

# FleetNews

## Special report

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# FLEET

September 2024

# leadership

Strategies and suggestions for how to run your fleet now – and in the future



### SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN AN EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

How to excel in the new landscape of fleet management

### PLANNING TO SUCCEED

Why the current fleet manager should be mentoring their replacement



### ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS WITH ROBUST FLEET POLICIES

Managing a fleet means having a clear understanding of business objectives



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# WELCOME

The ambition of *Fleet News* is to help fleet decision-makers to become outstanding leaders.

Some might see this as an overly lofty ambition, others might even think this doesn't apply to them – how can they be a leader within their business?

It applies to everyone: the role of the fleet manager has become far more strategic and the person in the hot seat needs to be able to form strategy based on the goals and future plans of the broader business, know how to influence and engage key stakeholders, learn new skills and adapt to a changing environment – and in all these instances, they – you – are the ones leading the discussion.

You are people managers and change managers; you consult on energy usage and funding options; you are supply chain managers and you are the juncture within a business where all departments – finance, HR, procurement, legal, operations – meet.

For far too long, fleet managers have been seen as disposable, a role which can be outsourced. And some businesses, undoubtedly, still feel that way.

Thankfully, many others have realised that a high-quality professional fleet manager offers numerous benefits for their business. Cost, legal compliance, CSR, wellbeing, risk, decarbonisation – all are strings to the fleet manager's bow; all are opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation by having an outstanding fleet operation.

More power to the fleet manager – the fleet leader!



Stephen Briers,  
group editor,  
*Fleet News*

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# Survive and thrive in an ever-changing fleet environment

The role of a fleet decision-maker has evolved rapidly as technology, legislation and business models have changed. [Andrew Ryan](#) looks at how to excel in the new landscape

**A**s technology, legislation and the way organisations operate have evolved significantly in recent years, so too have the responsibilities of the fleet decision-maker.

Gone are the days of the spanner-wielding fleet manager whose sole focus was to buy and keep vehicles on the road, to be replaced with a role which, as well as looking after the day-to-day operations, is much more strategic.

This includes creating and overseeing fleet management strategies (see page 16) looking at issues such as safety and cost, sustainable mobility strategies (see page 24), or – perhaps the most topical – decarbonisation.

“Fleet has definitely taken a more prominent position than ever in an organisation and it’s not necessarily because they need somebody to do the nuts and bolts, the transactional stuff,” says Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP).

“It’s more the transformational stuff; the strategy about where the fleet needs to go over the next few years to improve operational efficiency, improve safety, drive down costs and how to decarbonise has become critical. You just can’t outsource some of those things.

“The role is also much more inclusive of softer skills, almost acting as an HR consultant at times.”

In response to the changing demands, Hollick says a lot of organisations are either creating new dedicated fleet roles, reversing earlier decisions to

get rid of the position by re-establishing them, or strengthening existing fleet teams.

A recent example of this is Wheatley Group, which was named Most Improved Fleet Operator in this year’s Fleet News Awards.

The housing, care and property management group had previously worked with service leaders, ordering vehicles to their specifications, on a fleet of 150-200 vehicles based in specific locations.

The process was elementary, but served its purpose. However, as the fleet size grew beyond 400 vehicles, the added complexities demanded a new, more strategic approach.

“It was apparent from the size and scale of the organisation, our national context, our service levels with our customers and our ability to manage warranty issues and fleet dynamics had outgrown the service leader approach,” says Laurie Carberrry, its director of procurement, processes.

“It couldn’t be a bolt-on role; it needed a dedicated fleet manager.”

Since Jenny Dolan was appointed to fill the role, the company has made major fleet savings, significantly improved safety and has started its electrification journey.

“None of this would’ve happened without having a fleet manager,” says Carberrry. “The organisation’s dependency on Jenny and the team is huge now.

“This is a solid team in which we are looking to invest because the returns are tangible. We couldn’t be without them.”

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**RAISED PROFILES**

For many organisations, the need to transition to electric vehicles (EVs) has been the key factor in creating new roles, while it has also increased the profile of existing fleet decision-makers within their organisations – among both senior managers and drivers.

“Until EVs came along, the car fleet had been a bit flat for about seven or eight years,” says Matt Hammond, head of fleet at Altrad UK.

“You were just churning the same numbers, trying to squeeze your CO<sub>2</sub> down and screw manufacturers down to better terms.

