for those that have completed the highest Level 3, which includes elements like planning and making an independent journey on busier roads.

The courses can be provided by local councils or approved training providers either for free or for "minimal cost" due to DfT subsidies.

The DfT said it also wants to give councils more powers to tackle parking in cycling lanes and it is working with the police, courts and road safety groups on using courses or training as part of the sentencing framework for driving and cycling offences.

Joshua Harris, director of campaigns at the road safety charity Brake, said: "With cyclists and pedestrians among the most vulnerable on our roads, safety, and the perceptions of safety, need to be addressed to encourage more people to leave their cars at home and get active."

The proposal was announced as part of a DfT two-year action plan to improve safety for vulnerable road users.

The DfT has put together 50 new measures as part of the Government's plan to combat road rage, encourage greater mutual respect between road users and protect the most vulnerable.

"It is hard to see how this could have any meaningful impact on premiums"

Association of British Insurers

JLR admits that lack of hybrid models has stifled fleet sales

Manufacturer has been concentrating on retail where buying confidence is greater

By Jeremy Bennett

Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) will reveal its new fleet strategy early next year as it acknowledges challenges in the market that have led it to focus on retail customers.

Land Rover's fleet sales, not including Motability and captives, were 17.6% down after the first three quarters of 2018, with 19,661 units registered, compared with 23,873 for the same period last year.

Private registrations for the brand were also down, but not by so much, with 31,534 cars registered by the end of quarter three, compared with 34,835 last year, a 9.5% decline.

The difference between fleet and private registrations was even more pronounced with Jaguar. It reported 10,526 registrations to fleet, not including Motability and captives, by the end of Q3 2018. That compared to 13,206 units for the same period last year, a 20.3% fall.

Private registrations for Jaguar actually increased year-on-year by 22.6%, with 13,104 units registered compared to 10,692, last year.

Rawdon Glover, JLR UK managing director, told *Fleet News*: "Our year-on-year performance in the fleet market is down and some of that is due to the uncertainty in the market around the Worldwide harmonised Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) and customers holding off



"Some of our challenges aren't conscious choices, but down to powertrains we have available"

Rawdon Glover, JLR

The 2019 Evoque has been unveiled and is due on the market in April



making buying decisions, something that has impacted a lot of other manufacturers."

He explained that the British manufacturer took the decision to focus on retail where there is "more buying confidence".

Also, drivers are opting out of taking a traditional company car and acting like retail customers in greater numbers, he said.

The model range has also proved problematic. Glover explained: "It's no secret we don't have a hybrid in the XE and XF ranges, making it very difficult to be competitive in these segments from a benefit-in-kind (BIK) point of view. So, some of our challenges aren't conscious choices, but down to powertrains we have available and decisions made some time ago."

However, he said: "While we were probably right to lose volume in those markets – we can't continue this retail focus for more than the short-term."

He told *Fleet News* he was working with Jon Wackett, JLR's general manager of fleet and business sales, to re-appraise the fleet market, break it down into segments and then decide where they want to target.

"Plans should be finalised in about a month's time," he said.

"We might want to get into affinity and opt-out schemes where drivers behave like retail customers, win Government contracts – where you'd think buying British in the current climate would be important – and with only two hybrids, the Range Rover and Range Rover Sport, we're going to have to be really intelligent and targeted."

"When the time comes, when we have a range of low CO₂ vehicles, we will sustain the volume

we have and build on it. That's our focus for the next 12 to 18 months."

Some manufacturers have been struggling to fulfil orders due to the need to retest vehicles to meet the WLTP. But, that was not the case with JLR.

"We've been largely unaffected by WLTP," said Glover. "The only recent two models that needed to be certified under the new regime were the plug-in hybrids in Range Rover and Range Rover Sport in mid-October, causing a delay in deliveries of around six weeks."

Rawdon was speaking at the UK unveiling of the 2019 Evoque, due on the market in April.

The 2019 Evoque is notable in the fleet market for the addition in the range of, initially, a mild-hybrid electric engine (taking energy lost during deceleration storing it in an underfloor lithium battery), followed up this time next year with the addition of a plug-in hybrid (PHEV).

The mild-hybrid engine has fuel consumption figures of up to 50.4mpg and CO₂ emissions from 149g/km. And, although performance figures for the PHEV won't be available for about six months, Glover claimed "it will be the game-changer in 12 months' time for those fleets that are CO₂ emissions focused".

The delay in bringing the plug-in to market is down to a desire to start small and build the range gradually as production increases to meet demand, and the practical needs in putting the first PHEV in the Evoque range on a new vehicle platform.

Glover does not believe fleet customers will hold off buying the new model until the PHEV is launched, however.

Bus company fined £2.3m for not acting upon telematics warnings

Clear evidence of poor driving, but fatal crash driver was allowed to continue

By Gareth Roberts

The opportunities offered by the latest risk management tools could become "threats" to an organisation if not properly managed.

That's according to insurance brokers Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT), after a bus company was fined £2.3 million for failing to act on telematics warnings which led to a fatal collision.

Midland Red (South), which is part of Stagecoach, admitted breaching health and safety standards and was sentenced alongside its driver, Kailish Chander (80), after a two-day hearing at Birmingham Crown Court (*fleetnews.co.uk*, November 28).

The bus company's telematics system, driver trainer and passenger complaints had consistently raised issues over the standard of Chander's driving.

However, the company allowed him to continue to work and on October 3, 2015, he mistook the accelerator for the brake pedal leading to the fatal crash. The coach he was driving accelerated into a supermarket, killing two people.

Ian Hesselden, a partner at JLT, believes additional risk management tools such as telematics and in-cab coaching devices can produce "invaluable" data to safeguard both company and driver.

However, he told *Fleet News*: "If not properly managed, then these opportunities can become threats. Data – whether in the form of irrefutable



Ian Hesselden, JLT

"If not properly managed then these opportunities can become threats"

driver performance reports, anecdotal situations or health warnings – needs to be analysed, understood, acted upon and recorded."

In the bus company's case, the court heard how it sent eight warning letters to the driver about the standard of his driving after its telematics system flagged up poor performance.

Chander had been involved in four other driving incidents in the previous three years.

However, he missed a one-to-one meeting to address concerns over his driving because "his bosses needed him to be out driving" – he continued working until the fatal collision.

After sentencing, Phil Medlicott, managing director of Midland Red (South), accepted that



Data analysis can be a big help but fleets must act on the information

there were a number of failings at the company.

"While we met in full all the regulations around driver working hours and had all of the relevant checks in place, our own detailed policies were not followed as closely as they should have been," he said.

"There were failures at an operational level in driver supervision and we deeply regret the opportunities that were missed to act decisively on emerging warning signs."

Hesselden says if the information delivered through a telematics system is difficult to understand, consider changing the system or what it produces so that it "works for the company, and not against it".

"If it becomes too hard a task, it will be marginalised and not shared in a coherent manner across the respective management functions," he said.

"Disjointed fleet management plans with little coordination or means of measurement will often fail and in doing so leave the company, drivers and the public exposed."

Medlicott says that following the accident, Midland Red (South)'s priority has been to put these matters right.

"We carried out a comprehensive review of all of our policies and have made several key changes," he said. "This means we have in place a significantly more robust safety regime than is required by law."

This includes more frequent medical testing and a pre-medical review for older drivers, with appropriate checks being carried out every six months rather than on a statutory annual basis.

He added: "We have also provided additional training to all drivers and strengthened the application of our accident reduction processes."

"We cannot turn back the clock in this case, but we have sought to do everything possible to learn lessons and ensure that this kind of accident does not happen again."

Hesselden explained that the motivation to install the system ultimately sets the tone as to how the organisations will respond to the data.

If the focus was to reduce running costs, the management process will be based around achieving efficiency.

If, on the other hand, it was installed to meet the company's needs and culture to optimise running costs, efficiency, safety, driver welfare and insurance costs, Hesselden says it is "very likely the company will have thought about how to use the data across all facets of the fleet in a smart and intelligent way".

"By asking a few pragmatic questions during the system feasibility phase, and even after, many fundamental mistakes, wasted opportunities and a lot of cost, both direct and indirect can be avoided," he added.


“I’m a mum of three boys and also manage a team of 10 consultants so I need a car that has plenty of flexibility. The Kia Sportage is perfect, it has all the latest tech like wireless phone charging and touch-screen satellite navigation but is also really safe and spacious which is ideal for the daily school run.”


Sarah / Sales Manager



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The Power to Surprise

THE BIG PICTURE

By Stephen Briers, editor, *Fleet News*



It's our last issue of the year and our last fortnightly issue before we go monthly (technically 15 issues a year with additional editions in March, September and November).

While you'll receive nothing from us in print until January 24, you can join the other 200,000-plus regulars staying up-to-date with breaking news and fleet developments via our website and newsletter.

The growth in our digital products is one of the reasons why we are reducing the frequency of the magazine. Most of you are getting your daily or weekly news fix from the website; the magazine needs to provide greater depth and analysis across all its content and going monthly gives us the time to deliver this.

"Going monthly gives us the time to deliver greater depth and analysis"

Our best loved sections will remain, including our fleet profiles and manufacturer/supplier interviews, while we will continue to dig behind the headlines of the month's most significant news stories, adding greater commentary and insight to keep you fully informed.

Our new 'Tomorrow's Fleet' section will shine a light on the latest developments in mobility, autonomy, connectivity, shared services and electrification, helping you to understand how these next-gen technologies can improve your operations.

Meanwhile, 'Today's Fleet' will provide the best practice, benchmarking and fleet education insight required to help you maximise efficiencies and effectiveness.

Fleet News will also incorporate *Commercial Fleet*, as many of the most pressing issues affect all fleet operators irrespective of the size and type of vehicles they manage.

In short, we will become your one-stop-shop for everything relevant to the business of moving people, goods and services around: in print, online and via our events.

Finally, from all of us at *Fleet News*, Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

YOUR LETTERS

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

Change road layout if problems persist



S Chavda wrote:

Having read 'Changes to yellow box junction rules could prove costly for fleets' (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22), generally I am in favour of councils being able to use cameras at yellow junction boxes.

However, this should come with an obligation on them that when the number of contraventions exceeds a set number, say 1,000 they have to formally review the junction as clearly the yellow box is not working in keeping traffic flowing.

The top five list is appalling and shows that the councils along with the highways authorities seriously need to re-evaluate these junctions. That is if they want traffic to flow. If they want to generate revenue then they should leave them alone as they are working.

Wayne Burnett added:

Enforcement of box junctions at straightforward road junctions is one thing. On roundabouts it is completely different. I can think of two in my area – one at the exit of a large retail park off the M4 – where traffic light sequencing can mean that if you do not chance your luck you could be stuck for ages waiting for a clear exit.

Highway Star continued:

The problem for HGV drivers is that to leave the space for a truck to clear the junction means someone will always fill the gap (typically on two lane roads where the cars will just overtake the truck while those sat behind blast their horns). Better driver education and more police on the roads is the solution.

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

MILEAGE RATES

Electric rates 'not fair'

Steve Best wrote:

Having read 'HMRC publishes new advisory fuel rates from December' (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22), that's crackers for the electric car at 4ppm. If I use a complete tank of electric 90Kw, it will get me approximately 220 miles in my Tesla.

That's 90Kw at 0.15p per Kw = £12.60, 220 miles at 4ppm = £8.80. How is that fair?



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

More charge points needed

Paul Gauntlett wrote:

Having read 'Thousands of 'free' EV charge points to be installed at Tesco sites' (fleetnews.co.uk, November 30), while every little helps, this equates to four charging points per store installed over the next three years.

It's a great step in the right direction, but I hope in three years' time there are more than four EV points per store and that other stores and major sites have followed, too.

What's really needed is a fast charging point at every major petrol station, not only to make the technology easier to adopt by fleets but to also drive the awareness. Build it and they will come.

VEHICLE LIGHTING

Dashboard lighting doesn't help

Darren wrote:

Having read 'Daytime running lights causing confusion' (fleetnews.co.uk, December 3), I think the confusion isn't so much about the fact that the vehicle has external lights on, but that the dash is lit up without the headlights being on. So from a driver's perspective, my dashboard is all lit up so my lights are on. Also another issue not raised in this article is that motorcycles and cyclists, who are much more vulnerable road users, are no longer

ROAD SAFETY

Use existing car cameras

The Engineer wrote:

Having read 'One in four drivers wants compulsory dashcams' (fleetnews.co.uk, November 22), the stupid thing is a large number of cars now have cameras already fitted, for safety/driver aid systems and signpost reading systems.

It would be so easy and cheap for manufacturers to add a memory card slot and chip to record the footage. If it recorded the reversing camera too it would offer front and back protection. Some are catching on. The new Citroën C5 Aircross offers this where the driving aid camera is also a dash cam.

It's not 'big brother' as long as the memory card remains under the control of the driver who can choose to use its evidence or delete it.



instantly visible during the day or at dusk in a sea of LED daytime running lights, whereas they used to be much more obvious seeing their lights filtering through slow-moving traffic.

Keith Lane added:

Logic should demand that, by law, daytime running lights must include having the rear lights on. Clearly an error in the way the regulation was written, but one which could be corrected by the stroke of a pen.

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Burning question:

What possession would you want buried with you to use in the afterlife?

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FLEET OPINION 1

FLEET MANAGEMENT



Steve Beattie,
head of business sales,
Volvo Car UK

Redefining role of the fleet manager as autonomy goes through the gears

By Steve Beattie

Our recently unveiled 360c concept represents our vision for a future that is fully autonomous, electric, connected, personal and safe.

The concept offers a glimpse of the

myriad developments that could be set to unfold in the coming decades. This future is not upon us yet, but the journey there is likely to redefine the role of the fleet manager and indeed the practices of company car drivers.

The new technologies emerging as

part of this evolution will have a significant impact on fleet practices and decisions.

One development that is set to bring big benefits to company car users is completely autonomous driving technology. We are aiming for cars capable of full autonomous driving to be on the market early in the next decade.

When introduced, the technology in these vehicles will fundamentally transform the driving experience for user-choosers, enhancing safety through reduction of physical and mental strain.

For example, in certain scenarios, such as in traffic or on the motorway, the burden of long business drives will be reduced by this autonomous capability. Our Pilot Assist feature, a driver support system available on our latest range of new cars and which helps the driver through steering, braking and accelerator inputs, has already demonstrated the potential in this area.

In the longer term, the capacity to remove the human driver will change the

"In-car sleeping cabins may allow users to travel through the night in first-class comfort, waking up refreshed at their destination having lost no work time"

way people do business. Unproductive travel time will be recaptured and transformed into useful time on the road with the potential for cars to become mobile offices.

Business will be possible not just following, but also during the commute.

In-car sleeping cabins may allow users to travel through the night in first-class comfort, waking up refreshed at their destination having lost no work time while travelling.

Another question raised by these developments is what the impact may be on

employee housing decisions. This is not anticipated in the short term but when integrated, employees will become much less reliant on their proximity to cities, able to work as they travel.

The freedom that this may facilitate is likely to stimulate significant user-chooser demand for these connected services.

Fully autonomous driving has the potential to fundamentally change our society in many positive ways and have a profound impact on how we commute, how we interact with cities and how we use infrastructure.

FLEET OPINION 2

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Chris Eldridge,
managing director,
Autoglass BodyRepair

AI to transform the bodywork industry

By Chris Eldridge

In fields such as retail, technology has transformed the customer experience over the past decade. This is no different in the automotive sector.

While the media mainly focuses on driverless technology and how this will change the consumer's relationship

with cars, behind the scenes artificial intelligence (AI) is starting to dramatically change how some automotive brands interact and engage with their customers and fleet partners.

Bodyshop work may not be the first thing you think of when discussing AI, however, I predict it will soon have a dramatic impact on the industry.

We recently introduced IBM Watson Visual Recognition Technology to assess car damage. This is a new cloud-based image technology, which allows the customer to take a photo of their car's damage, upload it to the website and receive a quote instantaneously.

The AI technology is used to evaluate the car damage, based on previous images, and assess its severity.

Until recently, a team of three damage advisors examined photos that customers had sent in through a portal or via email. The new AI technology means a quote is calculated 70% quicker than through the previous method.

I truly believe this use of AI technology is only the tip of the iceberg.

As well as improving the customer journey, AI will soon be used to help technicians perform to the highest possible standards.

Already on trial are AI-supported augmented reality glasses for techni-

cians to wear. It might sound like a science fiction film, but these glasses will allow technicians to review vehicle damage and receive guidance and feedback on how to fix the damage from a technical expert back at head office.

Therefore, wherever a technician is and whatever the damage is, the technician will have the information they need immediately to hand. This will ensure the fleet vehicle is fixed and back on the road as quickly as possible, as there will never be a case of the technician having to refer to a colleague or technical expert.

As these technologies are fine-tuned and more widely introduced, their impact will continue to grow. I have seen the industry change dramatically over the years, but the speed of change is set to ramp up significantly.

Fleet managers and bodyshops who embrace this change will be best positioned to adapt and evolve in line with the industry.

"Cloud-based image technology allows the customer to take a photo of their car's damage, upload it to the website and receive a quote instantaneously"



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easy move



Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Ateca SE Technology 1.0 TSI Ecomotive 115PS in mpg (litres per 100km): urban 44.8 (6.3); extra-urban 60.1 (4.7); combined 53.3 (5.3). CO₂ emissions 120g/km. Standard EU Test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Business users only. *Source: CAP, June 2018 data for the SEAT Ateca SE Technology on a 36-month/60,000-mile agreement. Total Cost of Ownership pence per mile includes fuel. Includes metallic paint. T&Cs apply. Ateca S 1.0 TSI Ecomotive 115 Winner of the WhatCar? Car of the Year, Best Family SUV less than £20,000. Model shown £26,830 OTR. Prices correct at time of print July 2018.

seat.co.uk/fleet/ateca

26,000 MILES *using just* 19 LITRES OF FUEL

Eric Wright Group fleet and transport manager Steve Openshaw leads by example when it comes to zero-emission motoring. *John Maslen* explains...

Stakeholder engagement is a crucial element to the successful introduction of any new fleet initiative. From senior management to drivers, everyone has an opinion and a vested interest when it comes to changes that affect their vehicles.

Winning their buy-in is an important first step, one that can be facilitated when the fleet manager is willing to lead from the front.

People dislike change; some actively resist it, so a mix of psychology and persuasion is just as important as rules and regulations.

For Steve Openshaw, group fleet and transport manager for construction and property company Eric Wright Group, a persuasive subliminal message about a core fleet policy is delivered to employees each time he arrives at work.

Openshaw has been driving zero-emission capable vehicles for six years, covering nearly 100,000 miles, first in a Vauxhall Ampera and now in his current company car, an electric BMW i3. The i3 is fitted with a range extender that tops up the battery, if needed, between charges.

Openshaw says: "I am showing drivers what these cars can do. You get some people

saying you can't go anywhere with them, you can't do anything, so I am showing day-to-day that you can live with them.

"I have covered 26,000 miles in the i3 now and I have used 19 litres of fuel. Based on what is coming to the market in the next couple of years, I will be looking for a pure electric vehicle (EV) when I come to my next change and, hopefully, we will make that available to the fleet."