“The drivers had lost interest and the younger ones, in particular, weren’t that bothered, they just bought a car.

“Now they know what’s going on. They know about the tech. They want to understand what it’s all about. There really is that buzz around it.

“It’s definitely lifting the industry and made everybody more passionate and understanding about what we’re doing.

“From a fleet management viewpoint, suddenly you’ve gone from being the guy down the bottom of the corridor nobody ever wants to go and see, to being in the busiest office in the building.

“Not only have you got all the drivers wanting to talk to you, you’ve got the ESG guy standing outside your door, you’ve got the FD standing outside your door. It’s great – you’re a man in demand.”

However, while it is overwhelmingly positive news for the sector that dedicated fleet managers

are back in vogue, they must be able to show they add value to their organisation, says Hollick.

From a finance director’s or CEO’s point of view, if the fleet team is not adding value then there will always be questions around how valid the roles are and whether the responsibilities should be outsourced or insourced, he adds.

“The transactional element of just doing the paperwork can always be outsourced, but it the strategic element where extra value can be found,” says Hollick.

“This could be working with your finance directors, line managers and HR community to drive the fleet forward and improve the quality of your choice list, the quality of your driver happiness and wellbeing while they’re out on the roads, improving safety and driving down costs.

“Perhaps the biggest thing at the moment is decarbonisation. You really need someone in your organisation that owns your data and information about where you are before you can work out where you need to be. If you don’t have a good steer on your data, you’ve got no hope of working out how you’re going to be able to create a decarbonisation journey.”

**MIXED BACKGROUNDS**

A further evolution in the position of a fleet decision-maker is that while traditionally they tended to have a mechanical or engineering pedigree, people carrying out that role are now coming from different backgrounds, such as procurement, facilities or HR.

This does mean there may be some knowledge gaps which would not have existed in the past, says Steve Winter, former fleet manager at Centrica and now a fleet consultant.

“The role now is very different to how it was in the past,” he adds. “But you still need someone who understands the mechanics of a fleet, and there are many factors which, all too often, won’t be naturally understood if responsibility for the fleet is in a procurement, HR or facilities function.”

Of course, skills and knowledge can be learned and the sector is full of highly-competent fleet decision-makers from those backgrounds who have dedicated time and effort into getting to grips with the sector.

Plenty of help is available for both new and experienced fleet decision-makers. This can take the shape of resources and advice from sources such as trusted leasing companies and suppliers, while help with specific areas of fleet management can be gained from organisations such as Driving for Better Business (DfBB), Energy Saving Trust (EST), road safety charity Brake and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

The DfBB, for example, is a free programme from National Highways which aims to help organisations reduce work-related road risk, control the associated costs and improve compliance with current legislation and guidance.

It offers tools and case studies to help organisations evaluate practices, strengthen culture, enhance performance and demonstrate leadership in the management of work-related road risk.

Earlier this year it launched an interactive Driving for Work Policy Builder to help fleet decision-makers create, review and update their own policy to meet their legal requirements to minimise risk.

Meanwhile, the EST focuses on decarbonisation and offers free advice on topics such as how fleets can transition to EVs.

**BENEFITS OF TRAINING**

A wide variety of training courses are also available to those in the fleet sector, and these have numerous benefits for both employee and employer.

A more effective fleet decision-maker will help an organisation increase operational efficiency, ensure it is compliant and reduce costs.

For the employee themselves, training ensures they have the skills necessary to succeed in their role, improves their confidence and credibility, and allows them to meet career goals by addressing gaps in their personal development. ➔

“FROM A FLEET MANAGEMENT VIEWPOINT, SUDDENLY YOU’VE GONE FROM BEING THE GUY DOWN THE BOTTOM OF THE CORRIDOR NOBODY EVER WANTS TO GO AND SEE, TO BEING IN THE BUSIEST OFFICE IN THE BUILDING”

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“The importance and value of training is not lost on those in the fleet sector, with Hollick reporting the AFP’s range of courses is proving “unbelievably popular at the moment”.

“We’ve highlighted before that we believe an entire generation of high-level fleet expertise will be lost through retirement in the next few years and this means that training the fleet managers of the future is crucial,” he adds.

“There’s definitely a thirst for education, particularly classroom-based training rather than online, at the moment.

“All our courses are sold out for the rest of the year, and we’re just in the process of putting the dates out for the entire calendar for next year so people can start booking spaces, even if the course is next November.”