Openshaw is the only team member in a range-extender EV, but the fleet has a number of self-charging and plug-in hybrids on offer and the message is getting through, with 10% of its 180 cars now made up of zero emission-capable vehicles, a 50% rise in the past year. The balance of the car fleet is diesel.

The fleet has a core list of seven manufacturers across its vehicle grades, with ultra-low emission vehicles offered at each level, while senior managers have an open choice, with all model choices based on whole-life cost calculations.

The fleet now has five self-charging hybrids and 12 PHEVs, with premium brands the most popular choice, covering zero-emission capable versions of the BMW 5 Series, Mercedes-Benz C-Class and Lexus RX, while other hybrid models on fleet include the Kia Niro, Toyota Auris and C-HR and GTE

versions of the Volkswagen Passat and Golf.

Eric Wright Group is careful to ensure that drivers who opt for a hybrid vehicle have a suitable mileage profile, so they can maximise the benefits of green technology.

Recently, experts have warned that some drivers are opting for hybrids just for the tax benefits, with no intention of running the vehicle on battery power, which harms both the environment and running costs.

Openshaw says: "A lot of the problems we have heard from fleets and fleet managers is that people aren't plugging them in, often because they have a fuel card. Our policy is pay and reclaim, so if a driver doesn't want to plug in, it will increase their fuel costs, but we won't pay the uplift in the cost. We will just pay the HMRC rates."

His colleague Sue McGuigan, fleet manager for Eric Wright Group, adds: "We always look at what journeys a member of staff does and whether it will benefit them to choose a plug-in."

The business has installed five EV chargers and is looking to introduce another four next year to meet growing demand.

In the right circumstances, the benefits are clear, with Openshaw achieving more than 270mpg with his Ampera, while



Steve Openshaw's choice of company car allows him to 'promote' low-emission vehicles on a daily basis

FACTFILE

Fleet size 296: cars – 180; vans – 115; HGV – 1

Replacement cycle 4 years /100,000 miles

Car brands Ford, Kia, Peugeot, Škoda, Toyota, Vauxhall, Volkswagen (user-chooser for management)

Van brand mainly Ford

Key suppliers Lex Autolease; Allstar; VisionTrack



employees have reported fuel economy of more than 60mpg with self-charging hybrids.

Overall, based on wholelife costs, Openshaw says vehicles sit somewhere between petrol and diesel.

However, while the group is trying to plan for a greener, more efficient future, a lack of clarity from Government and legislative upheaval is taking its toll.

Ongoing disruption is caused by the failure to publish company car tax rates beyond 2021 and restricted vehicle choices as manufacturers refresh their models to comply with the new Worldwide harmonised Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) emissions test.

At the same time, there are mixed messages regarding ultra-low emission vehicles, with recent tax rises for most zero emission-capable vehicles and the cancellation of the plug-in car grant for all models except full EVs.

McGuigan says: “The plug-in car grant no longer being available for hybrids doesn’t

help. It has really pushed some of the cars up a band now, which is not ideal.”

Openshaw adds: “Without the information from the Government on taxation, it is difficult to form a strategy. Then, on top of that, there is the fall-out from WLTP.”

“At one point, our choice list was down by at least 80% and we are now about 60% of what we had prior to WLTP.”

The combined impact of the policy changes could be counter-productive to the Government’s plans to shift to low-emission transport as part of its Road to Zero strategy, as some drivers are looking to opt out of company cars altogether.

McGuigan explains: “It is making a lot of drivers think about taking a car allowance because they can’t see what tax they are going to be paying.

“It is a bit unfair really and it is going to push them down the car allowance route; so they are going to, effectively, run a car that has probably got higher emissions than they would have for a company car.”

The fleet has average emissions of 109g/

km, down from 150g/km in 2008, but the grey fleet has an average of 115g/km.

In other areas of the fleet, a long-term vision is possible, particularly when it comes to risk management.

Starters receive a detailed fleet induction, including driving assessments for employees using its 115 commercial vehicles.

Other initiatives have included driving simulator experiences during company events and ‘toolbox talks’ on key issues, such as vehicle and tyre inspections.

Telematics and dashcams were introduced to the van fleet in the past year, which required careful management of drivers to ensure they understood the potential benefits of the system and how it would be used.

The team had previously fitted speed limiters to vehicles, so they had experience of how to manage the launch of challenging policies.

They spoke to drivers about the importance of keeping them safe on the road and protecting them in the event of an incident.

Since being introduced, the system has



“There is the fall-out from WLTP. At one point our choice list was down 80% and now we are about 60% of what we had prior to WLTP”

Steve Openshaw, Eric Wright Group

been used to defend against bad driving claims, including providing evidence that a driver wasn’t in the area when a complaint was made, but also to support employees to improve risk awareness where errors are identified.

Openshaw adds: “There was quite a bit of resistance to it, but we talked to drivers and explained to them why we were putting technology in and what we wanted to do.

“Drivers are buying into it now because in a few instances it has assisted them in proving that they didn’t do anything wrong.”

The team also provided reassurances about who would be able to see the data.

As commercial vehicles are only for business use, there are no privacy concerns, although there is an agreement that any incident footage outside working hours won’t be used for disciplinary reasons, unless there is evidence of gross negligence.

The team would like to extend the use of dashcams to its car fleet, following the success of the commercial vehicle programme.

Openshaw concludes: “It is used more for training and guidance than discipline, just to alter behaviour and encourage culture change. You can ask why the driver thinks something happened. We have also said that if something happens, drivers will want that footage.”

Steve Openshaw says lack of clarity from Government is making it difficult to formulate policy



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

TEAMWORK AND PARTNERSHIP KEY TO AN EFFECTIVE FLEET

Steve Openshaw and Sue McGuigan put their success on the Eric Wright Group fleet down to partnership and teamwork.

McGuigan took on the role of fleet manager 16 years ago, having previously worked elsewhere in the business during a 27-year career.

Openshaw joined to oversee the plant and transport department 11 years ago but took over strategic responsibility for the fleet last year as the number of vehicles operated by the company expanded.

“Originally the van fleet was only half a dozen vehicles and, as it ramped up, Sue really threw herself into upskilling herself. I can give guidance on that with the experience I have had,” Openshaw says.

“Then, if she is away, I can step in.”

McGuigan adds: “We talk to one another and we know exactly what each other is thinking and can bounce ideas off one another. I think we work well as a team.”

Both are members of the ICFM (Institute of Car Fleet Management as was), and



Steve Openshaw and Sue McGuigan

fleet association ACFO and they are also Van Excellence-accredited.

Together their partnership has driven efficiencies across the fleet. Their budgeted cost per vehicle remains the same as it did four years ago.

The partnership approach also extends to suppliers, including Lex Autolease, which is sole supplier of its vehicles.

McGuigan says: “They were giving us the deal we wanted and the level of account management we needed. We

have freedom to shop around, but we receive benefits as part of the service, such as consultancy which is very helpful. There is also a no-quibble tyre policy.

“We found a big company that is looking after us like a small company would, with people that know us and understand how our policy works.”

Where possible, services are delivered through local providers, such as dealerships, to support the local economy.

Future areas of focus will include fuel management to ensure efficiency is maximised following an increase in vehicle numbers, with greater use of fuel cards, including current supplier Allstar.

There is also an ongoing focus on ultra-low emission cars, despite the current challenges over Government policy in the long-term.

McGuigan said: “We are pushing to make sure that charge points are put into new properties, so when our maintenance division takes over after they are built, they could use electric vehicles. It future-proofs the fleet.”

'IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DRIVER'

TR Fleet MD Julie Summerell believes that software which focuses on the vehicle isn't the answer and says the latest version of her DriveSecure platform will capitalise on personal leasing growth. *Sarah Tooze* reports

When Julie Summerell launched her TR Fleet business in 2010, she was keen to develop systems which focus on the driver.

Her consultancy specialises in procure-ment-led fleet management, driver risk management and delivering digital solutions. "The vision I had for DriveSecure was that it was 'all about the driver,'" she says. "The asset is the driver, not the car."

The risk management platform includes licence checking, driver risk profiling, eyesight checks, e-learning modules, grey fleet management, policy management, mileage capture, incident alerts and reporting. It costs £5 per driver per month (dependent on fleet size).

In the first quarter of 2019, TR Fleet will bring out the second generation DriveSecure which takes a modular approach, allowing businesses to opt for standalone products, such as corporate eye care or

licence checking, rather than taking the whole package.

From April 1, 2019, TR Fleet will be able to do driving licence checks direct with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) rather than going through a third party.

Also new will be telematics integration. Summerell says it will be "vendor neutral", with TR Fleet managing the data and working with the fleet customer's insurance provider.

The data is presented through configurable dashboards, allowing customers to focus on particular issues rather than becoming overwhelmed.

"Every customer has a different problem and a different challenge so we help them by focusing on that area," she says.

TR Fleet will also link fuel card data to telematics data and "put a value on it".

Summerell says businesses need to demonstrate to their insurer that they have reduced driver risk so version two of DriveSecure will include a 'benefits tracker', which shows how much they have improved since investing in the system.

But it is also forward-looking.

"What we're looking at is predictive data now. So it's not just looking at it today, we're saying 'what's the likelihood, based on all this data, of this driver having an accident in the next 12 months?'" she says.

"And that's powerful to the insurer in terms of risk scoring."

There are about 3,500 users across all driver categories and, while Summerell won't reveal how much she expects this number to grow by, she says she already has clients lined up to use the new platform.

She expects some business to come from grey fleet management as a result of more company car drivers opting out of schemes in favour of a personal lease due to the uncertainty around company car tax.

It's a growing trend, particularly affecting employees in the 40% tax bracket, she says.

TR Fleet's consultancy work comes from customer recommendations or through strategic relationships with international procurement companies.

It can be as varied as doing benchmarking for a global client across 10 countries to acting as a company's 'fleet manager'.

The latter is a symptom of TR Fleet's customer base: SMEs who often don't have the time or experience to run a fleet.

"It's project-led so we do a piece of work and nine times out of 10 we make our recommendations and walk away," says Summerell. "Some customers say 'don't walk away, can you deliver them?' That's what happened with Travelodge so we are its fleet manager."

However, having been employed as a fleet manager herself (at one time she ran 1,200 vehicles for a merchant bank, as well as working for dealer groups and others aspects of the supply chain during her 40 years in fleet) she advocates businesses appoint a full-time fleet manager if the fleet size warrants it.

"We looked after one 450-vehicle fleet for a couple of years and then helped them recruit a fleet manager and move on," she says.

TR Fleet's work was split 70/30 between consultancy and the digital side (in favour of consultancy) but since Safo Group, which specialises in European fines management and automotive IT, took a 75% stake in the



Julie Summerell has spent 40 years in fleet and is a former fleet manager

"Nine times out of 10 we make our recommendations and walk away. Some customers say 'can you deliver them?'"

still largely paper-based. Safo has integrated with one fines issuing authority and is in discussions with others to introduce an electronic data exchange and payments system.

Claudio Scarsciafratte, sales and marketing director (Europe) at Safo Group, says the challenge is that, although the payment can be done electronically, by law the authorities have to send the fine by letter.

He anticipates a rise in the number of fines when London's ultra-low emission zone and other clean air zones are introduced but says that the quantity is "not an issue" because Safo already manages millions each year. The key thing is to "speed up the process".

In Italy, for example, Safo uses an app to notify customers they have received a fine and to allow them to choose whether to appeal or pay it.

Offering something similar in the UK would improve the driver experience although drivers wouldn't necessarily realise it was Safo behind it as leasing companies tend to white label their services.

Safo is also trying to improve the service, maintenance and repair (SMR) process for drivers through its Driver Support App which launches at the end of March.

The app gives drivers a list of pre-approved repairers for the leasing company their car is with, along with a customer service score so they are able to book their vehicle in with the dealer or independent repairer who provides the best service if they wish.

The request to book goes directly to the repairer/dealer rather than the leasing company's helpline, making the process simpler and quicker.

TR Fleet, meanwhile, is about to go live with a major customer with its DriveSecure Commercial app, following months of tests.

The app enables drivers to perform a vehicle walkaround check and alerts the fleet manager to any issues that require action.

Rental or demonstrator vehicles as well as the standard fleet can be uploaded and the app caters for multiple drivers.

Summerell won't predict take-up but, overall, last year TR Fleet grew by 17% and she expects 20% growth this year.

"We want the growth to continue to be organic, stable and managed effectively," she says.

FACTFILE

Organisation: TR Fleet
Parent company: Safo Group
Managing director of TR Fleet: Julie Summerell
Time in role: Eight years

CURRENT DRIVER EYESIGHT REQUIREMENT IS 'A JOKE'

Julie Summerell believes the Government isn't doing enough to ensure drivers have adequate eyesight and are therefore safe behind the wheel.

Poor eyesight is linked to approximately 3,000 road casualties every year and 1.8 million drivers have vision below the minimum standard, according to road safety charity Brake. Summerell has been calling for a change in the law since 2013.

Currently, there is no requirement to reassess a driver's vision once they have passed their test, although responsible fleet operators often provide a corporate eye care package so drivers have an annual test or carry out spot checks to ensure drivers can read a number plate from 20 metres – the legal minimum requirement.

Summerell would like regular, mandatory checks and believes the current system of only assessing drivers

when they take their driving test is "a joke".

To highlight the issue, when she met with Government officials at the House of Commons back in 2013 she took a number plate and a tape measure with her and challenged people to stand 20 metres away.

"They didn't stand anywhere near 20 metres, it was 18 metres, 16 metres, so as I said 'it's a bit of a joke,'" Summerell adds.

Despite this, there was no appetite for change. It was "too administratively burdensome", she says.

She hopes the current Government might take a different stance following the Driving Blind campaign, whose petition closed yesterday (December 12).

It calls for new drivers to be vision tested and certified by an optician, with follow-up tests every decade up to the age of 70, and then every three years.

WINNING OVER THE 'CREATURES OF HABIT'

Many bluelight fleet operators prefer to stick with the models they know. It's Steven Cowell's task to persuade them otherwise. *Matt de Prez* reports

Over the past decade, Škoda has established itself as a serious player in the fleet market. Having won the respect of company car drivers and fleet operators alike, Škoda has set a new goal of becoming one of the 'go-to' brands in the bluelight sector.

While the company is no stranger to the public sector, Volkswagen Group brands have never really dominated this area, giving Škoda a tough battle to win over bluelight operators.

Nestled in a quiet corner at the Volkswagen Group UK head office is a small team responsible for what could be referred to as 'Volkswagen's Q division'.

Led by technical sales manager Steven Cowell, the team looks after the group's bluelight fleet sales, dealing with police, fire and ambulance as well as private sector businesses that require specialist conversions.

Škoda is the most prominent brand among

the group's bluelight sales, which account for around 7-8% of the total bluelight market.

While Škoda, and the rest of VW Group, may lack the high-volume sales success that other manufacturers have enjoyed in this segment – think BMW, Vauxhall and Ford – the group is keen to grow and has worked hard to ensure it has a competitive offer.

Selling bluelight vehicles used to be the responsibility of individual brand's fleet sales representatives. Having realised that bluelight customers require specialist knowledge and a different approach, Cowell was appointed to oversee sales across the group.

He is now the main point of contact for all bluelight fleet managers and aims to provide a personal service to each customer.

"Everything we do is bespoke," says Cowell. "Each local authority has its own ideas about the type and spec of vehicles it requires. Turning those into a reality is my job."

While some manufacturers promote a turn-key solution, Cowell says Volkswagen Group provides more of a one-stop-shop.

"Each local authority has its own ideas about the type and spec of vehicles it requires"

Steven Cowell, Volkswagen Group UK

"We don't have standardised specifications, we go to the customer and find out what they want then come back and create a package for them," he explains.

With most public sector fleets opting for tender, Cowell not only has to ensure he can offer the most cost-effective contract but also has to contend with "creatures of habit".

"My job is to influence them into something from the VW Group, instead of the brand they have traditionally dealt with – and many

simply want to stick to what they know."

Cowell says Škoda models are the most popular due to their lower price point.

"People recognise they can get the same level of build quality and reliability as other VW Group products for a lower price," he adds.

Wholife costs are becoming increasingly important within the sector, according to Cowell.

"We don't have to be the cheapest to come out on top. Bluelight fleets are now looking at

the whole package, including support and warranty," he says.

The Škoda range has something to suit most police requirements. From the Fabia as a beat car to the Octavia and Superb for fast response. Its new SUVs – the Karoq and Kodiaq – provide all-wheel drive traction and off-road capability.

Cowell expects the upcoming Kodiaq VRS, which features a 240PS diesel engine, to be popular among armed response fleets looking for a cheaper alternative to the BMW X5.

EXAMPLES OF ŠKODA'S BEST BLUELIGHT PERFORMERS



Octavia VRS Response Car

Undercover police operations require a vehicle that can blend in with traffic but can also keep up with the fastest cars.

The Octavia VRS has a 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol engine with 245PS, allowing it to accelerate from zero to 62mph in less than seven seconds.

It features subtle LED lighting built into the windscreen frame and front grille, making it indistinguishable from a standard Octavia.



Karoq Ambulance

The all-wheel drive Karoq provides confidence in all weather conditions and allows ambulance first responders to access remote locations both on and off road.

Secure racking systems can be integrated into the rear of the vehicle to store equipment, with lockable compartments for drugs. Full livery and roof mounted lights complete the transformation.



Kodiaq Fire Engine

In rural areas, the Kodiaq can be used by fire brigades that need to cover ground quickly in difficult-to-access areas.

The all-wheel drive system provides the driver with the confidence to venture onto unknown terrain at higher than normal speeds.

Its loadspace of more than 1,160 litres (seats folded) enables fire crews to transport a large array of equipment.

ARMoured SUPERB IS READY FOR FIRING LINE

The Armoured Superb is Steven Cowell's latest concept. It's a fully bulletproof model built for covert operations.

"It's really not like anything we've done before," says Cowell.

"When you are putting something out there that's, quite literally, in the firing line, it has to be right."

Understandably, the exact specifications of the Superb's armour remain confidential, but the vehicle does meet the stringent PAS 300 standards for ballistics and blast protection.

Bulletproof glass is fitted all around. At almost an inch thick, it does mean the windows no longer open.

The armour is created using a new

The bulletproof glass is almost an inch thick



manufacturing process and is specially moulded to fit the interior of the car, creating a cocoon around the occupants.

This method of installation allows the conversion to be done quickly and, most importantly, cheaply.

The Armoured Superb costs around £119,000, which is around a third of the price of a regular converted executive car.

"For the public sector, where cost is everything, our car represents a significant saving over the competition," says Cowell.

The police have already snapped up around 150 examples, although how and where they will be used remains a secret.

Cowell and his team ensured the interior panels can be refitted, after some modification. To the naked eye you would be hard pressed to tell the difference between it and a standard Superb.

The suspension and brakes have been uprated to handle the additional weight of the armour, but otherwise the Armoured Superb comes as a standard 190PS 2.0TDI manual.

Other trim variants are currently not available, as each derivative would have to undergo the stringent approval process and may require modifications to the armour, according to Cowell.

Fleet News was given the opportunity to drive the new model, which comes exclusively in estate form.

While the car appears to look standard, the weight of the conversion is apparent as soon as you try to open the door. It's heavy!

The Superb is carrying around a tonne of extra weight and that is noticeable in the cornering and acceleration. It doesn't take long to adapt and the car is still easy to manoeuvre and offers adequate performance.

19 THINGS TO DO IN 2019

Fleet decision-makers face a number of demanding challenges next year. Here, *Andrew Ryan* looks at some of the actions they can take to improve their operations

KEEP ABREAST OF LOW EMISSION ZONE DEVELOPMENTS

The first clean air zone (CAZ) – London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) – comes into effect on April 8 and many more are due to follow.

These may not impact hugely on company car fleets as the vast majority of vehicles are likely to be Euro 6-compliant and therefore be charge-free, says John Pryor, chairman of ACFO.

"However, CAZ entry charges are more likely to impact on van fleets so it is vital fleet operators keep abreast of developments, where charges are due to be introduced, and adapt accordingly," he says. (Details at fleetnews.co.uk/CAZ).

Claire Evans, head of fleet consultancy at Zenith, says fleet decision-makers should now introduce wording into their company car schemes to pass on responsibility for costs of non-compliant grey fleet and cash takers travelling into CAZs in their own cars.

TACKLE GREY FLEET COMPLIANCE

Many organisations struggle to get to grips with their grey fleet – cars which are owned by employees and used for business journeys.

Steve Pinchen, sales director at Licence Bureau, says: "Take time out to survey who in the company is using their own car for company business by the fleet team and HR teaming up to work together.

"Once fleets have a good idea of how many grey fleet drivers they have, they can then work with senior management and their drivers to ensure they are compliant.

"Service history, MOTs and insurance are a great place to start, and this information needs reviewing on a regular basis, particularly when drivers change their vehicle. "By collecting data and undertaking regular reviews of a company's grey fleet risk you are automatically carrying out your duty of care commitment to your employees and in the event of a problem will show you have a process in place."

Clive Forsythe, UK sales director at Europcar Mobility Group, adds: "Grey fleet can be the bane of fleet managers' lives, but there is always the advantage of removing a cost from the balance sheet. A way to get the best of both worlds is to create a scheme that gives staff access to new vehicles that they can personally rent over a longer-term period – from six months onwards.

"The employee has access to 'no hassle' car usage at a known cost – and without being penalised under the benefit-in-kind rules."

REVIEW AND DECLUTTER FLEET MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Carrying out an internal audit of management reporting practices and procedures can help fleet decision-makers ensure they are recording the information they need.

Ashley Sowerby, managing director of Chevin Fleet Solutions, says while useful information supports both the operational needs and business decisions of the fleet, excess information is, in effect, clutter.

One way to improve data-gathering processes is for fleets using spreadsheet or paper-based reporting systems to consider investing in fleet management software, while those who already use it may need to consider if it is meeting business needs.

"Even the most basic fleet management software can provide significant benefits," says Sowerby. "Fleets can 'benchmark' by adopting pre-configured fleet management systems as they contain the key modules used to streamline and manage processes. This can help determine which information you really need."

REVIEW YOUR TRAVEL STRATEGY

Fleet managers should look beyond company vehicles and rental in the search for more efficiencies and better service, says Adrian Bewley, assistant vice-president of business mobility UK and Ireland at Enterprise Rent-a-Car.

"Many [fleet managers] are already considering how company cars and rental form part of a much wider and interconnected mobility and business travel ecosystem, which includes access to local transport options via mobility as a service (MaaS) apps," he says.

"Widening the scope of the internal conversation will help ensure the best solution.

"By engaging with the wider business holistically, a company will be able to re-examine how it moves goods and people from place to place."

Shaun Sadlier, head of consultancy at Arval, says a growing number of its customers are looking for flexible vehicle options.

"More and more, businesses need to be able to access vehicles for short-, medium- and long-term periods to meet their business needs," he says.

"This can range across hours, days, weeks, months and years through products like car sharing, short- and mid-term rental."

PREPARE FOR BREXIT

The United Kingdom's future position in relation to the European Union remains unclear, but fleets should be aware of – and prepared for – how leaving could affect them.

"It might be said in relation to Brexit that 'who knows?', but the Department for Transport has published a series of technical notices that set out information to allow businesses and citizens to understand what they would need to do in a 'no deal' scenario, so they can make informed plans and preparations," says John Pryor, chairman of ACFO.

"These technical notices include issues around driving in the European Union, including in relation to vehicle hire and insurance. It is vital operators undertake preparatory work, including holding discussions with suppliers, so they are ready for whatever scenario emerges at the conclusion of UK-EU discussions."

GET EDUCATED

Fleet is a fast-moving sector, with developments in areas such as technology and legislation ensuring it is vital to keep on top of trends.

"The challenge of ensuring fleet decision-makers implement best practice on behalf of their employers will not diminish in an industry where the volume of change is unprecedented," says Paul Hollick, chairman of ICFM.

"To truly understand the cost-effectiveness of company cars from the viewpoint of both employers and employees, ensure duty of care compliance and that the 'right' vehicles are selected based on wholelife costs while also ensuring fitness for purpose, education and training is business-critical."

ICFM has seen a massive increase in interest in its training courses through 2018 – from fleet newcomers to more experienced fleet professionals – and expects demand to continue, and increase, this year.

KEEP FAITH IN COMPANY CARS

The popularity of company cars as an employee benefit appears to be waning with many fleets reporting an increasing number of employees opting to instead take a cash allowance.

Factors include concern over increasing benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax bills, exacerbated by the current uncertainty caused by the WLTP testing regime and no BIK tax bands being available for the period after April 2021.

"Fleet decision-makers should resist the easy option," says Paul Hollick, chairman of ICFM. "Too often, ICFM is hearing stories that employers either have, or were considering, ditching company cars because managing them was becoming 'too difficult' and introducing a cash option.

"Put simply, if they think managing company cars is difficult, they should try managing grey fleet cars.

"That underlines the importance of education and training for fleet decision-makers whether they are from a procurement, HR, finance background or are the managing director's PA.

"Managed efficiently, effectively and along best practice lines, the company car has a long-term future as a favourite employee benefit."

TAKE A PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH TO CO₂ TAX

The Government's review into the impact of WLTP on benefit-in-kind tax is due to be completed by spring 2019, meaning that the uncertainty this issue has caused fleet managers and drivers should be over.

Historically, BIK tax bands had been announced for up to four years in advance, but now they are available up to March 30, 2021.

They have also not been amended to reflect the impact of the new WLTP testing regime, which has raised the CO₂ emissions figures of cars by up to as much as 20%.

"We expect that clarity will emerge in the first quarter or so of 2019 and it is essential that decision-makers adopt a pro-active, forewarned is forearmed approach," says John Pryor, chairman of ACFO.

"While we are all awaiting the Chancellor's spring announcement on tax, we can expect in the coming months motor manufacturers to 'release' many more WLTP-compliant models.

"For many years, the tax regime has signposted low emission cars as the direction of travel and that will not change.

"Therefore, fleet operators can start to review company car choice lists in light of an increasing number of WLTP-compliant models being available while being mindful that the broad scope of the new company car tax regime can be anticipated, even if the detail cannot."

TEACH DRIVERS THE 'DUTCH REACH'

Fleets are being encouraged to teach their drivers the 'Dutch Reach' to reduce the number of cyclist casualties caused by people opening their vehicle doors right in front of them.

It works like this: when someone is about to exit the car, they reach across their body for the door handle with their far or opposite hand.

This forces them to turn toward the side view mirror, out and then back over their shoulder to be sure a cyclist is not coming from behind. Only then do they slowly open the door.

EXTEND THE FLEET BEYOND CORE COMPANY CARS

Organisations are increasingly looking to offer a broader mix of vehicle solutions to their wider employee base so that it is not just company car drivers they are supporting, says Shaun Sadlier, head of consultancy at Arval.

"A mix such as personal lease, salary exchange and car sharing will all form a growing part of the flexible benefits package for employees and the HR function within a business will be at the heart of this approach," he adds.

Claire Evans, head of fleet consultancy at Zenith, says that offering cars through an all-employee scheme is likely to become an ever-increasing feature in 2019.

She says: "Fleet operators should offer a variety of options to suit their employees which could be salary sacrifice or as a personal contract hire scheme."

CONSIDER FITTING ALL-SEASON TYRES

The concept of changing tyres dependent on the season has never really caught on among UK fleets, with the cost and increased downtime caused by switching generally judged to outweigh the benefit of the improved grip they offer in our often mild winters.

But there is a new generation of 'all-season' tyres which can provide winter-certified performance coupled with strong performance in the warmer and drier months.

Tea company Ringtons fits Michelin CrossClimate+ tyres across its fleet of 230 vans and cars.

Operations manager Stephen Killinger says: "They are costing us a few pounds more than the tyres we fitted previously, but we feel it is worth it because you can't put a price on safety and the ability just to get around in the weather we saw last winter."

CONSIDER THE RIGHT FUEL FOR YOUR FLEET OPERATIONS

New technologies and environmental concerns mean that diesel is no longer the default fuel choice for fleets, with petrol, hybrid, plug-in hybrid and fully electric vehicles also viable alternatives.

However, each fuel has its strengths and weaknesses, says Shaun Sadlier, head of consultancy at Arval.

"Our belief is that the fleet of the future will employ a mix of fuel types, so having an understanding of how each of them will work in different operational scenarios is essential," he adds.

Fleets need to carry out thorough analysis of vehicle use data to make the right decision, says Martin Evans, managing director of Jaama.

"Company car drivers, in some cases, are choosing PHEVs due to the benefit-in-kind tax advantages available over their operational viability," he says.

"However, underpinning the decision-making process should be wholelife costs and a vehicle's suitability for the job, ensuring it is used in 'electric mode' as frequently as possible, which means regular charging.

"Therefore, data analysis is key and that should include employees' journey patterns, mileage undertaken and fuel usage.

"Without data analysis, introducing PHEVs to company car choice lists and fleets could be an expensive mistake."

INCENTIVISE DRIVERS FOR GOOD BEHAVIOUR

While data from telematics systems can identify bad drivers for training or disciplinary procedures, it can also be used to highlight good driving and encourage improvement.

One way to do this is to use the data to create league tables, which harness an employee's competitive spirit and allow peer pressure to drive the desire to improve.

This can encourage safer, more environmentally friendly and cost-effective driving techniques, as well as boost employee engagement and morale.

Companies can further incentivise drivers by offering prizes such as vouchers to the best or most improved performers.

CONSIDER FITTING IN-CAB CAMERAS

Telematics technology has transformed the way many organisations manage their fleets, as the ability to monitor driver behaviour has allowed companies to cut incident rates, slash fuel costs and plan more efficient delivery routes.

However, while the data the technology produces has proved invaluable to many organisations, it doesn't always explain why a driver may be driving the way they do.

"Cameras complete the picture," says Steve Thomas, managing director (sales and marketing) at Ctrack. "Telematics gives you all the information, when the vehicle is used, its speed etc., but not footage of an event. Putting cameras into a vehicle gives the last piece of the jigsaw."

Cameras can also help attribute blame after a collision, potentially cutting insurance costs, as well as preventing fraudulent injury claims.

SPECIFY AEB AS STANDARD

Fleets should specify cars ordered in 2019 with autonomous emergency braking (AEB) to cut costs and improve safety, says Andy Price, director of Fleet Safety Management.

"AEB has been proven in real-world conditions to reduce the number of rear-end collisions, so it is a clear win for organisations to specify that all vehicles joining the fleet should have it fitted," he says.

"It is standard on some cars, but even if it costs a little more it is worth it because the reduced collision rate is going to be of benefit to the business overall."

A study by Euro NCAP and Australasian NCAP found that AEB leads to a 38% reduction in real-world rear-end crashes.

As well as saving on repair costs, reducing these collisions will reduce uninsured losses such as vehicle downtime and damage to cargo.

Claire Evans, head of fleet consultancy at Zenith, says: "Review manufacturers and choice lists to look at the availability of cars with advanced safety features such as automatic braking and lane departure."

REVIEW YOUR TYRE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Tyres have a critical role to play in the safety, reliability and smooth operation of a fleet, so reviewing policy could prove beneficial.

"We often see fleets developing a company car policy or a driver management policy, which typically explains what drivers should do in the event of an accident, or how they should drive safely, but tends not to include an element on how drivers should look after the tyres on their vehicle," says David Morris, business account manager – fleet and public sector at Goodyear.

"Educating their drivers on how to carry out day-to-day maintenance, such as checking their pressures and tread levels, will help to increase driver safety, but will also impact the tyre's performance."

Jonathan Layton, head of fleet at Michelin, says fleets should also take a fresh look at the technology available to them, as there are plenty of apps which can support their goals of increasing safety and sustainability. These include tyre dealer apps which can help streamline tyre bookings and appointments, while inspection apps require drivers to carry out checks against a personalised list.

CARRY OUT A FLEET POLICY REVIEW

Organisations should carry out a fleet policy review to enable them take a flexible approach to vehicle procurement this year.

"There are still so many unknowns," says Simon Staton, director of client management at Venson Automotive Solutions. "The only certainty is no supplier can provide you with the answers on future taxation, the ultimate impact of Brexit or final outcome on model line-up from manufacturers in the wake of WLTP."

"Instead they should be advising you based on current knowledge and available data. So start 2019 with a fleet policy review."

"This shouldn't just look at the vehicle selection but encompass all aspects of managing the fleet. Start with reviewing the issues that you had in 2018 and make sure these have been resolved or, as a minimum, an action plan is in place."

"Then consider whether there is anything that can be changed in the policy that won't be impacted by the uncertainties in the market, such as grey fleet management, management of pool vehicles, driving for work policies and driver training."



CONSIDER DRIVER WELL-BEING

The mental well-being of a driver can have a far-reaching effect on the smooth operation of a fleet.

"Make no mistake, if you are not managing fatigue, stress and driver well-being, it is having an impact on your operation," says Paul Jackson, head of impairment research at TRL.

A tired or stressed driver is likely to take greater risks behind the wheel, increasing the likelihood of a collision.

"There is the bent metal costs, bumps and scrapes, damaged wing mirrors and increased insurance costs, while research has shown that tired and stressed drivers use up far more fuel," adds Jackson.

AIM FOR SAFETY BEST PRACTICE

Fleets should strive for safety best practice and not just do enough to be legally compliant, says Andy Price, director of Fleet Safety Management.

"Some organisations do things just to tick the box to protect themselves against prosecution, but one of my favourite sayings is 'never confuse what's legal with what's safe'," he adds.

"For example, you could argue it is legal to use a hands-free phone while driving, but it clearly isn't safe."

"Companies should be reviewing where they are and measuring themselves against what current best practice looks like."

"Not every organisation is going to be able to achieve best practice, but they should be working towards continually evolving and improving what they are doing to continuously drive down their collision and claim rate."

INTRODUCING THE NEW BMW 3 SERIES

Latest incarnation drives as good as it looks





New BMW 3 Series proves well worth the wait

After three years in development, newcomer is lighter, brighter and more agile

“It’s been my baby for three years,” explains James Thompson, BMW’s 3 Series product manager. “It’s always exciting to get the car out there. People get how important this car is, to us and to customers. It’s like my third child.”

Revealed at the Paris Motor Show, the seventh-generation BMW 3 Series takes the established dynamic and purposeful lines and reimagines them in a bold, clean and precise form. It’s longer and wider than before, but keeps the traditional BMW design cues buyers appreciate.

That large BMW kidney grille is framed by twin headlights featuring a two-way split highlighted by an eye-catching notch. The grille then sweeps back, flowing into four contour lines that slice along the length of the bonnet. Function follows form, with the front fog lights and special air curtains being integrated into the outer air intakes.

Those intakes, appearing on the SE and Sport models, are inspired by classical racing cars featuring the NACA intake designed originally for jet engines.

The famous ‘Hofmeister kink’ remains, the BMW hallmark now integrated into the C-pillar, giving the rear doors a lighter look. These top contours that lead to the rear of the car, visually elongating the surfaces and culminating in a pair of darkened, L-shaped LED tail lights.

Step inside the wide-opening doors and you’ll find an interior that accentuates the space in the cabin, tempered with a driver-focused cockpit. The horizontal lines of the instrument panel give a sensation of width, while the instrument binnacle itself houses a digital panel offering lightning fast responses.

Physical buttons for the climate control and audio systems are grouped thoughtfully, but most interactions will be



“If you’re a car nut, I can promise that you’ll be really pleased”

James Thompson,
BMW 3 Series
product manager

completed using the iDrive infotainment screen that sits proud at the top of the centre stack. Controlled by a redesigned iDrive controller that sits by the newly designed gear selector and relocated start button, it gives quick and easy access to BMW’s operating system and the impressive Intelligent Personal Assistant, where equipped.

It’s all housed in materials of the very highest quality, with new options available to make the new 3 Series truly yours. As well as open-pore fine wood options, customers can choose from a variety of aluminium trims including a new mesh-effect one.

Impressive levels of standard equipment adorn the new BMW 3 Series, with the SE models coming fitted with LED headlights, interior ambient lighting in 11 colours, a reversing camera with reversing assistant, three-zone climate control and acoustic glazing to filter out exterior distractions. The rear seat also splits and folds, ensuring it’s a practical proposition for families and the adventurous.

Step up to the Sport model and the wheels increase from 17- to 18-inch, lending a more sporting stance to the car. Visual tweaks extend to a darkened high-gloss trim for the side window surrounds, plus kidney grille bars and trim elements for the air intakes and rear apron in a high-gloss black. The style continues inside, with black gloss trim highlights complementing heated sports seats trimmed in Vernasca leather. As with the SE, there’s an 8.8-inch central instrument screen.

The athletic M Sport models takes the 3 Series’ dynamic design and boosts it with a unique front bumper, side skirts and rear apron, and an M Sport leather steering wheel. The rest of the interior is highlighted with aluminium tetragon strips, updated Vernasca leather sport seats, and the new

Four contour lines slice along the length of the new 3 Series bonnet

Customers can choose from a variety of aluminium and open-pore fine wood trims



BMW Live Cockpit Professional with a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster alongside a 10.3-inch central instrument cluster that houses BMW’s latest ID7 operating system.

Of course, all the equipment, comfort and style in the world would count for little if the car didn’t drive like a 3 Series should. Fortunately, there’s been a surprising amount of work to make the new model the most dynamically engaging generation to date.

Reducing the mass of the car was important, despite it growing slightly in size. “There’s weight savings of up to 55kg,” says Thompson. “Most of that is through greater use of aluminium. The body itself is about 20kg lighter, the subframe and springs are down about 7.5kg, and the bonnet and side panels are aluminium which is another 15kg.”

“You really do feel that in the car. Because the chassis has also been made quite a bit stiffer, it’s able to transfer its weight much more effectively.”