When the AFP was formed in 2020 from the merger of ACFO (Association of Car Fleet Operators) and the ICFM (Institute of Car Fleet Management), one of its aims was to train, educate and develop fleet professionals to raise the standards of corporate fleet operators and associated support service providers.

**RANGE OF COURSES**

Through its Fleet Academy, it now offers members a range of both online and tutor-led training options.

“We always look out for new entrants into the fleet industry and how we can support those guys,” says Hollick.

“Sometimes people will take a job at a senior level but have no fleet experience at all.

“Although they’re massively skilled in terms of general management, sometimes they need that element of vocational qualifications that the AFP and others provide.”

Its Fleet Vehicle Management Pathway courses provide a development route for those looking to gain skills in a range of fleet roles, while its Accelerate programme focuses on specific topics.

These are designed to be a deep dive into subjects that are key for fleet professionals, with courses including making the switch to electric vehicles,

transition to an eLCV Fleet, and funding and finance for fleet professionals.

Other accreditation schemes include FORS (Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme), which is a voluntary programme designed to improve standards in the road transport industry.

It assesses and recognises fleet performance in key areas – environmental impact, safety and operational efficiency – and provides a framework and sets benchmarks to help operators enhance their performance in these areas.

Training is offered for managers and drivers to enhance their expertise, competence, skills and overall effectiveness in their respective roles.

Undergoing training and gaining qualifications can also help a fleet decision-maker to advance their career.

“One thing we are seeing more and more in the jobs world is that those with qualifications, whether they are from AFP or FORS for example, are the people who are most sought after by organisations,” says Hollick.

“We sometimes see the more senior fleet managers moving companies into bigger or more defined roles, which is great to see, and they all tend to be involved with the AFP.

“There’s definitely a trend for organisations requiring skilled fleet professionals, not only at that senior level, but also ensuring people in their teams have got fleet accreditations to help set strategy and link the fleet with the business needs of the company.”

**STAY UP-TO-DATE**

It is also important for fleet decision-makers to stay up-to-date with current and future trends to enable them to shape strategies accordingly.

Events such as Fleet & Mobility Live, which takes place this year at the NEC in Birmingham on Tuesday, October 8, and Wednesday, October 9, provides access to a range of expert speakers – as well as suppliers – in one place, while the Fleet200



“ONE THING WE ARE SEEING MORE AND MORE IN THE JOBS WORLD IS THAT THOSE WITH QUALIFICATIONS ARE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE MOST SOUGHT AFTER BY ORGANISATIONS”

PAUL HOLLICK, AFP

Strategy Network adds to this by providing networking opportunities with other fleet decision-makers.

“Networking events are really important to build relationships with your peers,” says Winter.

“There may be a presentation going on, and you may pay attention to it, but it’s often not the most important thing there.

“It’s often about sitting around the table and chewing the fat with other fleet professionals to share your challenges and they can share how they overcame them. I learned so much from that.”

Hollick says this sharing of knowledge can extend beyond in-person meetings once a relationship has been formed.

“If you network, you become conscious about industry challenges, headwinds and future concerns that might not even be on your radar at the moment.

“It also gives you the ability to pick up the phone, go on LinkedIn or use the AFP WhatsApp group to share insights and challenges.

“We regularly get at least 10 messages a day in terms of people wanting and offering advice; it’s been a real success.”



# Planning charging infrastructure implementation



Naomi Nye, head of sales,  
Drax Electric Vehicles

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**T**he route to your operationally efficient, cost-effective charging infrastructure isn't as simple as buying and installing hardware. It's important to understand the electrical capacity of your sites, the requirement for internal support and approval, and the importance of future-proofing solutions.

We cover six considerations for factoring into your decision-making in our Plug Into Progress guide. To summarise:

**Assessment:** Make the case for electrification and plan your infrastructure accordingly.

**Installation:** Maximise value with minimal business disruption.

**On the road:** Onboard your drivers smoothly and ensure they understand any operational challenges.

**Maintenance and optimisation:** Minimise infrastructure downtime and gain insights into EV operations for maximum fleet effectiveness.

**Suitability:** Evolve your charging infrastructure and embrace renewables.

**Innovation:** Take early advantage of change in the energy and EV industries and help future-proof your business.

An additional consideration involves engaging specialist support.

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# Planning to succeed

Having a succession plan for when a fleet decision-maker leaves has numerous benefits for both employee and employer. *Andrew Ryan* reports



**M**any fans of hit HBO show 'Succession' may be under the impression that taking over the reins from a long-time incumbent is a messy business, dogged with infighting and politics.

However – and unsurprisingly – the reality of succession planning is that, when done properly, it is straightforward and has many benefits for both the organisation and the member of staff who is being succeeded.

This is why such planning is becoming increasingly common in organisations for many senior roles, including those of fleet decision-makers.

"The aim of succession planning is to be able to fill key roles effectively if a current post holder leaves the organisation or changes role," says Steve George, digital learning portfolio manager, HR and employment law, at CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development.

"In a climate of enduring skills shortages, interest in succession planning has revived."

This is a trend Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) has also seen in the fleet sector, as organisations look to maintain

continuity in their operations if there is a change in fleet decision-maker.

Although the fundamental aims of the majority of fleets are very similar – meeting operational demands, improving safety, reducing costs and cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, for example – the day-to-day requirements can vary significantly.

If a new fleet decision-maker is brought in from outside, it can take time for them to fully understand the characteristics of the fleet, as well as establish fruitful relationships with that business's suppliers as well as internal stakeholders.

Such issues can be avoided by appointing someone from within the organisation who is already familiar with the operations, its strategies and suppliers.

It also means that someone can seamlessly step into the role of a fleet decision-maker during unforeseen events such as illness, accidents or sudden departures.

## QUALITY LEADERSHIP

"Having a succession plan is an important element of good quality leadership," says Hollick.

"Quality leaders don't need to lead all the time. There will be times when they will be on holiday or unavailable, and the issue with fleet is that you can expect there will be a problem with the CEO's or CFO's car at the worst time possible.

"What you don't want is to be the single point of failure within your organisation.

"Although you might have an outsourced supply team that can handle things, it is important to develop your team into a position where they can offer support in your absence. Of course, this assumes that you are able to get the head count. There are still some really small fleet teams even in big companies.

"It's not just knowing where things are in terms

of keys etc., it's more about who to speak to, the reason why things are done, and involving them in some of the key strategic elements of what is happening with the fleet as well."

When the time comes, a team member should be ready to take over the role on a permanent basis.

Steve Winter, former head of fleet at British Gas, is an advocate of succession planning, having both benefited from it before he took over the role at British Gas and delivered it before he left the company in 2022.

"My background was a motor mechanic, so I could fix vans, I could fix cars and I could drive trucks, but I didn't have the exposure to what a business case looked like, for example," says Winter.

His predecessor Colin Marriott helped him learn the skills to become a successful fleet manager in his own right.

"Colin helped me massively," says Winter. "Through him I learned about how to put a business case together, how to operate a comprehensive wholelife cost model, how to draw recommendations from those, how to present them to the board and knowing how to prepare for the questions they could ask me.

"It was that kind of administration that I learned from him, as well as the almost political environment of upwards and downwards communication."

Winter adds: "He never threw me in at the deep end, but he would always give me a task outside my comfort zone.

"So he would say 'go and speak to the managing director', so the MD would know who I was – I wasn't head of fleet, I was Colin's right-hand person – and, when Colin left, there was no shock for the MD.

"The MD knew me and he was comfortable I was going to go into this position because he knew I'd been taught how the company worked and what the ambitions were."





## SELECTION PROCESS

Participants in succession planning programmes may be selected either by informal methods, such as conversations with managers, or by more formal techniques, such as the performance review process and assessing competencies, says George.

"However, competencies may be too limiting and mechanistic to assess skills such as leadership. They also relate to the past and present rather than the future," he adds.

"When using competencies to assess 'potential', organisations need to be very clear and consistent on what potential actually means. It should link to the organisation's values and its strategic goals."

When Winter was putting in place his succession planning, he was looking for someone who was good with the day-to-day fleet operations, could talk to people, unions and senior leaders, and get their point across really well.

"I think you can start to recognise that in people quite quickly. Are they technically minded? Do they have vision? Ideally, your fleet manager should be looking at a strategy and what's happening in the next five-to-10 years," says Winter.

"This person should learn the ropes, become used to getting the operational piece running and then move up to understanding and learning how to write a strategy."

Winter found these qualities in fleet engineer James Rooney, although ultimately British Gas decided to take a different route when it came to appointing a replacement head of fleet, hiring someone from outside the team.