Stiffer springs have been fitted thanks to innovative dampers that react to varying driving styles in different ways, allowing the 3 Series to behave as a sports saloon one moment, before providing a cossetting ride the next.

“You get the best of both worlds so when you’re driving a little bit hard, you feel the input you’re putting in is being transferred straight to the wheels. It’s really rewarding how the car reacts to you.”

The wheels sit wider, aiding stability, with MacPherson strut suspension at the front and a multi-link system at the rear, with stiffer suspension mountings. With a body that’s 25% more rigid, it provides an excellent base to work with, something the development team did on the roads of Wales.

“The new 3 Series has been driven on Welsh roads a few times during development,” says Thompson, “with the

11
colours of interior
ambient lighting

5.8 secs
is the time it takes to hit
62mph in the M Sport

chassis team really refining the work that the engineers do to make the car work in the real world. They’re conscious it needs to work on a German autobahn as well as a potholed country road in Wales!

“I jumped in a 320d M Sport and drove around the local roads. I remember getting out of the car after 45 minutes and thinking ‘I really enjoyed that’. It was just fun.”

While the entry point to 3 Series ownership offers a satisfying dynamic package, buyers can choose to enhance what’s there by moving from the SE or Sport trim up to M Sport. This brings further enhancements including adaptive suspension that rides 10mm lower than the other models, and more rigid springs, anti-roll bars and bearings. An M Sport Plus pack adds more driver-focused changes, including lightweight M Sport brakes and the option of an electronic limited slip differential to enhance traction, agility and cornering.

It’s all backed by upgraded four-cylinder engines and a new-generation six-speed manual gearbox or eight-speed Steptronic transmission. The EfficientDynamics engine in the 320d has been revised to provide 190hp with peak torque of 400Nm, enough to propel the car from standstill to 62mph as quickly as 6.8 seconds. It’s not at the expense of economy though, with a return of as much as 64.2mpg being promised and CO₂ emissions as low as 110g/km. More enthusiastic drivers could opt for the 330i, a petrol unit able to carry the car to 62mph in a rapid 5.8 seconds. BMW’s xDrive all-wheel drive system will also be available on both options to ensure all that power is transferred to the tarmac effectively.

“I always thought the BMW 3 Series was the best driving car of its competitors. The Alfa Giulia has challenged that, but this new car is a big jump forward. If you’re a car nut, I can promise that you’ll be really pleased.”



One in five of BMW's UK sales is a 3 Series

It's little wonder the national corporate sales manager describes the 'best in segment' car as 'fundamentally important'

Brian Cox says the UK is the No 1 market for 3 Series Plug-in Hybrids

25
electrified vehicles in the range by 2025

"If the Government continues with its 2040 plans, our expectations are that plug-in hybrid volumes will grow, but I do not see PHEVs overtaking (diesel) in the foreseeable future"

Brian Cox,
national corporate sales manager, BMW

There's no doubting how important the new BMW 3 Series is. Even though the brand's product lineup is growing, 20% of the BMWs sold in the UK are 3 Series, underlining how vital it is to get the car and the customer offer right.

"It's fundamentally important for us," explains Brian Cox, BMW's national corporate sales manager. "It's absolutely the benchmark car in the segment. One in five of all BMWs sold in the UK is a 3 Series as it's the best in segment for technology, comfort and driving assistance features."

Despite the shift towards SUVs, the new BMW 3 Series saloon is expected to do well. "The X3 does well, with it and its premium rivals selling between 10,000 and 14,000 a year, but the 3 Series will do 26,000 in a year. There's still a place for the sedan in the market and it's not going away."

"Within that, the plug-in hybrid has been hugely important," says Cox, although he doesn't see the diesel models losing big ground any time soon. "Diesel still has lower CO₂ emissions than petrol by some margin, and the case for diesel is still quite strong. We're comfortable and confident in terms of WLTP figures and the cleanliness of our diesels."

"If the Government continues with its 2040 plans, our expectations are that plug-in hybrids volumes will grow, but I do not see PHEVs overtaking in the foreseeable future. Diesel is still very prominent for us, and the 320d will outsell the 330e."

Despite that, hybrid sales are expected to be very strong, continuing a trend BMW is already seeing.

"With the BMW 330e, we outsell the US two-to-one, and Germany by 10-to-one, so we're the number one market for the 3 Series Plug-in Hybrid in the world," says Cox.

"Most of our 330e iPerformance sales have been to corporate customers, probably around 98%. The volumes we've been able to build, we've been able to sell to corporate customers straight away, so it's made sense to do that, but I think there opportunities for further growth. We know that the Mini Countryman Plug-in Hybrid does very well on the retail channel, so there's further growth potential for the 3 Series PHEV there."

Cox points out that the future for BMW isn't going to be just 3 Series models with diesel, petrol or plug-in hybrid power,

with the brand investing heavily in alternative power sources.

"By 2025 we will have 25 electrified vehicles in the range, 12 of which will be pure electric. We've already made moves with battery electric vehicles with i3, and there'll be a 3 Series-sized battery electric vehicle option in the forthcoming iX3."

The new 3 Series will be the focus from now on, despite demand for the existing model remaining strong. "The current 3 Series is still doing well," explains Cox, "but we've actually stopped production now and only have what's left in stock, which isn't much. We'll be producing new cars ahead of the March launch date, and those cars will come into the marketplace then."

Those cars will predominantly be going to corporate customers, with leasing companies taking a large share.

"Leasing is north of 80% of cars we sell, so the lease companies play a huge part in everything that we do. We have a team that focuses on the lease companies within the company, and we have a team that looks after the end customer as well. There's also a team of people that look after the big PLCs, and they work hand in hand with the leasing team so we can all benefit from a joint effort. It's just making sure that we're joined up with our end customers as well."

End users are demanding, wanting the latest technology and inspiring driving dynamics, which the 3 Series delivers. The fleet operators want reduced costs, which is attained through residuals that are expected to be higher than the 3 Series' rivals, and lower maintenance costs. Repair bills will also be kept to a minimum, thanks to the latest safety technology.

"The cars have got automatic emergency braking (AEB) as standard to dramatically reduce accidents. Around 80% of accidents are rear end shunts, so the new 3 Series has our highest standard of AEB, called Active Guard Plus. It's standard equipment for all the models in the range."

Those demands come from across the board, and BMW is keen to meet them.

"We look after SMEs, large corporate accounts, and the public sector as well," says Cox. "Every customer is hugely important to us from a retail and corporate perspective."

"There's a model in our range for everyone. The customer is king, and we look after them accordingly."



Every model comes loaded with apps and features

More technology than ever

The new 3 Series introduces cutting-edge features that haven't been seen before, all designed to make driving easier and more productive

Chief among the 3 Series cutting-edge features is BMW's Intelligent Personal Assistant (IPA). Responding to voice activation, a simple "Hey BMW," the assistant is able to help out with all manner of functions, from checking maintenance issues – "Hey BMW, is the oil level okay?" – to offering help and instructions on features of the car – "Hey BMW, how does the High Beam Assistant work?"

It does so much more than answer questions though. Far from being a simple voice-control system for the car, the IPA learns each driver's routines and preferences to proactively assist. On a cold day, it'll set the interior temperature to your preferred setting or, more impressively, work out that you're leaving the office for home and automatically set the navigation and download traffic updates.

Unlike the systems you'll find in your phones, BMW's assistant can be given a name, allowing you to call out "Hey Sandra, where's the nearest fuel station?" or perhaps "Hey Charlie, call home". It's therefore possible to make each 3 Series truly unique, with a personal secretary, BMW specialist and map reader travelling with you at all times.

It's one part of ID7, BMW's latest in-car operating system, that takes intuitive operation to the next level and helps drivers concentrate on the road ahead. Live Cockpit Plus is standard on SE and Sport models and brings a touch controller, navigation system, two USB ports and a WiFi interface to the car, all easily controlled through an 8.8-inch touchscreen. For those wishing to simply mirror their smartphone, Apple CarPlay is included as a service for one year.

M Sport drivers benefit from Live Cockpit Professional which increases the instrument binnacle display from 5.7-inches to a fully digital 12.3-inch display, complemented by a larger 10.25-inch control display on the dashboard. An adaptive navigation system is included, along with a hard-drive-based multimedia system with 20GB of storage. Live

20GB
of storage on the multimedia system

"The IPA learns each driver's routines and preferences to proactively assist"

Cockpit Professional also sees the introduction of the IPA, as well as on-street parking information, and Connected Navigation that allows for destinations to be entered remotely from multiple devices.

Every 3 Series is fully connected though, with teleservices to contact qualified technicians, an automatic emergency call system that contacts the emergency services in the event of an emergency, while all the gadgets and mapping will be kept updated with phone-like over-the-air updates.

And, while every model comes loaded with apps and features, technology is aiding safety as well. BMW's Active Guard Plus includes speed limit recognition, lane departure warning and collision and pedestrian detection, with automatic emergency braking to mitigate any issues. This can be added to with the addition of the Driving Assistant Professional package that includes adaptive cruise control that works right down to a standstill, lane-keeping assist that steers the car gently to keep it in the centre of a lane, and active side collision protection that reduces the forces during a side impact. It'll even alert drivers if they head down a one-way street the wrong way.

All these alerts could be overwhelming, but optional head-up display projects vital information onto the windscreen, the data seemingly floating ahead of the car in a position that allows the driver to keep updated without looking away from the road.

All of this technology can be accessed from a smartphone using a Digital Key. Using near field communications built into the latest Samsung Galaxy phones, opening the door and starting the car can be done without a physical key; you simply hold the phone to the door to unlock it, then slot it onto the wireless charging pad to allow the car to be started. The Digital Key can be shared across multiple devices and users too, allowing for safe and secure access to trusted family members and colleagues alike.



The 330e iPerformance is set to arrive next July

Whatever you require from a car, there will be a 3 Series for you

Saloon or estate, frugal or fast plus a choice of powertrains – it's a diverse offering

While the 320d will take the lion's share of sales, thanks to its impressive balancing of performance and economy, and the 330i will prove popular for those needing a little more poke, there's more to come in the new BMW 3 Series range.

Arriving in July 2019 will be a fleet-friendly plug-in hybrid version of the car that will offer a pure-electric driving range of more than 35 miles.

Called the 330e iPerformance, economy of as much as 166mpg is promised, using NEDC-correlated figures. Final official figures should arrive in the new year, but CO₂ emissions are expected to be less than 40g/km.

Using the latest eDrive technology, the 330e iPerformance sacrifices little in terms of practicality, hiding the lithium-ion battery under the rear seats. Gliding silently along in a relaxed style typical of electric motoring, having earlier pre-heated or cooled the car remotely, it will transform urban driving.

166mpg
is the economy promised by the 330e iPerformance

251hp
produced by the combined engine and electric motor

6 secs
is all it will take for the 330e iPerformance to hit 62mph



The 330e iPerformance can decide for itself whether to be in petrol, electric or hybrid mode

Leave the car to its own devices and the advanced on-board computer systems will switch between petrol, electric or hybrid power as it sees fit, extracting the maximum efficiency from the power sources available. However, the iPerformance isn't designed purely for economy. Pushing all the power through an eight-speed Steptronic transmission, the combined engine and electric motor will produce some 251hp, enough to slingshot the car to 62mph in six seconds flat. An exciting new XtraBoost mode frees up another 40hp for a limited time, allowing the driver to access higher levels of performance.

Those needing a little more go will be pleased to hear of the simultaneous arrival of the M340i, a car every bit as hot as the outgoing V8-powered M3. The *de rigueur* 0-62mph sprint will be despatched in a supercar-rivalling 4.4 seconds, with M Sport suspension and chassis changes ensuring the 3 Series can comfortably handle the extra power provided.

Thanks to some innovative engine technology, the M340i will also be able to return strong economy, meaning it's not a case of sacrificing the sensible in return for extra fun.

"It's going to be absolutely brilliant" exclaimed Thompson. "It's not just sticking an M badge on the front and rebranding it. It's got 50 extra horsepower, it's got a limited slip differential, it's got active suspension, and it's got a nice sounding six-cylinder engine that's as fast as the previous M3 V8.

"The car really should take the fight to Audi S4s and Mercedes C43s. I'm really excited it!"

A full-blown M3 will follow in good time, but it's unlikely we'll see that until 2020.

Despite the growing trend for SUVs, something that's catered for by BMW's X range of vehicles from the sporting X1 through to the luxurious X7, there's strong demand for an estate model.

With the addition of a couple of extra engine options through the year, there'll be a 3 Series for everybody, whether it's a diesel, petrol or hybrid, saloon or estate, frugal or fast.

DON'T WAIT FOR MOBILITY REVOLUTION TO HAPPEN

Fleets have the opportunity to capitalise now on the benefits of a connected vehicle future. *Jonathan Manning* reports

Progressive fleet managers are laying the foundations for a future in which their roles will change fundamentally, according to an expert in mobility trends.

Fully autonomous vehicles may still be a few years away, but forward-thinking operators are already seeing the opportunities presented by the other letters in the CASE acronym (Connected, Autonomous, Shared, Electric) to explore how employee and business travel will be transformed in the years to come, said Neckermann Strategic Advisors MD Lukas Neckermann.

His new report, 'The Mobility Revolution: a primer for fleet managers', builds on the issues crippling modern cities, primarily air pollution and congestion, to create a compelling business case for a world where the model of one-car-one-driver is superseded by shared, on-demand transport.

"If today the fleet just exists to enable company employees to do their job, the connected vehicle can do so much more. It reduces insurance costs, it can reduce downtime through



Lukas Neckermann
managing director
of Neckermann
Strategic Advisors

predicted maintenance, and it can enable shared use in certain instances," said Neckermann in a webinar address to the NAFA (National Association of Fellowships Advisors) Foundation.

He forecast that within five years all new cars will be 'connected', with the capability to transmit a wealth of data back to fleet operators, and early adopters of telematics tracking systems are showing how this data can revolutionise business practices.

Neckermann cited one company which had used its ability to track its fleet by downsizing its vehicles. These now carry only half the tools and half the spare parts that they used to transport, thanks to RFID (radio-frequency identification) technology that tracks which tools and parts are on each vehicle; wherever there's a high density of vehicles, one can source any tools and parts it needs from another.

"If you are thinking about autonomy and about sharing vehicles, the best way to get on board with this is to gather data. Where are the vehicles, what are they doing, how many miles are they driving every day and what kind of environments are they driving in?" said Neckermann.

Armed with this information, he added, fleet managers can identify which vehicles could be shared.

"Fleets will acquire fewer passenger and commercial vehicles. It will become economically feasible to share vehicles supplied by mobility companies rather than acquire cars, vans, pick-ups, buses and commercial trucks that spend most of their time in parking lots," said Neckermann.

He put the case that many employees will welcome this development, with car ownership losing its lustre in urban areas, where it is no longer "the default mode of transport," although he conceded that a two-tier transport sector might emerge with rural employees maintaining individual car ownership while city staff switch to shared solutions.

"We believe fleet managers have a key role to play in the vision that mayors and city planners are painting to reduce the congestion, pollution, and traffic fatalities coming from vehicles jammed into city streets – and with it, the rollout and implementation of connected, autonomous, shared and electric vehicles," said the report.

"Over the next few years, as new options become available, fleet managers will have gone through one entire cycle of consulting their users on new mobility. They themselves will have gone on a journey from initially managing grey fleets, perk cars and commercial vehicles, to outsourcing and leasing, ending with car sharing, mixed mode mobility and even overseeing shared autonomous fleets.

"Almost cliché, the fleet manager will become a mobility manager."



London taxi fleet to lead autonomous vehicle trials

Government approves three tests of self-drive vehicles. *Jonathan Manning* reports

The Government has given the go-ahead for three new trials of self-driving vehicles, which are expected to reach UK roads by 2021.

Luxury taxi firm Addison Lee will lead one of them, called Project Apollo, to introduce an app-based, on demand ride-sharing service in London.

The consortium includes Oxbotica, the self-driving vehicle software company with which Addison Lee is already working to create a 3D map of Canary Wharf, in preparation for autonomous vehicles.

Paul McCabe, Addison Lee Group corporate development director said the project in the capital would deliver "better mobility for its people, enhanced public transport, cleaner air and safer streets."

The taxi firm is also a participant in a second consortium, called ServCity, led by Jaguar Land Rover. This will build a premium mobility service across four London boroughs, using six autonomous Land Rover Discoverys.

The third autonomous vehicle trial – Project CAV Forth – will take place in Edinburgh, where five autonomous full-size single decker buses will run a 14-mile service from Ferrytoll Park and Ride in Fife across the Forth Bridge to the Scottish capital's Train and Tram Interchange. The project aims to run buses every 20 minutes, accumulating 20,000 weekly journeys as a test bed for future autonomous bus services.

The bus will be Level 4 autonomous, which means that a driver will have to be on board at all times.

20,000

weekly journeys is goal for Project CAV Forth test

Porsche speeds up charging

As befits a manufacturer focused on speed, Porsche has unveiled what it calls the 'Porsche Turbo Charging' concept for electric vehicles. The company believes that by doubling the voltage of a charger to 800 volts it can more than halve the time it takes to recharge a battery. The result is a promised 250-mile range in less than 20 minutes.

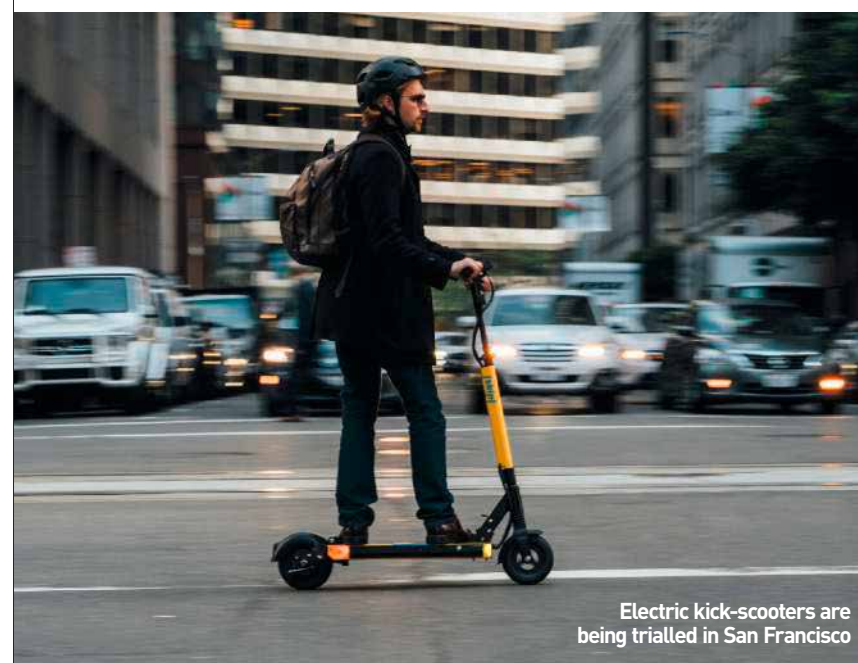
DC fast-charging stations for electric cars normally operate at a level of around 400 volts, but Porsche has developed a Combined Charging System connector to split its 800V between two 400V plugs.