Rooney is now head of road fleet at Network Rail. "James is a classic example," says Winter. "He came in as a graduate, very enthusiastic, extremely young, but was willing to learn.



“HE (PREDECESSOR COLIN MARRIOTT) NEVER THREW ME IN AT THE DEEP END, BUT HE WOULD ALWAYS GIVE ME A TASK OUTSIDE MY COMFORT ZONE”

**STEVE WINTER,  
EX-BRITISH GAS**

"That came with its problems as well, because we had other people in the team that had been there 15-to-20 years, and all of a sudden this young whippersnapper is coming in and has got the ear of the boss.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

"James had to deal with that and show that he could build those relationships with team members who perhaps thought he was a threat.

"You also have to build a relationship with somebody to understand if they are the right person. Do they think the same way as you do?

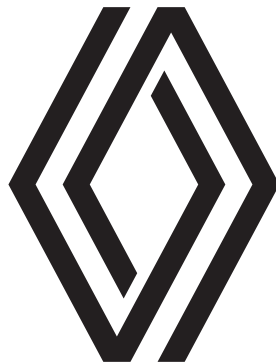
"Also, there's a complementary piece. Do they think about things different to you? Can your skill sets and



ideas complement each other? That's when you start to understand whether this is the right person."

Although Winter knew the timescale of when he was expecting to leave British Gas when he began succession planning, there is never a wrong time to start it.

"It shouldn't be just if the fleet decision-maker knows when they are leaving," says Hollick. "I know of a lot of fleet managers that are training their team up to be their successors, even though they aren't of an age to be thinking about retiring."



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# The all-in-one EV charging solution

How Allstar is solving the complication of controlling and paying for EV charging at home and on the road

**W**hile the milestones along the fleet journey to electrification appear to follow a smooth trajectory, the reality could not be more different. The transition to zero emission vehicles is demanding an entirely new set of skills and knowledge from fleet decision-makers, in addition to all of their long-standing responsibilities.

Bolted on to traditional job descriptions covering fleet management, budget control, safety and compliance are new responsibilities surrounding the operation of electric vehicles (EVs), with their implications for business operations, corporate sustainability commitments, and HR.

To support customers undertaking these new strategic and leadership duties, Allstar has focused heavily on building a proposition that removes the

administrative headache of paying for fuel, charging, mileage reimbursement and reporting, and delivers the consolidated management information and controls that fleets have been able to take for granted with the refuelling of petrol and diesel vehicles for some time.

Whether electric company cars and vans recharge at home, at the workplace or at public charging stations, Allstar Chargepass makes the switch from fossil fuels to electrons and the running of a mixed fleet seamless and straightforward.

"It's the UK's only fleet payment solution that does it all: fuel, public charging, home charging, reporting and controls," said Paul Holland, managing director for UK/ANZ Fleet at Corpay, which includes the Allstar brand.

Identifying a viable recharging solution for EVs may be the first building block of an electrification programme, but where company car and van drivers plug in remains a minefield that carries the risk of a cost explosion.

Allstar's latest AllCosts report reveals a spread in real world charging costs from as little as 4p per kWh to as high as £1.06. A similar range in petrol or diesel prices, where the most expensive would be in excess of 25 times more costly than the cheapest, is unimaginable. Yet failing to address this differential in EV charging tariffs could torpedo the most carefully calculated cost of ownership projections.

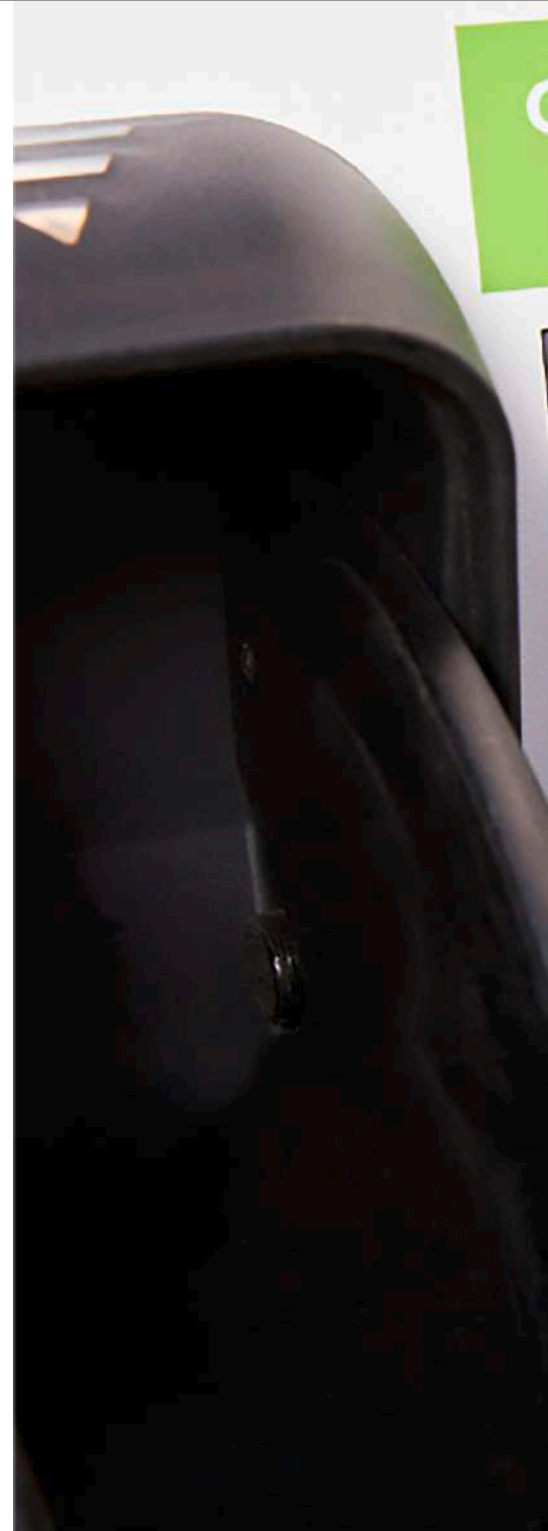
"If a driver can charge an electric vehicle at home, the economics of a fleet diversifying more of its vehicles to battery power stack up fantastically higher," said Holland. "It's massively more cost effective than recharging on the road."

Data from Allstar's customer base (it has 1.2 million cards in circulation) and from research reveals that an estimated 40% of drivers currently could charge at home, and even these drivers rely on public charging to top up their EV batteries.

The AllCosts report showed that Allstar customers are now drawing 264% more kWh of power from public chargers than in the same month of 2023, while home charging rose by 113% year-on-year. The increases reflect the growing size of the EV parc, the soaring number of drivers who cannot charge at home, as well



**“WE’RE FINDING QUITE A SIGNIFICANT VARIATION BETWEEN EV MANUFACTURERS**  
PAUL HOLLAND, CORPAY



as the rising confidence of EV drivers to undertake journeys longer than the range of their vehicles.

More than a third (36%) of Allstar's corporate customers now have a card for charging in public, while 21% also charge at home. Among SMEs, however, the proportion of home charging is considerably lower at just 7-8%. Demographics and geography help to explain the difference, and there's little doubt that as EV uptake extends from





More than a third of Allstar's corporate customers have a card for charging in public

the early adopters (whose profiles were ideally suited to battery-powered cars) to mainstream drivers, the pressure on business bottom lines to facilitate home charging is going to grow.

"It's why we developed the Allstar Homecharge solution, which enables us to directly pay utility bills to the appropriate electricity supplier on behalf of employees," said Holland. "It takes away the conversation around how much drivers should be reclaiming and how

much employers should be paying."

With HMRC's official Advisory Electric Rate (AER) notoriously underestimating the true electricity cost of every business mile, Homecharge allows employers to calculate the cost of electric business miles, and, by paying energy companies directly, it avoids the risk of drivers suffering 'bill shock', having spent their mileage reimbursement before their domestic electricity bill arrives.

For charging away from home,

companies have to strike a balance between cost and the lost productivity of driver downtime, although there are safety benefits from affording drivers a break from the road while their vehicle is plugged in. As a rule of thumb, the faster the charger, the more expensive the power, but the quicker a driver can get back to work.

"Companies have to put in place policies that instruct drivers to charge their vehicles at home as much as possible," said Holland.

"These policies also have to stipulate that when drivers are on the road they should use a certain profile of charger, whether that's based on the speed of charging or price. Most likely, it's a combination of these two factors."

He added that Allstar Chargepass gives drivers access to the most extensive network of charge points in the UK, including more than 75% of the nation's rapid and ultra-rapid chargers.

Having one supplier capture and consolidate all of this charging data, whether from home, public or workplace chargers, enables fleet decision-makers to drill down into the true energy economy performance of different makes and models of EVs, comparing both miles per kilowatt efficiencies and the accuracy of official WLTP ranges.