Four new charge points at the Porsche dealership on Berlin-Adlershof Technology Park have been installed, although vehicles will need a 'combined charging system' connector to take advantage of the high speed chargers.

Porsche says its new fully-electric Taycan, due in 2019, will be the first series production model to feature 800-volt technology, and that if this pilot proves successful the technology will be rolled out to other Porsche centres.



Double the voltage in Porsche recharging



Electric kick-scooters are being trialled in San Francisco

Electric scooter fleets hit San Francisco

Fleet operators may need to add another type of vehicle to their roster if a year-long trial of electric kick-scooters proves successful in San Francisco.

The city wants to find cost-effective, convenient, nimble and green mobility options, and has granted a 12-month licence to two firms, Scoot and Skip, to deploy a maximum of 625 scooters each. Both businesses have the potential to increase volumes to 2,500 after six months, at the discretion of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency.

A previous launch of motorised scooters in the city ended in failure earlier this year when 1,900 complaints were received within a five-week period about scooters blocking pavements and unsafe riding on public rights of way. This led to new regulations requiring scooter firms to have a permit from the SFMTA to park scooters on pavements and in public spaces.

Scoot's scooter has a 350 watt motor and is promoted as an "affordable, fast and fun transportation for people who live in the city where the 'last mile' is the only mile."

Scoot runs a fleet of shared electric vehicles, including electric bikes, motor scooters and kick scooters in both San Francisco and Barcelona.

Reducing the need for more power stations

But several barriers stand in the way of V2G technology providing a solution

This autumn a major trial installed the first vehicle-to-grid chargers in the UK, marking the start of an experiment that could see electric vehicles (EVs) start to solve the massive energy demand they will place on the national grid without the need to build new power stations.

Experts forecast that EVs will account for 5% of energy demand by 2040. But smart use of their electricity storage capabilities could help the national grid meet surges in demand with fleets providing their own solution.

Vehicle to grid (V2G) technology is the next step in intelligent electricity use; it sees EVs

recharge their batteries when demand on the grid is low, and potentially feeding the grid when energy demand is high. The technology could also prove vital in making electricity generation from renewable sources more viable, by facilitating the storage of power to feed back into the grid when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing.

Marco Landi, innovation lead – V2G & EV charging at Innovate UK, said electricity consumption from EVs will rise to 1,800 TWh (terawatt hours) by 2040 from six TWh in 2016. This has the potential to create demand peaks between 5GWh (gigawatt hours) and 18GWh by 2050 unless

smart charging is introduced.

However, EVs could "act as controllable loads, to smooth demand peaks and act as distributed storage, providing energy back to the grid", said Landi.

The technology should also see vehicle owners, including fleets, compensated for allowing their EVs to be used.

But barriers stand in the way of this smart future, including the regulatory environment, the development of affordable hardware, and the need to test the impact of V2G in action on the life of vehicle batteries.

Innovate UK is funding eight projects involving 2,700 vehicles in V2G trials to test not simply

the technology but also consumer attitudes.

"V2G is using an available asset sitting unused for 90% of the time," said Landi. "But it needs to be a choice not an obligation. V2G business models need to find a way to compensate EV drivers, and customers need to be continuously engaged in the process."

In theory, the UK ought to be the ideal test bed for V2G systems, given the country's deregulated energy market. But it is far from straightforward, said Mark Trahand, vice-president marketing, Nuvve, which claims to have the world's only commercially-ready V2G system.



EVs like Nissan's Leaf will be bidirectional in terms of electric supply

Connection to a local grid can take six months, there's no guarantee that HMRC won't tax EV owners on any revenue raised from selling electricity back to the grid, and the hardware is still in its infancy.

"We are seeing a lot of constraints. The energy markets need to be adapted so V2G can obtain maximum revenues from them," said Trahand. "In the UK we will be providing

commercial services mostly to fleets to start off, and we're looking forward to having more and more EVs in the UK connected to the grid. We spend a lot of time trying to explain to car manufacturers that if they want their EV to be optimal it needs to be bidirectional. Once consumers understand bidirectional cars, that's what they'll be buying. Car manufacturers will step up to this."

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

David Morris, business account manager, Goodyear Dunlop Tyres UK



At Goodyear, we are focused on what the future holds and how we will be able to respond to it.

To celebrate our 120th anniversary we conducted a 'Transport of the Future' survey to find out what members of the

UK public think the future holds for mobility and cities of the future. We asked what they thought the world would look like in 120 years' time.

According to respondents, cars will still exist, though three-quarters believe they will be completely self-driving and half even envision vehicles that will levitate via magnets. A further 88% believe that all cars will have Wi-Fi.

Despite predicted advances in motoring technology, fewer than one-in-five believe everyone will still use personal cars to commute.

Instead, the survey found that public transport will revolutionise our cities. A quarter of respondents predict that our cities will become pedestrianised, accessible via monorails and 23% envision trains that will operate on different levels, dependent on their speed and whether they are cargo or passenger trains.

Personal transport won't be the only arena to evolve, 44% of people agreed that same-day deliveries will be the norm and more than a quarter anticipated that same-hour deliveries will have been rolled out nationwide.

To achieve these delivery times, more than a third believe that door-to-door deliveries will be made by drones, while a fifth envision self-driving robots operating from a central depot.

The mobility ecosystem is changing at an unprecedented rate and, at Goodyear, we look forward to providing safe, smart and sustainable products and services in the future, whatever that may entail.



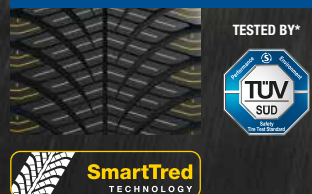


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CONNECTED FLEET

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Wireless charging is key to electric robo-taxi fleets

The EV recharging infrastructure should require no driver involvement in preparation for fleets of driverless vehicles.

By Alex Gruzen

Fleets of electric, autonomous cars will soon become a reality. More than 33 million autonomous vehicles are set to be sold globally in the year 2040, according to IHS Market. And, with the boom in ridesharing that we've seen over the past five years, it's clear that most urban cars will be shared instead of privately owned.

However, vehicle and city infrastructures must be equipped for the change. Self-driving cars will remove the driver from the equation. Robo-taxis will eliminate vehicle ownership.

Without a driver or a car owner, who will plug in these vehicles? Automakers, Tier 1 suppliers and infrastructure developers will have to bring autonomous charging to market.

By powering wirelessly, an autonomous future is possible. Magnetic resonance wireless charging enables vehicles of any type or size to simply drive over a source pad – embedded on or in the ground – and power is transferred safely from the pad to the vehicle. Charging can be done through water, snow and ice, with no concerns about cable connections. Wireless charging delivers the same power, efficiency levels and charge speeds as traditional plug-in charging methods, with no compromises.



Alex Gruzen
CEO of WiTricity, the
US-based engineering
company that
manufactures devices
for wireless energy
transfer using resonant
energy transfer based
on oscillating magnetic
fields

*"Drive over a source pad –
on or in the ground – and the
power is transferred safely"*

Alex Gruzen, WiTricity

Many automakers are already working to embed their vehicles with this innovative technology – such as BMW's 530e, Hyundai's new Kona, Porsche's Mission E and Audi's e-tron SUV. Wireless charging will help break the adoption barrier for combustion engine drivers, who cite charging as a top reason for avoiding the switch to electric. While this technology promises added convenience for EV drivers, for robo-taxi fleets and other autonomous applications wireless charging adoption is critical.

Zippering from one passenger to the next, autonomous shared cars will need to charge frequently. Since sending a vehicle to a remote charging depot would waste both time and battery range, vehicles should be able to opportunistically charge – or 'power snack' – in designated service areas or along vehicle routes. Wireless charging will become key infrastructure along frequent routes in cities.

Before digging up streets, though, infrastructure must be standardised, and vehicles must be interoperable. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with plug-ins, which have various charger ports around the globe and several different types of plugs.

To help the emerging wireless charging market avoid this fate, automakers have rallied around the SAE J2954 recommended practice specification.

This global standardisation helps automakers reach scale and ensures interoperable wireless charging across brands. The SAE J2954 standard and CATARC (China Automotive Technology and Research Centre), its China equivalent, will be ratified by 2019.

The pieces of the mobility puzzle are coming into place for a future of transportation that is electrified, shared, and, with wireless charging, truly autonomous. Broadly deployed wireless charging infrastructure will lay the foundation for e-powered robo-taxi fleets to successfully carry the next generation of consumers from one destination to the next.

Drivers too slow to take back control from AVs

Safety concerns over technology that needs drivers to take action in emergency

New research casts doubt over Level 3 autonomous cars providing a stepping stone to fully driverless technology.

Levels of autonomy are graded from one to five, dependent on the degree to which the vehicle can drive itself, with level one being the most basic, such as cruise control, and level five being the ultimate driverless experience.

Level three autonomy allows the vehicle to undertake aspects of driving, in theory allowing drivers to take hands off the wheel and eyes off the road, but with the proviso that the driver can retake control at any moment.

The new Audi A8 is the first car to showcase this technology with its Traffic Jam Pilot, which is capable of driving the car in traffic at up to 60kph (37mph), although current UK laws stipulate that drivers must continue to maintain overall control of their vehicle. The Law Commission of England and Wales is less than a year into a three-year review commissioned by the Government into driving laws and regulatory reforms required to allow self-driving vehicles.

However, the recently published final report of the Venturer project revealed that it is possible for a driver to take back control of a vehicle in optimum conditions – as Level 3 autonomy stipulates – but this is not necessarily a desirable approach from a safety perspective.

Peter Blackley, senior transport planner, Atkins' Transportation, was involved in Venturer, a three-year research and development programme into the barriers standing in the way of connected and autonomous vehicles.

He said: "It takes three seconds for drivers to take back control, but at some speeds it's taking as long as 50 seconds to regain proper control. There is a lot more work to be done on the handover of control from the autonomous vehicle to the human."

The research found that while drivers may have their hands on the steering wheel and eyes on the road, they



50

seconds was the time it took for a driver to regain proper control of the vehicle at higher speeds

struggle to refocus their attention and return to their 'baseline manual driving performance', adding a 20% delay in reaction time compared to a manually-driven vehicle. Incidents of less safe driving, such as swerving, and harsh acceleration and braking were higher for up to 50 seconds after taking back control.

The report concluded: "Even at speeds as low as 20mph, the planned handover task from the vehicle to the driver at Level 3 brings new kinds of road safety risk due to driver performance deficit following the resumption of control."

"A lengthier, more structured handover process is likely to be necessary, especially in the early stages of adoption, in order for drivers to regain control safely and in a manner which does not expose them to unfair liability consequences."

The consequences of any delay in regaining control are clearly more serious at faster speeds, and one suggestion by Venturer is for an autonomous car to deliberately slow itself down before handing back control to its human driver.

LEVELS OF AUTONOMY

Level 1: Minor driver assistance

The driver is in charge, but a vehicle may feature relatively basic systems such as adaptive cruise control.

Level 2: Advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS)

New safety technology such as automatic emergency braking and lane assist systems appear at this level. The person behind the steering wheel is still fully engaged and is ready to override any of the ADAS systems.

Level 3: Vehicle takes control

The first major step into the self-driving world, with vehicles capable of taking full control in some scenarios. However,

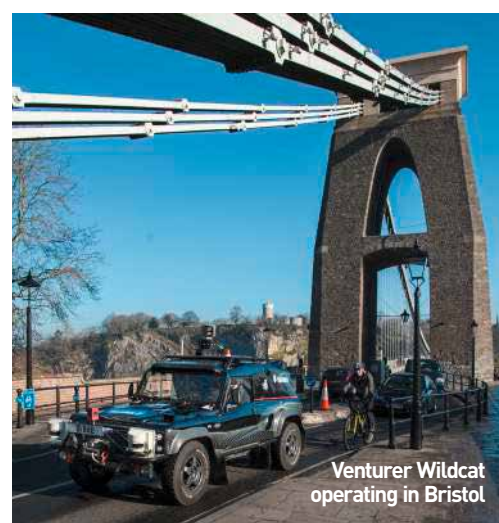
the driver has to remain sufficiently alert to take back control at any time.

Level 4: Door-to-door automation

At this level, vehicles are capable of completing entire journeys using their own artificial intelligence, although the vehicle would still have the architecture of a familiar car, with a steering wheel and pedals for times where a human still needs to drive.

Level 5: Complete automation

These driverless vehicles don't even need to have a steering wheel or pedals. They are the long-term goal of every manufacturer and tech firm.



Venturer Wildcat operating in Bristol

Minibuses stake claim to be commuter vehicles of the future

On-demand services bridge the gap between buses and taxis

Typical... you wait for one bus-based mobility solution and then three arrive at once!

New app-based on-demand bus services are offering a vision of future travel, combining the benefits of mass transit with the convenience of taxis.

Trials of the services have proved popular and could provide solutions for any businesses looking to free-up work parking spaces. The buses follow no fixed route, but, instead, let passengers request pick-up and set-down points.

Following a trial in Kent, transport provider Arriva has launched ArrivaClick in Liverpool. The service uses algorithms developed by ride sharing firm Via to match passengers travelling in the same direction and dynamically route 15-seater minibuses in real-time along the optimal route for their trip.

Passengers can summon a ride via an app and track the vehicle's approach on their smartphone. The app provides a guaranteed fare and real-time

information on the time of collection – it sends a text when the vehicle is two minutes away and again when it arrives.

Pick-up and drop off points are usually at the street corner closest to the location requested.

In Liverpool, the zone of travel currently extends from the city centre to John Lennon Airport, connecting workplaces and retail spaces.

ArrivaClick's pilot in Sittingbourne found that 43% used the service for their daily commute and that 50% of customers switched from private cars.

This is vital given fears that ride-hailing car solutions will actually cannibalise public transport, taking passengers off buses and trains and into private cars.

A report in July by Schaller Consulting calculated that 60% of passengers using ride-hailing services, such as Uber and Lyft, in nine major US cities would have walked, cycled or taken public transport had a cheap



A minibuse used on the Kent trial

and convenient cab not been available.

Steve Rotherham, metro mayor for the Liverpool City Region, said public transport had a key role play in his ambition to make the region more connected and accessible.

"Lifestyles and expectations are changing and we need to continue to modernise and renew our transport network to meet those needs," he said. "At the same time, we should be mindful about the impact this

has on the environment. That means thinking more creatively and providing innovative services that deliver tangible benefits for both passengers and the environment."

In west London, Ford expanded its ride-hailing minibus service, Chariot, at the end of the summer, while in October, ViaVan, a joint venture between Mercedes-Benz Vans and Via, launched an on-demand service in Milton Keynes, using Vito Tourers.

WHIM'S MOBILITY AS A SERVICE APP ABOUT TO BREAK OUT OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

Eight months after launching in the UK, the country's first Mobility as a Service (MaaS) solution, Whim, is looking at a series of new developments, with business travellers clearly in its crosshairs.

Whim offers access to bus services, taxis and car hire in the West Midlands, on both a pay-on-use and subscription basis, and will expand these options in 2019.

"We are working with a partner that is going to give us access to train tickets, and that will be a game changer," said Chris Perry, head of partnerships UK at MaaS Global, the company behind the Whim app.

With a national rail offering, its taxi supplier in nine cities, and a nationwide car hire company as a key partner, Whim is rapidly pushing back the frontiers of its West Midlands base, and the combination of train and taxi will allow it to offer a door-to-door service, with the added bonus of capturing receipts for expense claims and cost management.

"We would love to be in two if not three further cities by this time next year," said Perry. "We are talking to great partner cities and great partner transport providers."

He explained the company had deliberately maintained a low profile since its launch, using the experiences of its first customers to develop its product offerings.



"We think there will be a strong market for B2B"

Chris Perry, MaaS Global

"Once customers start using the product for real, they use it in ways that perhaps we haven't expected," said Perry. "The value in going live is that you get real customers making real journeys and you can understand how people travel and how they want to travel."

Usage patterns indicate that early adopters – the company has not released figures for how many people have downloaded its app or signed up for its service since its April launch – are using Whim for commuting. Applications for business travel are on the drawing board.

"We have not focused on business travellers and the products we have at the moment are about travelling around Birmingham and the West Midlands, whereas business travel tends to be long distance," said Perry.

"But we think there will be a strong market for B2B and, once we have the ability to sell rail tickets in the new year, we think the product will be much more appealing to business customers. We want to learn what their needs are and want to build something that works for them."

Since MaaS Global launched Whim in its home city of Helsinki in summer of 2016, its growth has been exponential, with more than 2.5 million journeys undertaken, 60,000 downloads of its app and 7,000 subscribers.

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The annual *Fleet News* 'Reader Recommended' programme allows our readers to have their say about the companies they believe offer the best service. We have gathered opinions via research conducted among the *Fleet News* audience.

Fleets nominated their best – and worst – suppliers in each industry segment. The top performing companies, when both scores were considered, were then granted Reader Recommended status.

The sectors highlighted within this sponsored section are breakdown, electric vehicles, fuel, rental, software, telematics and tyres.

A full list of Reader Recommended companies within each sector can be found on the *Fleet News* website under the supplier tab.

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Joining up the dots: Power of connected car technology

By Stuart Thomas, director of fleet and SME services, The AA

At the AA, we see ourselves at the centre of an automotive 'ecosystem' – one in which we go far beyond the roadside services for which we are most traditionally known. Not only do we help keep fleets moving by fixing their vehicles at the roadside when problems occur – our goal is also to predict any issues before they happen to ensure these breakdowns don't occur in the first place.

The AA's connected service is a strong forecasting tool for fleets. It's capable not only of predicting issues, but also preventing them from happening, by harnessing the power of foresight that is hidden in every fleet within its data.

We take raw data and use it to make recommendations to customers, or alert them to upcoming issues they need to be aware of. This could be in the form of a battery or service alert displayed in app form or via a web portal or dashboard – whichever format the manager prefers.

Car Genie for Business – upcoming launch

Our breakdown prevention system, Car Genie, will shortly be launched to business customers, helping managers to enable proactive, timely decision-making about service, maintenance and repair (SMR)



scheduling, while also helping to lower breakdown risk.

The system has been tested across more than 10,000 vehicles and can analyse a huge amount of data, delivering a better understanding of the probability that a fault code will lead to a breakdown.

Car Genie is simple to install into a vehicle's onboard diagnostics port, which analyses data in real time. The information is then relayed to the Car Genie app. Car Genie's aim is to take some of the burden away from fleet managers, allowing them to focus on other aspects of their role.

Connected car technology – the benefits

Connected car technology has a long history as a cost-cutting device for fleets through improving driving efficiency, leading to lower fuel consumption and reducing wear and tear on a vehicle. According to recent research by LexisNexis Risk Solutions, it is also playing a role in reducing insurance costs for young drivers thanks to its reduction of casualties by more than a third since 2011.

This indicates that connected car insurance has done more to cut accident risk than other road safety initiatives aimed at the young driver market. At The AA, we also believe it has the capability to improve fleet-wide safety for older drivers by making data widely available to managers on

"Car Genie will shortly be launched to business customers, helping managers to enable timely decision-making about SMR scheduling"

driving styles and habits, thus allowing areas for improvement to be identified immediately. Indeed, its importance as an accident management tool cannot be overlooked.

Future plans

To highlight one particularly pertinent example: tyres, which are so vulnerable to wear and tear, are not currently monitored by the technology, despite posing a huge potential issue for fleets. Future connected car technology will be able to track individual tyre pressures, allowing a fleet manager to access and check each tyre's condition via the app.

Regardless of fleet size, our aim is to access key vehicle data to drive connectivity and predictive diagnostics across the whole vehicle. There's also scope for impressive capability expansion as we continue our research into connected car technologies.



Visit www.theaa.com for more information

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As a Fleet News Reader Recommended Leasing company, it's our ambition to ensure that your fleet is ready for 2019 and beyond.

Whilst it's important to remain future focused, it also pays to look back from time to time and learn from key areas of insight from the year.

From a webinar that equipped us with the tools to better understand WLTP, to a series of whitepapers that explored key themes that could affect your fleet, we want to make sure that you're FutureFleet ready with some practical guidance.

So with the fleet industry constantly developing with new legislation and emerging technologies, we've been dedicated to keeping you connected and up-to-date.

You can download this insight including our whitepapers and webinar at arval.co.uk/fleet-research/futurefleet



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At home, work or on the road, Chargemaster has EV answers

Chargemaster, now part of BP, is one of the UK's leading providers of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. The company, which recently celebrated its 10th year in business, manufactures a full range of universal EV charging equipment in the UK and operates POLAR, the UK's largest public charging network.

The UK business has delivered more than 50,000 charging points to date, with the majority of these being home charging units. Chargemaster has provided 45,000-plus Homecharge units for domestic properties and is recommended by 11 vehicle manufacturers in the UK.

Its home charging points can be specified with communications functionality that gives drivers a summary of their usage, which can then be used for expenses and reimbursement of home charging costs.

As many drivers have access to some kind of off-street parking, most electric vehicles will have the ability to be charged at home.

Chargemaster believes businesses should embrace this opportunity, including by potentially funding home charging points, even if the cost is ultimately deducted from an employee's salary.

For drivers eligible for the Government's Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme grant, the cost of an installed Homecharge unit is typically around £300-£400.

As well as charging at home, Charge-



master manufactures workplace charging equipment, including basic wallbox units that can be specified with 3.6kW, 7.4kW or 22kW power, 3.6kW, 7.4kW and 22kW dual-socket wall-mounted or floor-standing intelligent charging points, and 50kW DC rapid chargers.

The company's ChargeVision back office system allows businesses to monitor usage of their charging points, seeing which vehicles are charging when and where, how much energy has been used, and even approximate emissions savings.

Chargemaster's intelligent workplace charging points can also be specified with proprietary load management technology, which can enable more charging points to be connected to a limited power supply.

For example, if a business only has an available power supply of 100 amps for EV charging, it would typically only be able to have three 7.4kW charging points running off it.

However, Chargemaster's load management technology can reduce the power being supplied to each charging point as more vehicles are plugged in, meaning that the first three vehicles would get the full 7.4kW, but as the fourth vehicle onwards is plugged in, the charge rate would reduce, balancing the available supply over the charging points in use.

"ChargeVision allows businesses to monitor usage of their charging points, seeing which vehicles are charging when and where"

As Chargemaster operates POLAR, the UK's largest public charging network, it can also provide fleets and their drivers with seamless access to thousands of public charging points across the country, including 400 rapid chargers, with a single corporate account and one monthly bill for an unlimited number of vehicles.

Each driver uses an RFID card – either attached to a keyring or kept in their wallet or inside the vehicle – to tap in to any one of the charging points on the POLAR network, with all electricity consumption billed directly to the business.

Ultimately, Chargemaster can serve a fleet's every need, including charging at home, at work and on the road.

To find out how Chargemaster could help your business, call 01582 399413, email sales@chargemasterplc.com or visit www.chargemasterplc.com.

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Are you avoiding the necessary?

Inspections don't have to be like pulling teeth.

By Peter Golding

Dentists. We all know that nobody likes visiting them, not even for the routine check-up. Fear of the “drill” may have something to do with our reticence, but more often we resent the sheer inconvenience of the process. And we dread the prospect of the inspection exposing that something is wrong, and that further work may need to be carried out. According to the NHS, in the 24-month period ending 30 September 2017, only 51.3% of the adult population visited a dentist.

So, why am I writing about dentists here in FleetNews? Well, it occurred to me that vehicle inspections are similar to visiting the dentist. In a recent survey¹ 17% of businesses admitted that they do not carry out regular vehicle safety inspections. This figure may be significantly higher in reality, as often a company may be only sporadically inspecting their vehicles, or failing to inspect the right things.

In the same survey, 63% of businesses reported using a paper-based system to manage their vehicle inspections. I wonder how many checksheets are completed away from the vehicle, or lost, or filed in the wrong place? Even the most switched-on of fleet managers would struggle to achieve total control of such a manual process.

So, why are these inspections necessary?

You may be aware of the Sentencing Council Guidelines that were introduced in 2016. These guidelines are in place to help the courts set a fair and transparent approach to failings, but most of all, to underpin a system of consistent fines for health and safety offences.

The guidelines take a risk-based approach that identifies three key elements for

consideration, namely the level of harm, culpability, and the fines and sentencing. Notably, fines are now calculated in direct proportion to the company's turnover, and since the guidelines were introduced they have already resulted in numerous convictions. More fines in excess of £1 million have been issued than in the previous 42 years, since the Health and Safety at Work Act was implemented, and across a total of 80 cases, the average level of fine has been around £780,000².

The guidelines also stipulate that companies will be considered to have a high level of culpability if they “ignore concerns raised by employees or others”. In other words, you need to be completely confident that any issues identified by your drivers are not only recorded, but actioned. And actioned on time.

Furthermore companies must not “allow breaches to subsist over a long period of time.” If you are aware that your drivers are failing to carry out regular safety inspections as stipulated by your company policy, you could easily be seen to be knowingly allowing this behaviour to continue.

As businesses, we need to be clear that the courts are expecting us to “put into place measures that are recognised standards in the industry.” Do your current fleet management processes provide you with a robust audit trail of fleet activity? It is crucial that you can demonstrate that your vehicles and drivers are correctly managed. This is particularly worrying for the many companies who rely on spreadsheets and paper-based systems to handle their fleet tasks.

The good news is that FleetCheck's new driver app has been developed in direct



response to valuable feedback about these precise issues from our well-established clients. Not only does 'FleetCheck Driver' integrate fully with our award-winning fleet management software, it also delivers a range of additional benefits covering all areas of vehicle inspection and reporting, and it supports fleet managers with the management of their driver's welfare.

In summary, FleetCheck Driver will revolutionise your vehicle inspection routine, with improved compliance and total control. Moving to FleetCheck Driver is simple, quick and painless. Exactly as we hope our next dentist appointment will be!

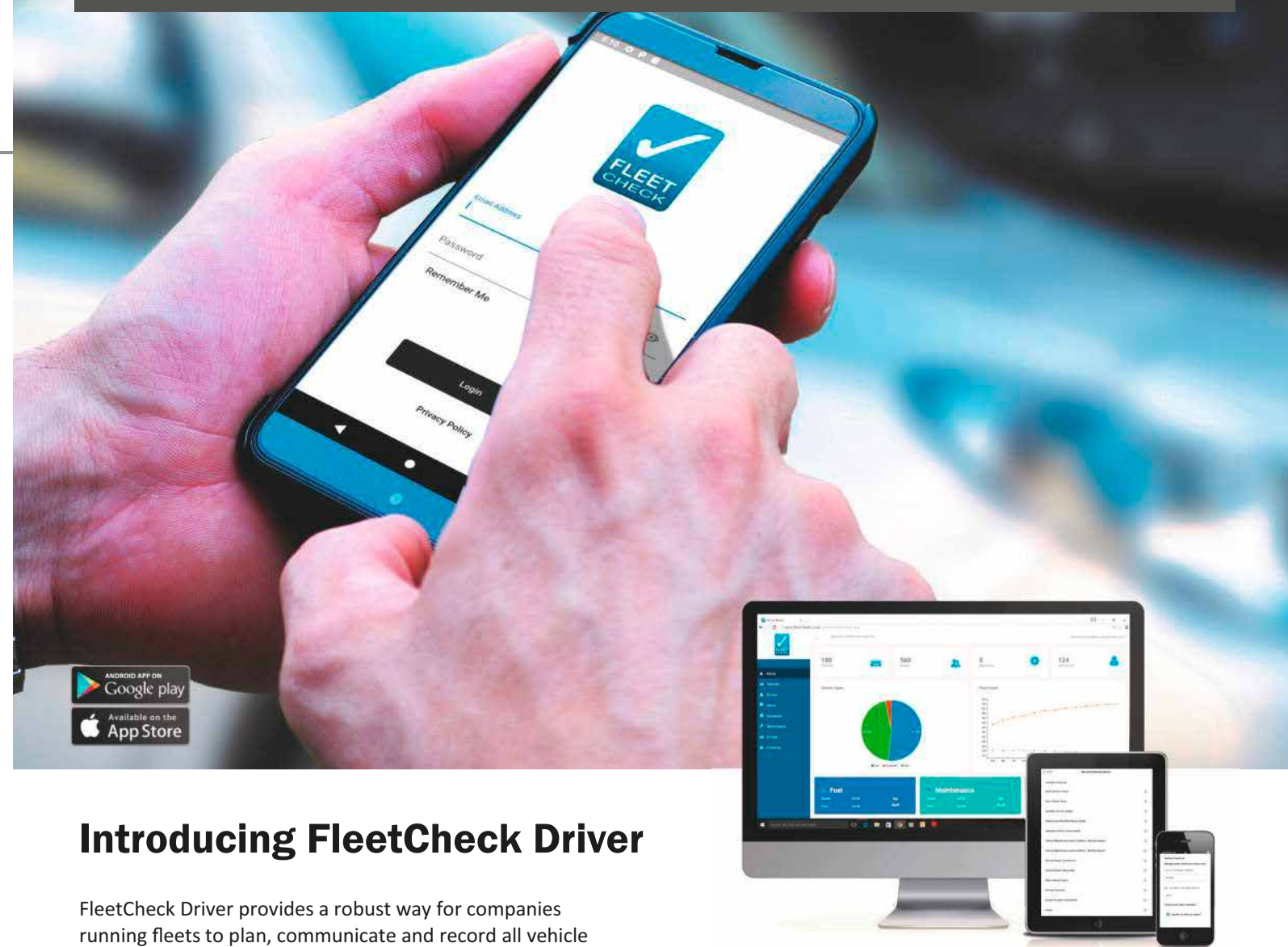
As testament to our leading-edge technology and customer support, we are delighted to have been selected by FleetNews for their “Reader Recommended Award.”

You can find out more about FleetCheck Driver by visiting www.fleetcheck.co.uk



Source: 1) Pro vision 2018 2) Allianz

Not all vehicle inspection solutions are equal...



Introducing FleetCheck Driver

FleetCheck Driver provides a robust way for companies running fleets to plan, communicate and record all vehicle inspections. Designed to fully streamline the vehicle inspection process and remove the need for manual paper trails, FleetCheck Driver also gives drivers the facility to submit 'Fit to Drive' declarations, input fuel purchases, report incidents and more.

Information submitted by drivers is instantly alerted to the fleet department for validation, giving your company complete control over all your fleet tasks.

Product highlights:

- Elimination of paper-based checksheets and associated chasing, filing and manual recording.
- Instant visibility of missed inspections.
- Automated integration of mileage and defect data with our FMS platform.
- Simple, automated scheduling of regular inspections.
- Easy upload of photographic evidence of vehicle damage and defects.

- Bespoke inspection routine for specialist equipment.
- Robust audit trail of inspection process.
- Customisable 'Fit to Drive' declarations.
- Collision reporting, fully integrated with our FMS platform.
- Customisable driver support information.
- Simple fuel purchase recording.

Whether you run 5 or 5,000 vehicles, FleetCheck Driver gives you complete confidence that your inspection process is robust and compliant, with minimal intervention and zero paperwork.



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Ability to respond to customer needs at core of Kwik Fit success

Kwik Fit, the UK's largest automotive repair company, is continuing to expand its comprehensive service, maintenance and repair (SMR) capability with key contract hire and leasing company clients and major end-user fleets, while also growing its seven-day, extended hours mobile tyre fitting capability to company car and van drivers.

The Fleet News Reader Recommended company operates in a wholly customer-focused world with a strategy concentrating on delivering a comprehensive range of vehicle-related solutions – tyres, brakes, MOTs and SMR – via first class client service.

Andy Fern, fleet sales director, Kwik Fit GB, said: "In recent years Kwik Fit has been – and remains – on a customer-centric journey. Consequently, it has never worked closer with key clients, resulting in long-term strategic partnerships. The business is



at the head of a chain that encompasses contract hire and leasing companies, fleet decision-makers and drivers and by working closely with all those clients Kwik Fit delivers customer service excellence."

Year-on-year Kwik Fit is increasing its volume of fleet SMR work with the roll-out of Kwik Fit Plus-branded centres at the core of that growth. Today approximately 10% of the company's 600-plus centre network is branded Kwik Fit Plus, replicating the atmosphere and standards found in a modern volume car dealership.

Fern said: "Customer convenience, with opening seven days a week and a long hours culture coupled with delivering value for money and short vehicle repair and

"Short vehicle repair and maintenance lead times are long-established hallmarks"

maintenance lead times are all long-established Kwik Fit hallmarks when compared to franchise dealers thus helping to increase the company's focus as an SMR provider."

He added: "Kwik Fit's strength is its ability to deliver services to the top and bottom of the corporate market by size – touching vehicles operated by, for example, the UK's largest contract hire and leasing companies to the handful of vehicles run by SMEs."

Mobile7 operates seven days a week

Kwik Fit launched Mobile7 inside the M25 London ring road in 2016 and has subsequently expanded the service into other regions across the UK.

As a result of a substantial roll-out programme during 2018, Mobile 7 is operational in the following areas: Birmingham and the West Midlands;

Bristol/Bath; Edinburgh/Glasgow; Leeds/Huddersfield; Manchester/Liverpool and the North West; Milton Keynes/Bedford; Southampton/Portsmouth.

During 2019 and into 2020 'Mobile7' will be rolled out into a number of other major conurbations.

Kwik Fit operates a 200-strong mobile fleet nationwide, with some of the vehicles Mobile7 liveried. Mobile7 operates 8.30am to 8.30pm seven days a week. Kwik Fit Mobile operating hours

for the rest of the UK where Mobile7 is not currently available remain 8.30am-5.30pm (Mon-Fri) and 8.30am-1pm (Sat).

Andy Fern said: "More and more companies are meeting the demands of their customers, which is for a seven days a week service. Kwik Fit has reacted to that with Mobile7."

"Kwik Fit recognises the increasing demands on customers' time and Mobile7 is the company's response to delivering increased flexibility."

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The fourth industrial revolution and fleet management

There is no question that ongoing uncertainty caused by Brexit has affected fleet decisions in the UK. As discussions rumble on and economic uncertainty abounds, fleet managers have little incentive to invest in depreciating assets – the transport market is fast-paced and business mobility solutions must be malleable to cope with the current economic climate and the needs of individual organisations.

The Future of Mobility

Nexus is observing more businesses turning to rental for their mobility needs as rentals can be kept off a balance sheet and provide greater cost control. The benefit of Nexus' business model means it keeps costs low by not being tied in to the running and maintenance of depreciating assets. This, in turn, enables it to provide customers with the newest vehicles that they only have to pay for when needed – fleet capacity can be scaled as necessary to allow businesses to always have the resources required to deal with peak periods, whilst downsizing fleets when demand isn't as great.

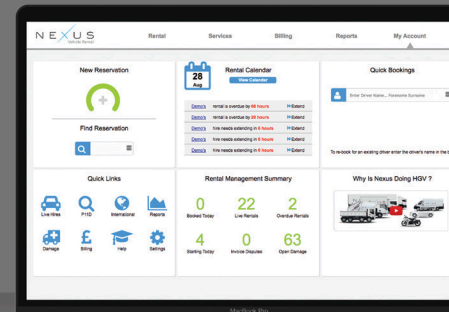
The best way mobility providers can keep up with market trends is through investment in, and the application of, technology.

Digitise to Minimise

Digital transformation within an organisation not only leads to greater efficiencies regarding asset management, but by proxy, results in lower running costs through time saved. With the mobility market on the cusp of a new era of disruptive technology – from electric to autonomous vehicles – businesses of all sizes must choose to stick or twist; invest in tech or risk being left behind.

Technology has always been at the heart of Nexus and has enabled the business to evolve from a corporate rental provider to a mobility consultancy, keeping its clients moving in the long-term.

Advertisement Feature



Complete Control

Nexus' pioneering rental software, IRIS, gives clients access to over 550,000 vehicles, including 100,000 specialist and commercial vehicles and 50,000 HGVs, across 2,000 UK locations. The technology confirms 90% of bookings with no human interaction, streamlining processes for both supplier and end-user and allowing businesses to flex their fleets as cost effectively as possible.

Offering daily, short, medium and long-term rental through its unrivalled network of suppliers, which it has built up to be the largest in the UK, Nexus' no turndown policy sees it able to source any vehicle, anytime, anywhere, usually within two hours of a booking being made. Built on innovation, technology is at the heart of everything Nexus does. IRIS is developed in-house and the cloud-based system provides fleet managers with complete control. IRIS also identifies areas for fleet efficiency to be improved, saving customers an average of up to 20% of their rental costs each year.

A healthy business is ultimately about the bottom line and Nexus' unique technology can improve this as fleets navigate the transition from ownership to usership. Usership, not ownership, will define the future of mobility, with investment in technology underpinning the shift.

"MORE BUSINESSES ARE
TURNING TO RENTAL FOR
THEIR MOBILITY NEEDS
AS RENTALS CAN BE KEPT
OFF A BALANCE SHEET
AND PROVIDE GREATER
COST CONTROL"



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IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE. IT'S VANONOMICS.



These days, fleet managers are finding it makes less and less sense to own commercial vehicles outright. It's just not economically or operationally efficient. Which is why, in these changing times, more UK businesses than ever before are deciding to switch to hire plans.

AT NORTHGATE WE KNOW WE CAN MAKE THIS DECISION EASIER FOR COMPANIES BIG AND SMALL BY APPLYING SIMPLE COMMON SENSE WITH GOOD VAN HIRE ECONOMICS. WE CALL THIS VANONOMICS.

As Sales & Marketing Director, part of my job is to ensure that we find ways to work with businesses running fleets. So, we put ourselves in the shoes of fleet managers and used Vanonomics to create solutions for each of the key management areas; *vehicle management and maintenance, accidents, fuel and risk*. The more vehicles in the fleet, the more Vanonomics can help drive down business costs. Excuse the pun.