"It's an important area of interest for decision-makers to understand how their EVs are performing compared with alternatives, and we're finding quite a significant variation between manufacturers," said Holland.

"We're also finding that over a fleet life some EVs retain the capacity of their batteries substantially better than others."

Further data-based insights shine a spotlight on the driving and charging behaviour of individual company car and van drivers, laying the foundation for programmes to encourage greener driving styles as well as prioritising lower cost charging.

And, perhaps most importantly of all, businesses cannot ignore the cost implications of going green, but for most the driving force underpinning their electrification programmes is to meet their objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.





# Achieve your goals with a robust fleet strategy

Managing a fleet requires strategic planning and a clear understanding of your business objectives. *Ben Rooth* looks at how to develop the right strategy for your organisation

**T**he best fleet strategies perform a simple, but transformational, purpose. They create the clearest possible road map that aligns the way your fleet is run with the objectives of your business.

While these will vary from one organisation to another, they will frequently include cost management, operational efficiency, driver safety and environmental sustainability.

They will establish goals that will both measure and drive success while managing risk and reducing inefficiencies, including budget overruns and compliance issues.

Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), is in no doubt that it is now more difficult than at any point in the profession's history to create an effective fleet strategy.

"Businesses are faced with a range of tough issues – from a troubling economic backdrop and faltering consumer confidence to recruitment shortfalls and the aftermath of high inflation," he says.

"To help meet these challenges, they are looking to their fleet functions to deliver low cost, environmentally-friendly, efficient transport.

"Fleet managers need strategies that satisfy

these objectives while rapidly implementing the paradigm shift of electrification – meaning everything from identifying the right vehicles to providing effective charging solutions, overcoming driver concerns to taking account of highly unpredictable residual values.

"Alongside these is a range of other current trends that require positive action such as higher parts prices, rising leasing and vehicle acquisition costs, and pressure on workshop capacity.

"Any worthwhile fleet strategy created in 2024 needs to take account of this long list – and probably more."



### ACHIEVING REAL BENEFITS

Having a clearly defined fleet strategy allows for better control over total cost of ownership (TCO), ensuring that every element of outlay is identified and considered in the modelling.

"It also helps when procuring fleet services as it clearly communicates the needs of the organisation and states the level of service required to meet the day-to-day needs of the business and its drivers," says Simon Staton, client management director at Venson Automotive Solutions.

Real benefits will also ensue from the ability of fleet strategies to assist with improving utilisation and reducing vehicle downtime.

Caroline Sandall-Mansergh, consultancy and channel development manager at Alphabet, says they help fleet managers make more informed decisions about each business's mobility mix.

"A properly developed fleet strategy ensures that employees have the right tools for their jobs, while also complementing the business' employee

benefits strategy," Sandall-Mansergh adds.

An obvious example of this is deciding where and how electric vehicles (EVs) can be used and what infrastructure is needed to enable their use, as well as the support needed to help employees transition to an EV.

However, a fleet strategy also gives decision-makers clarity when it comes to how the vehicles will be funded and sourced which "empowers them to make decisions for the good of the company".

"A fleet strategy also allows managers to build a long-term plan, predict how the business landscape may change, and integrates solutions that allow the company to remain agile," says Sandall-Mansergh.

"If we've learned one thing from the past few years, it's how quickly businesses need to adapt to a changing environment and good fleet strategies consider alternatives that can be deployed should circumstances require."

### UNDERSTAND YOUR FLEET


It's essential to understand fully the make-up of your fleet and how it is used on a daily basis.

Nick Jones, strategic relationships manager at Novuna Vehicle Solutions, believes telematics and up-to-date data play essential roles in this.

"Every fleet is different and has many moving parts," he says. "Understanding how the current fleet operates is critical to help establish a baseline for any successful fleet strategy.

"The availability of more accurate data and the gift of telematics technology have important parts to play here, because if you can't measure it, then you can't manage it either."

These insights help fleet operators get to the crux of what is working, what is not and the steps needed to better manage risk and boost efficiency.

Paul Hyne, commercial director of motor finance and leasing at Lex Autolease, continues: "A lot has changed in recent years which also needs to be taken into consideration." 

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“Within auto leasing, company cars and vans were once a primary focus.

“However, the pandemic shifted priorities and altered how the sector operates today.