When it comes to **vehicle management** we make sure our hire plans are flexible; allowing managers to change vans when needed, and return any that aren't being used. We've also built a powerful piece of software, *Fleet Dynamics*, and introduced ongoing maintenance-tracking to give managers the functionality and visibility to keep their vehicles on the road. Plus, our range of telematics solutions

means that customers can always track vehicles and how they're being driven.

We've made **accident management** simple. The last thing customers need, after an accident, is to deal with multiple agents and complex procedures. So we've created one dedicated team to deal with everything; from incident, to insurance, to getting back on the road. And every hire plan includes servicing, maintenance and 24/7 breakdown cover.

We've also come up with a fuel card solution to make **fuel management** easier for our customers. Helping them save money on prices at the pump. So they can spend it on the things that really matter.



And finally, we've designed several support solutions to help customers **manage risk**, such as *Fleet Risk Audits, Driver Risk Assessments* and tailored *driving courses*, all to help prevent unforeseen events from happening in the first place.

This common sense approach, combined with smart van economics (and the fact that we'll even buy your old vans off you) is just another reason businesses are switching to

Northgate. Maybe that's why we've just been named as **Fleet News Reader Recommended Rental Company**.

If Vanonomics sounds like it can help keep your business driving forward, get in touch. It really is that simple.



Neil McCrossan
Sales & Marketing
Director, Northgate

Find out more at northgatevehiclehire.co.uk Or call Northgate on 0330 042 0903

Supporting your business and your drivers: vehicle tracking

“Vehicle tracking actually works in our drivers’ defence, it’s their personal protection in case of unfair claims” says Matt O’Conner, Managing Director of John O’Conner Grounds Maintenance. With over 250 vehicles and 500 staff to manage across the UK, a crucial advantage the business finds with a GPS tracking system is knowledge of the fleet’s current and historic activity. When describing his staffs’ reaction to the tracking system, he comments, “Drivers expect vehicle tracking nowadays. It shows that a company is fully invested in its operations and in the safety of its employees.”



GPS tracking gives businesses actionable insight to start making efficiencies, improving productivity and saving money. It also protects employees, improves road safety and encourages more economical driving styles. The team at John O’Conner Grounds Maintenance use vehicle tracking to improve driving styles and subsequently drive down fuel consumption and vehicle repair costs.



A good vs bad driving style can save £2000 in repairs costs per vehicle

John O’Conner Grounds Maintenance uses the Quartix driving style data to investigate whether poor driving scores correspond with higher fuel costs and higher repair costs. The answer is a resounding yes: a driver with above average speed scores (green) totalled £1200 in fuel consumption, £96 in workshop repairs and just 1.5 hours of workshop labour time over a 3-month period.

| Over 3 Months | Good Driving Score | Bad Driving Score |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Fuel Costs | £1200 | £1350 |
| Workshop repair costs | £96 | £2216 |
| Workshop labour | 1.5 hours | 29.5 hours |

In the same 3 months, a driver with a poor speed score (red), covering similar mileage, used £150 extra fuel, cost the company an extra £2120 in repairs and incurred an astonishing 29.5 hours of workshop labour. This case study and many more can be viewed at www.quartix.net/learn/case-studies/

About Quartix

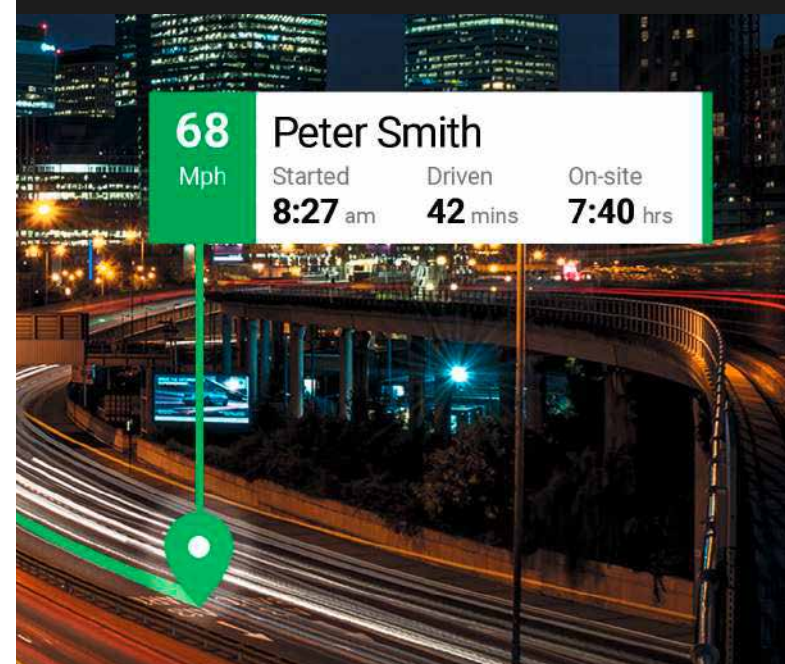
The Quartix vehicle tracking system has been installed in over 350,000 vehicles and helps a wide range of businesses improve productivity, cut costs and save on fuel every day. Providing commercial fleet tracking for cars, trucks, coaches and vans throughout the UK, US and France, the system offers a host of valuable features for fleet managers.

Quartix does the hard work of analysing your data, generating simple to use reports that can be accessed online. Live tracking, driver timesheets, geofencing and management dashboards allow managers to easily see where efficiencies can be made. In-depth driving style reports help to assess driving style, which if improved can save businesses up to 25% in fuel consumption as well as positively impact the safety of other road users.

Quartix offers tiered packages to help businesses identify their safest drivers, make sense of mileage and fuel costs and reduce admin. Get in touch to discuss the best option for your business on 01686 806 663 or enquiries@quartix.net.

More than just vehicle tracking...

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- Unlimited geofencing
- Management dashboards
- Expected fuel usage



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RAC rolls out 'All-Wheels-Up' next generation trailer

The RAC has rolled out its latest innovation in roadside rescue and will be introducing the 'All-Wheels-Up' next generation trailer extension to all its patrol vehicles as standard.

The increasing number of 4x4 vehicles on the roads such as SUVs, has led to a rise in the number of breakdowns where the vehicle needs to be fully lifted if the problem can't be fixed at the roadside - rather than being towed with two wheels on the ground.

In response the RAC has developed Orange Plus, an extension to its rapid deployable

trailer (RDT) to enable patrols to lift all four wheels up, and recover more vehicles, more quickly.

Roger Williams, RAC Business sales director said: "The RAC was the first UK breakdown service to equip all its vans with the built-in trailer RDT and we've now launched the 'All-Wheels-Up' next generation trailer. This means our roadside patrols have the capability to recover a much wider range of



Roger Williams, RAC Business sales director

“Our roadside patrols have the capability to recover a much wider range of vehicles with the type of fault that requires a lifted recovery rather than being towed.”

vehicles with the type of fault that requires a lifted recovery rather than being towed.



"In fact, this market-leading innovation means RAC patrols can recover more vehicles than ever when necessary, including 4x4s and EVs, reducing the need for those customers to have to wait for a recovery truck."

The 'All-Wheels-Up' follows a number of key innovations that were first developed by the RAC and are now used as standard across the industry. The RAC was the first to introduce the RDT in roadside patrols, and mobile diagnostics system RACScan, bringing the power of garage diagnostics to the roadside.

The RAC was also the first to roll out the multi-fit wheel in response to increasing 'puncture no spare' breakdowns, and the first to adopt cutting-edge battery



diagnostic technology in its roadside testing unit.

Williams adds: "The reason we've been able to introduce industry-leading products and services is by listening to what our customers are telling us, and analysing the data generated from more than two million breakdowns a year.

"It's that customer-first approach that has undoubtedly been a factor in being recognised by the readers of Fleet News in this way, and why we're extremely proud to be a Reader Recommended company."



RAC BUSINESS

Benefits of the 'All-Wheels-Up' trailer

- All 1600 RAC patrols to carry new trailer extension as standard
- RAC patrols will be able to recover a much wider range of vehicles
- Reduction in waiting time at the roadside for recovery
- More efficient management of vehicles off the road
- Improved service for fleet managers and their customers



It's all the pulling power you need

Keep your business moving with RAC Breakdown
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Advertisement Feature

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Shell Fleet Solutions, a Fleet News Reader Recommended Supplier

Shell has over 55 years of experience in tailoring and refining its fuel card solutions to deliver an exceptional service to customers. We are committed to being a trusted partner to businesses, answering the challenges of both today and tomorrow.



FUEL

- Customers can access high-quality petrol and diesel fuels through a network of some 3,500 Shell and third-party UK stations. A station locator tool enables journey planning, identifying the stations en route and the facilities and services available at each one.
- With one in three Fleet Managers believing the move to alternative fuels is vital for their operations to stay competitive.¹ Shell is also committed to providing low carbon fuel options that will make up the diverse fuels mosaic of tomorrow, such as electric, hydrogen, gas-to-liquid and liquified natural gas.

PARTNERSHIP WITH NEWMOTION



NewMotion are a member of the Shell Group. One of Europe's largest providers of smart charging solutions for electric vehicles at home, at the office and on the road. NewMotion provides access to a network of over 80,000 public charge points in 28 countries.



FRAUD PREVENTION

- Fleet Managers have the comfort of knowing that the Shell fuel card offers sophisticated fraud prevention through the ability to set controls, parameters and alerts.
- A dedicated team monitors card transactions 24/7 to rapidly identify and tackle any red flags, helping protect fleets from losses.



DEDICATED ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

- Dedicated Account Managers use their knowledge of Shell's offer and the industry to provide Fleet Managers with advice on business solutions to help manage their costs effectively and securely.



ALL IN ONE CLICK

- Recent research found that UK Fleet Managers spend 32 hours a month just on routine administration, often working without the tools or specialist support they feel they need.²
- The Shell fuel card aims to streamline any unnecessary admin time with payments and invoices consolidated for customers using the Shell Card Online portal and the mobile app.
- Fleet Managers have access to all expenditures in one place. This gives them control and insight, with the ability to improve on any inefficiencies.

DON'T JUST TAKE IT FROM US

Marc Waterfield, Co-Owner and Managing Director of Select Euro, customer of Shell for 16 years:

"As part of having the Shell fuel card, we have access to our own online Shell portal. It provides information on the activity of our fleet – so we can track data such as our drivers' refueling points. The fact we can access this easily and remotely really saves time spent on administration, helping to improve our operational efficiency when managing on and off the road spending. Our Account Manager from Shell is essentially seen as one of the team here now. She understands the business and has the knowledge and tools to create a bespoke offering for us."

A PARTNER TODAY, AND TOMORROW

- The fleet industry is seeing an influx of new technologies, services and greater connectivity.
- It is set to reshape the way the industry works, and businesses must prepare for what it means for them.
- However, the pace of change is rapid. 40% of Fleet Managers are currently struggling to stay informed and expect just staying competitive to soon become a challenge.¹
- Shell is committed to working with customers to navigate this by providing services and advice to help them succeed.

¹Survey taken from "Ultra-Efficiency or Digital Disruption: Planning for the Future of Fleets", a report commissioned by Shell Fleet Solutions and conducted by research firm Edelman Intelligence.

²SME Fleet Managers spend 32 hours a month on fleet admin, says Allstar, 2 August 2017, Daniel Puddicombe, Business Car.



BMW 3 SERIES

Much anticipated seventh generation of best-selling 3 Series will not disappoint



Still aspirational for many company car drivers

By Andrew Ryan

The BMW 3 Series has long been the aspirational vehicle for many mid-management company car drivers.

Its mix of badge appeal, efficient engines and sporty characteristics has proved to be a winning formula in the corporate market, as its constant place among the most popular fleet models demonstrates.

It is also BMW's best-selling model, meaning that any update to the range is big news for fleets, company car drivers and the manufacturer alike.

None of these parties is likely to be disappointed as the seventh generation of the premium saloon, which will be launched in the UK in March next year, has all the qualities needed to remain at the top of the class.

Designed to look sharper and more muscular than its predecessor, the 3 Series saloon also offers greater efficiency through reworked engines, more interior space and a host of new technologies aimed at enhancing the ownership experience.

At launch, it will be available in three powertrain variants: a 190PS 320d diesel in both rear-wheel drive and all-wheel drive (xDrive) versions, and a 258PS 330i petrol.

These will be followed soon after with two further petrol engines (184PS 320i, 374PS M340i xDrive) and two diesels (150PS 318d, 265PS 330d), with a 330e plug-in hybrid following in July.

Of these later arrivals, the PHEV will be of most interest to fleets: it will be able to travel up to 37 miles on electric power alone – a 50% increase

compared to its predecessor – while average combined fuel consumption will be 138mpg with CO2 emissions of 39g/km.

BMW expects this powertrain to account for 30% of registrations with more than 90% of those going to corporate customers.

The biggest seller, however, will be the two-wheel drive 320d, which will account for 50% of the range's expected 26,000 registrations in its first full year, of which 60% will go into fleet.

Under the Euro 6d-Temp exhaust standard, it has CO2 emissions from 110g/km to 122g/km dependent on transmission and trim level. Its official combined fuel economy ranges from

67.3mpg to 60.1mpg. This is a notable improvement over its predecessor's correlated-NEDC figure and back on a par with the old NEDC test results. It also compares favourably to its rivals (see panel, right).

This increased efficiency doesn't come at the expense of the driving experience: on the international media launch we drove the 320d fitted with the optional eight-speed Steptronic automatic gearbox, and it impressed.

The 2.0-litre diesel engine produced plenty of power, delivered smoothly throughout the rev range. The ride was typical BMW: firm and controlled enough to give a sporty feel but also

delivering a decent level of comfort, meaning that progress was unflustered. Its steering was also nicely weighted and precise, providing a feeling of agility.

The cabin also impressed. The new 3 Series is roomier than its predecessor, offering more shoulder and elbow room in the front, while legroom in the back is also greater. All occupants benefit from increased headroom.

The quality of build and materials are admirable, while the refreshed interior design is easily comparable to the best-in-class.

Among the highlights is the new digital instrument cluster, which has replaced the

traditional round dials on the instrument panel of the previous 3 Series.

Speed and engine revs are now shown on arced graphics which follow the outside edge of the display, creating space in the centre of the cluster to display information such as navigation guidance.

This is complemented by a large touchscreen at the top of the centre console, from where the infotainment system can be controlled. It all feels fresh and intuitive.

Three trim levels are available: SE, Sport and M Sport. All offer generous amounts of standard equipment such as adaptive LED headlights, BMW Live Cockpit Plus (which includes BMW Navigation, BMW Teleservices and map updates), heated front seats, and parking assistant which includes automatic parallel parking as well as a reversing camera.

M Sport will be the most popular trim level, taking 70% of registrations, further emphasising the car's sporty appeal. SE and Sport will both account for 15% of sales.

Standard equipment on M Sport includes 18-inch alloy wheels, exterior sports styling, sports seats, an M leather steering wheel and BMW Live Cockpit Professional which includes a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster and 10.3-inch central instrument cluster.

The new 3 Series is designed to look more muscular



A new digital instrument cluster has replaced the traditional round dials

FLEET PICK MODEL
BMW 320D M SPORT STEPTRONIC

ENTRY MODEL
BMW 320D SE

RANGE-TOPPER
BMW 330I M SPORT

SPECIFICATIONS

| | FLEET PICK MODEL BMW 320D M SPORT STEPTRONIC | ENTRY MODEL BMW 320D SE | RANGE-TOPPER BMW 330I M SPORT |
|------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| P11D price | £39,740 | £33,350 | £40,700 |
| CO2 emissions (g/km) | 112 | 115 | 134 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 65.7 | 64.2 | 47.9 |
| BIK | 27%/112g/km | 28%/£1,868 | 27%/£2,198 |
| Annual VED | £205 then £140 | £205 then £140 | £205 then £450 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,481 | £1,289 | £1,516 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 9.47 | 9.69 | 12.40 |
| AFR (ppm) | 10 | 10 | 15 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £11,325/28.4% | £9,650/28.9% | £12,125/29.8% |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 50.00ppm | 43.84ppm | 53.12ppm |

FLEET PICK RIVALS



AUDI A4 40 2.0 TDI 190 S LINE TECHNOLOGY



JAGUAR XE 2.0 180 R SPORT AUTO



MERCEDES-BENZ C220 2.0D AMG LINE 9GT+

SPECIFICATIONS

| | AUDI A4 40 2.0 TDI 190 S LINE TECHNOLOGY | JAGUAR XE 2.0 180 R SPORT AUTO | MERCEDES-BENZ C220 2.0D AMG LINE 9GT+ |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| P11D price | £38,470 | £36,245 | £38,575 |
| CO2 emissions (g/km) | 120 | 141 | 117 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 62.8 | 53.3 | 64.2 |
| BIK | 29%/£2,231 | 33%/£2,392 | 28%/£2,160 |
| Annual VED | £205 then £140 | £515 then £140 | £205 then £140 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,540 | £1,651 | £1,491 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 9.90 | 11.67 | 9.88 |
| AFR (ppm) | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £11,150/28.8% | £10,050/27.7% | £9,650/25% |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | 50.64ppm | 49.19ppm | 52.18ppm |

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

THINKING CAP



By Martin Ward, manufacturer relationships manager

cap hpi

Monday/Tuesday A quick flight to Nice for the European press launch of the Kia e-Niro (see also page 78). When we picked the car up at the airport it was 91% charged with a claimed a range of 245 miles. We drove all day up in the hills and on the coast and the range fell consistently with the distance covered.

It's roomy, comfortable and full of 'goodies'. As expected, it is quiet, hardly any road noise due to its advanced soundproofing and, of course, no engine noise.

We drove it around 125 miles and it still had plenty left in the lithium-ion batteries. Kia has combined two growing sectors of the market: EV and SUV in the e-Niro. At no stage did we get range anxiety and it was probably the first time I have driven a full EV and felt totally confident with it.

Prices start from £32,995 after deduction of plug-in grant with first UK deliveries due in April. We lunched on floor '0' of the hotel then drove out. A case of zero to Niro!

An impressive electric car which is a giant step forward for this sector. As more EVs become available they become more accessible and attractive to buyers. This Niro is useable for long and short journeys – hats off to the engineers at Hyundai/Kia.



Thursday/Friday To Daventry for the first drive of the all-new Suzuki Jimny (see

also page 79). What a change it is. I did the original launch back in 1998 at Gleneagles and in those 20 years hardly anything has changed on this small off-roader.

I tried to think of the Jimny's main competitors, but, in reality, it doesn't have any. Maybe the Fiat Panda 4x4 or Dacia Duster, but these are as close as you'll get.

The new Jimny carries some of the old one's characteristics particularly on dual carriageways – it's a bit bumpy, and not that quick. The new one gets a 1.5-litre petrol engine which is much smoother and quieter. We went to a very muddy off-road course and this little 4x4 proved its worth. Up and down some steep inclines and it didn't budge an inch. It was rock solid in some awful conditions.



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



KIA E-NIRO

Distinctive lights and wheels help differentiate e-Nero from its Kona stablemate

By Phil Huff

Range anxiety – fear of running out of electricity at an inopportune moment – still haunts those wedded to their petrol- and diesel-powered cars.

Given the early cars of the electric revolution struggled to reach 100 miles before needing to be plugged in, it's easy to see where this fear came from.

There was surprisingly little progress, outside the luxury end of the market dominated by Tesla, until the Hyundai Kona turned up with its 279-mile range and rapid charging capability.

Now sister firm Kia has launched the e-Niro, an SUV that shares the same drivetrain and battery packs, but does not completely follow the trend for rugged off-road looks.

The e-Niro is broadly similar to the Niro in hybrid and PHEV formats but, externally at least, differentiates itself with a sleek panel where the grille would usually be, and some distinct lights and wheels.

The interior features a new centre stack with extra storage. That's thanks to the lack of gear lever as, with no gearbox to operate, the e-Niro



High-tech cabin is helped by absence of a gear stick

only requires a button press to select drive, reverse or neutral. The instrument binnacle has been filled with an LCD screen rather than traditional dials, lending a suitably high-tech ambience to the cabin.

There's a seemingly endless roster of equipment, with heated leather seats and steering wheel (these use less energy than heating the cabin) climate control, adaptive cruise control, an eight-inch touchscreen infotainment system with digital radio, Bluetooth, sat-nav and both Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, all pumping out sounds through a JBL audio system.

There's also a wireless charging pad and fast-charge USB socket.

It's the electric drivetrain that is the talking point though, and that's lifted wholesale from the Kona. A 64kWh battery is hidden under the floor and an electric motor provides 204PS of power driving the front wheels. Interestingly, while Hyundai also offers a lower range 39kWh battery option, Kia is adamant that the increased range is essential to

customers, so will be sticking with just the larger capacity unit. Officially, it can cover a maximum range of 282 miles (WLTP) giving it a slight advantage over the Kona.

Experience suggests a real-world range of around 240-250 miles should be feasible.

Having an electric motor translates to invigorating performance, with the e-Niro sprinting to 62mph in just 7.5 seconds.

The chassis is definitely set up to be safe and predictable, offering little engagement but ultimately plenty of grip. It rides quite well too, although doesn't soak up every imperfection. It's capable in that respect, but not class leading.

Running costs could be, though. Zero emissions means a low benefit-in-kind burden, and energy costs are likely to hover around the 3p per mile mark, while it'll avoid any city-centre tariffs such as the London Congestion Charge.

Add in reduced servicing costs and a seven-year warranty, and the e-Niro could be among the cheapest company cars to run.

FLEET PICK MODEL KIA E-NIRO 64KWH FIRST EDITION

| SPECIFICATIONS | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| P11D price | £36,440 |
| BIK | 13%/£947 |
| Class 1A NIC | £654 |
| Annual VED | £0 then £0 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | TBA |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | TBA |
| AFR (ppm) | 4 |
| Running cost (4yr/80k) | TBA |
| CO ₂ emissions (g/km) | 0 |
| Range (miles) | 282 |

SUZUKI JIMNY

Driving the Jimny is a no-frills experience that's full of charm

By Matt de Prez

Suzuki appears to have struck gold with its new Jimny. The brand had amassed 10,000 expressions of interest from UK customers before the prices were revealed.

The cheap-and-cheerful off-roader offers an unrivalled package in the current market, costing from just £15,499.

It's a shame then that only 600 examples will make it to UK shores in the first half of 2019.

Fleet sales will be limited as Suzuki expects it will only be able to import around 1,200 units per year, due to supply constraints.

Its 1.5-litre petrol engine develops 101PS. There's a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic, and all models get switchable all-wheel drive.

Emissions of 154g/km may not sit comfortably with many fleet managers but the Jimny could prove useful for businesses operating in rural areas.



The Jimny will come into its own in rural areas

Simplicity is the key. It's a true no frills experience, but one that is full of charm. Suzuki expects the Jimny to act as a halo model for the brand, attracting new customers that are drawn in by its appeal.

Driveability is pretty awful by modern SUV standards. It's certainly not a car for long motorway trips and even low speed cornering creates a wave of body roll.

But, if you head off road, the Jimny is far more capable. There's a low range gearbox that is engaged using a heavy lever and excellent ground clearance and approach angles.

Inside, the Jimny features exposed body panels, robust plastics and neat retro details. The ribbed

FLEET PICK MODEL SZ5 MANUAL

| SPECIFICATIONS | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| P11D price | £17,429 |
| BIK | 31%/£1,080 |
| CO ₂ emissions (g/km) | 154 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 41.5 |

gear gaiter and square instrument housings are a nod to previous versions. Two models are available. SV4 gets aircon, digital radio and steel wheels, while the SZ5 (from £17,429) features sat-nav, climate control and heated seats.

SUZUKI VITARA

Low P11D price means drivers' BIK tax will be less than £70 a month

By Matt de Prez

While supply constraints will prevent the Jimny from becoming a high-volume model, Suzuki is hoping the facelifted Vitara will appeal to a wider range of drivers.

It is primed to rival small SUVs like the Seat Arona.

A new 1.0-litre three-cylinder Boosterjet petrol engine is now available, replacing the 1.6. It develops 111PS and emits 121g/km of CO₂.

Having dropped diesel from the range back in April, Suzuki says the new Vitara petrol is still a cheaper option for company car drivers when compared with diesel rivals.

Benefit-in-kind tax will cost less than £70 per month (20% taxpayer), due to the base model's low P11D price of £16,779.

Fuel consumption is rated at 53.2mpg, although we expect it to perform worse during high speed travel – so may be more suited to urban use.



Only minor cosmetic changes on the facelifted Vitara

There is also a 1.4-litre Boosterjet petrol, carried over from the last Vitara. It is a lot more potent with 140PS and emits from 131g/km.

All-wheel drive can be specified with both engines.

The facelifted Vitara features new technology, including blind spot monitoring, traffic sign recognition and rear cross-traffic alert.

While the cosmetic changes are minor, Suzuki says it has improved refinement and driveability.

We found that both engines offer adequate performance and refinement and, while not class

FLEET PICK MODEL 1.0 BOOSTERJET SZ4

| SPECIFICATIONS | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| P11D price | £16,779 |
| BIK | 25%/£839 |
| CO ₂ emissions (g/km) | 121 |
| Fuel efficiency (mpg) | 53.2 |

leading, the Vitara's interior is a step up from before with higher quality materials and a high level of standard kit.

MINI COUNTRYMAN COOPER SE ALL4 PHEV



How much of a 'Mini' is our Mini Countryman plug-in hybrid? When a colleague tested it for a week he wasn't convinced that it lived up to its Mini status. He owns a Mini Cooper so is a fan of the brand, but he thinks the Countryman is just too big to be classed as a Mini and that "it feels like they've stretched it out".

He has a point. At 4,299mm the Countryman is 317mm longer than the five-door hatch (3,982mm) and 46mm longer than our previous Mini test car, the Clubman (4,253mm).

Aesthetically, I, too, think the five-door hatch is better.

But, to be a contender in the fleet market, Mini has to offer bigger and more practical models.

While the five-door hatch accounts for 60% of fleet registrations, its sales have fallen, but the Clubman and Countryman are up, the latter by 30% year-to-date.

The Countryman also taps into the growing popularity of compact SUVs.

On the road, it still gives drivers the performance they would expect from a Mini (arguably more so in the PHEV guise with its instant torque) and the interior has the familiar dials, switches and lighting.

My colleague appreciated the car's adaptive cruise control but felt that some of the other technology could be improved – the reversing camera doesn't display any guidelines, for example, and the sat-nav screen is on the small side.

I would agree, particularly if you put 'turn' instructions on the sat-nav and are not using the head-up display.

But these are minor niggles, and, overall, we're greatly enjoying our time with the Countryman.

Sarah Tooze

"On the road the Countryman still gives drivers the performance they would expect"



Bigger wheels help give our test model a sportier look

MERCEDES-BENZ E220D AMG LINE

E-Class moves up three tax bands but is still a winner

COSTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| P11D price | £43,695 |
| BIK tax band (2018/19) | 30% |
| Annual BIK tax (40%) | £5,243 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,809 |
| Annual VED | £205 then £450 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £13,100/30% |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 10.75 |
| AFR (ppm) | 12 |
| Running cost (ppm) | 56.37 |

SPEC

| | |
|--|-------|
| Engine (cc) | 1,950 |
| Power (PS) | 194 |
| Torque (Nm) | 400 |
| CO₂ emissions (g/km) | 127 |
| Manufacturer mpg | 67.3 |
| Real-world mpg* | 58.9 |
| Test mpg | 52.3 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 7.3 |
| Current mileage | 5,579 |

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

TEST TIMELINE



By Gareth Roberts

It could be argued that the fifth generation E-Class got off to a bad start on our test fleet. No sooner has it arrived than the cost of running it went up.

Like other models launched since September 2017, all variants were required to be tested under the new emissions testing regime, the Worldwide harmonised Light vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP).

For our test car, the E220d saloon AMG Line Premium Plus, WLTP resulted in emissions increasing by three benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax bands since delivery, with CO₂ emissions rising from 112g/km to 127g/km.

The rise costs a 40% taxpayer an additional £478 per year, with a business paying £165 more in national insurance contributions (NICs).

However, importantly in terms of our test car, it remained below the 130g/km threshold many fleets employ and, despite the additional costs, remains a key executive model for the fleet market.

It offers everything you would expect and want from a car in the executive segment, proving more than a worthy rival to the Audi A6 and the BMW 5 Series, chief among its challengers.

In terms of P11D price, the Mercedes-Benz E220d AMG Line Premium Plus costs £43,695 and, even with the emissions increase, its 127g/km compares favourably to

131g/km for the BMW 525 M Sport.

For a 40% tax-payer that means the E-Class will cost £5,243 in 2018/19, attracting a 30% BIK tax rate.

It is offered in four body styles – four-door saloon, estate, coupé and convertible.

There are two basic trims, SE and AMG Line, while Mercedes offers Premium and Premium Plus packages.

The entry level SE is well equipped, while the AMG Line (our test model) adds a sportier look with bigger wheels.

The 2.0-litre, four-cylinder, turbo-diesel gives a quiet drive that really impresses, while the nine-speed auto gearbox makes for low cruising revs of just 1,300rpm and, thanks to a slippery exterior, there is virtually no wind noise.

Inside, there is even more to like, with a high-resolution dual display, offered as an optional extra costing £1,495.

The two displays, each with a resolution of 1,920 x 720 pixels, merge to form a widescreen.

Below is a row of neat switches for the climate control on the dash, while the rest of the infotainment system is controlled from the rotary wheel on the transmission tunnel.

It all combines to offer fleets and drivers a compelling car which compares well with its rivals from both a cost and performance perspective.

MERCEDES-BENZ C200 AMG LINE ESTATE

Estate offers several ways to boost fuel economy



Our C220d is a petrol model with nine-speed auto transmission

COSTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| P11D price | £37,265 |
| BIK tax band (2018/19) | 29% |
| Annual BIK tax (20%) | £2,161 |
| Class 1A NIC | £1,491 |
| Annual VED | £205 then £140 |
| RV (4yr/80k) | £9,800 |
| Fuel cost (ppm) | 13.02 |
| AFR (ppm) | 15 |
| Running cost (ppm) | 53.05 |

SPEC

| | |
|--|------------|
| Engine (cc) | 1,497 |
| Power (PS) | 184 + 10Kw |
| Torque (Nm) | 280 |
| CO₂ emissions (g/km) | 142 |
| Manufacturer mpg | 44.1 |
| Real-world mpg* | n/a |
| Test mpg | 39 |
| Max speed (mph) | 146 |
| 0-62mph (sec) | 7.9 |
| Current mileage | 1,066 |

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

TEST TIMELINE



AT A GLANCE – THE REST OF OUR FLEET



AUDI A6 40 S LINE



VAUXHALL GRANDLAND X 1.5 TURBO D TECH LINE

FORD FIESTA 1.0 125 ST LINE



The latest generation Ford Fiesta is proving a big hit with fleets. The latest SMMT (Society for Motor Manufacturers and Traders) figures show that to the end of November, it is the second-best selling car in fleet, behind the Volkswagen Golf.

It's also proved to be a popular member of our long-term test fleet. 'Our' ST-Line has covered 10,000 miles since we started running it at the end of June, and it has impressed all who have driven it.

I'm also a big fan: it looks great, the handling is just right – a balance of sportiness and refinement – while the interior, which was probably the weakest aspect of the previous Fiesta, is now among the class best.

Key to this is the optional eight-inch infotainment screen (£350), sitting at the top of the centre console, which enhances the cabin's premium feel.

The display is crisp and, as well as functions such as digital radio and Bluetooth phone connectivity, it also offers Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, which allow you to connect your smartphone and use apps through the car's infotainment controls.

This has proved to be a real boon. I've used it mainly for navigation through Google Maps and for audio through the Amazon Music and Pocket Casts apps.

Setting up Android Auto was straightforward and the navigation, in particular, has impressed, especially the clarity of the maps, the real-time traffic updates and how quickly it suggests alternative routes if there are any problems.

It makes me wonder for how much longer fleets will pay extra to have sat-nav systems fitted as optional equipment to cars, when an equally effective alternative is available for free.

Andrew Ryan

GARETH WILSHER

INTERNATIONAL FLEET MANAGER, AT&T GLOBAL FLEET OPERATIONS

Wilsher thought he wanted to be an accountant, but hated it. However, he fully appreciates that a solid understanding of financial concepts is integral to being an effective manager

A book I would recommend others read is *Obstacles Welcome*, about how to turn adversity into advantage in business and in life by Ralph de la Vega – a truly inspirational read. If anyone finds the answer to parenting, please let me know (still trying to find it).

My hobbies and interests are writing a novel and listening to/playing classic rock. Favourite band? Deep Purple.

The advice I would give to my 18-year-old self is to learn, gain maximum experience and embrace change.

The pivotal moment in my life was surviving cancer – brings amazing perspective.

My favourite film is *Groundhog Day*, but didn't I say that already?

If I were Prime Minister for the day
Task one: coffee.
Task two: reverse the Brexit decision.

The three vehicles I would like in my garage are a Classic Land Rover, Aston Martin DB7 and a Jaguar E-type.

My first memory associated with a car is sitting on the bonnet of my dad's Ford Consul at Black Rock Sands.

I want to be remembered with a smile, even if it is only due to my terrible jokes.

My pet hate is being late.

Your first fleet role

Billing/contracts manager at Evans Halshaw. The director who appointed me advised that once fleet gets into your blood you never stray far. Apart from a four-month hiatus, 30 years later I am still within the clutches of the industry albeit somewhat greyer-haired.

Career goals

Aside from the immediate challenges of WLTP and understanding the future impacts of BIK, my goal is to focus on the transition to mobility management and autonomy in vehicles.

Biggest achievement in business

One of my initial roles after joining AT&T was to manage the centralisation of the AT&T International fleet (25 countries), maximising leverage, harmonising processes and working with HR to streamline car policies. The process took around 18 months.

Career influence

My father. He gave outstanding advice in terms of always being at your best and maintaining honesty and integrity. He always said that trust takes years to accumulate and seconds to destroy – so true.

Biggest mistake in business

Becoming a financial controller. I learned that it was not for me but gained valuable experience including a good knowledge of general financial concepts, budgetary control and financial analysis.

Leadership style

Open-minded and fair.

If I wasn't in fleet

Working with deaf children. My bucket list includes learning to sign.

Childhood ambition

To be an accountant. I was good at mathematics and so it seemed a natural path – tried it, hated it.

Memorable driver moment

Taking delivery of a colleague's 'maroon' car that in bright sunlight appeared pink.

Ford has introduced three new series for the Kuga



Kuga's versatility makes it a must for fleet drivers

Significant enhancements to the Ford Kuga make it an even more attractive proposition for fleet drivers, with its high level of technology available, raised driving position and choice of petrol or diesel engines with manual or automatic transmissions, front-wheel or all-wheel drive.

Three new series have been introduced, with Titanium Edition and Titanium X Edition replacing Titanium and ST-Line Edition replacing ST-Line X. All series, except entry model Kuga Zetec, gain privacy glass, with Titanium Edition and

Titanium X Edition also gaining roof rails and one-inch larger wheels.

ST-Line and ST-Line Edition both offer a flat-bottomed steering wheel, while ST-Line Edition also now has a large spoiler, red brake calipers, black mirror caps, and a wheel colour change from black to Rock Metallic.

Available to order now, the new Ford Kuga is available with a wide engine range – 1.5-litre EcoBoost petrol with power outputs of 120, 150 and 176PS and TDCi diesel with 120, 150 and 180PS.

The new Kuga's meticulously crafted interior offers an ergonomic, stylish and

comfortable experience for occupants, with technologies that include Ford's SYNC3 communications and entertainment system, with eight-inch touchscreen, which allow drivers to control audio, navigation, and climate functions plus connected smartphones using simple, conversational voice commands.

The new Kuga also offers technologies such as Ford's Perpendicular Parking that helps drivers park hands-free in spaces alongside other cars; an enhanced version of the Active City Stop collision avoidance system; and Ford's Adaptive Front Lighting System.

RIDING HIGH – THE ALL-NEW ACTIVES CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION

The all-new Ford Focus Active and Active X crossover models combine rugged styling and enhanced versatility with fun-to-drive dynamics, sophisticated comfort and driver assistance technologies.

Ride height is increased by 30mm compared with the standard all-new Ford Focus and alloy wheels have higher profile tyres for better rough road ride and durability.

Sophisticated powertrain options include Ford's powerful and fuel-efficient 1.0-litre and 1.5-litre EcoBoost petrol engines delivering up to 182PS, and Ford's 1.5-litre and 2.0-litre EcoBlue diesel engines delivering up to 150PS and 78.5mpg combined – with six-speed manual or eight-speed automatic transmissions.

Design features include roof rails on both

5-door and estate models, except on 5-door Active X, which has a panorama roof, Active front and rear bumper and unique grille, unique skid plates, side rockers and branded scuff plates, twin exhaust tailpipes, with key equipment including cruise control with speed limiter and SYNC3 navigation with eight-inch colour touchscreen.



Go Further

For further information on any Ford Fleet products or services call the Ford Business Centre on 03457 23 23 23, email flinform@ford.com, or visit ford.co.uk/fordfleet

Next issue: Paul Bulloch, managing director, Concept Vehicle Leasing

ALL-NEW FOCUS

TOGETHER WE GO FURTHER



YOUR FLEET'S FINANCES TOTALLY TRANSFORMED

To keep running costs at a minimum the All-New Focus range delivers highly competitive low emissions from 91g/km CO₂. Plus, you and your drivers will benefit from a combined fuel economy of up to 80.7mpg.

Discover more at ford.co.uk/new-focus or contact the Ford Business Centre: 03457 23 23 23 | flinform@ford.com

P11D

£30,390-£18,100

BIK

28%-22%

CO₂

137-91g/km

COMBINED MPG

46.3-80.7



Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the All-New Ford Focus range: urban 36.7-74.3 (7.7-3.8), extra urban 55.4-85.6 (5.1-3.3), combined 46.3-80.7 (6.1-3.5). Official CO₂ emissions 137-91g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Regulation 715/2007 and 692/2008 as last amended), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Information correct at time of going to print.