“With more people working from home, leading to fewer commuters and fewer face-to-face meetings, there’s been a decrease in miles driven and a reduced need for vehicles.

“This means electrification and salary sacrifice programmes have gained popularity, bringing into the fold employees who may not have qualified for such schemes or benefits previously.

“Being aware of these changes and adapting plans to include these factors is crucial when beginning an evaluation.”

### INCORPORATE YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Fleet strategies must be aligned with overall company goals if they are to succeed – and cost reduction and sustainability frequently top this agenda.

“Today’s business landscape is laser-focused on efficiency, meaning that all areas of a business need to be pulling in the same direction,” says Sandall-Mansergh.

“Aligning the fleet strategy with the organisation’s overall business objectives is critical because it ensures that the strategy supports broader goals, such as cost efficiency and sustainability.

“They help manage costs more effectively by considering the TCO of vehicles, including factors like fuel and energy as well as maintenance and insurance, which, ultimately, support the company’s financial goals.

Sandall-Mansergh also cites employee satisfaction as a key business objective with which fleet strategies must be aligned.

“Employee satisfaction plays a significant role in achieving targets and is closely linked to the benefits a fleet strategy can provide,” she says.

“Salary sacrifice schemes, for instance, which enable employees to have a new car and reduce their personal tax burden, can have a profound impact on satisfaction.

“Private leasing for car allowance takers can also leverage your fleet purchasing power for staff at the same time as helping with grey fleet risks around more energy-efficient and well-maintained vehicles.”

For those companies committed to achieving

net-zero emissions, a fleet strategy should clearly prioritise the adoption of EVs and low-emission vehicles.

Emma Loveday, senior fleet consultant at Volkswagen Financial Services (VWFS) Fleet, adds: “If a company is looking to achieve net zero by a set deadline, the fleet will often have a critical role to play in helping achieve this.

“In this instance, ensuring that the current – and future – fleet strategy focuses on a smooth and planned transition to electric vehicles ahead of this deadline would be key.”

Hyne adds: “New EVs tend to be more expensive than their diesel or petrol counterparts. However, because the fleet market is relatively commoditised, adjustments can be made quickly if necessary. To address concerns around costs, companies must balance their environmental, social and governance (ESG) agenda accordingly.”

### COMPILING YOUR STRATEGY

Collaboration is essential when it comes to compiling a fleet strategy – and this must involve all stakeholders.

It’s also imperative to ensure drivers’ input on current policies – as well as their suggestions for change, including vehicle choice – are considered.

Staton says: “Clearly, when putting together a fleet strategy, the advice and expertise of the company’s fleet manager and fleet department is essential.

“However, it’s also crucial to involve a range of other personnel that can give vital insight and ensure a collegiate approach is taken.”

According to Staton, finance and HR managers, health and safety and environmental team members, and legal and union representatives can all provide invaluable input.

In addition, the perspective of a trusted fleet management firm – which can provide examples of potential best-practice approaches as well as tailored guidance – should be considered.

Staton adds: “Ensuring that the appropriate skillsets are involved will mean the strategy document fully reflects the organisation’s position on a range of issues.

“If tendering for services is going to be part of the ongoing process, then this will also help ensure that the supplier organisation eventually chosen is strategically a good fit.”

### IDENTIFY IMPROVEMENTS

It’s important to develop a detailed and strategic action plan that outlines positive steps for improvement that are achievable within a specified timeline.

While fleets are always looking for ways to cut costs and improve efficiencies, Jones believes that pinpointing the right initiatives usually comes down to setting a “clear baseline and data analysis”.

“Once fleet managers have visibility of factors like cost, usage, vehicle mix and overall fleet policy, the number crunching can begin,” he says.

“For example, at Novuna we have created a Fleet Maturity Index, which benchmarks fleet policy across multiple category data points and calculates a maturity rating on a scale of one to five.

“This can be compared with best-in-class fleets to help identify the differences and prioritise where to improve operations.”



### ASSESS A STRATEGY’S SUCCESS

The success of the fleet strategy should be measured regularly against appropriate pre-set key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets that underpin the objectives.

“If fleet performance is falling short in particular areas, fleet operators have the opportunity to make any adjustments to the strategy to ensure continual improvement and progress towards fleet and wider business goals,” says Loveday.

“It’s important to view the fleet strategy as a flexible foundation, which can – and should – evolve as the company fleet grows and changes.”

Venson’s Staton continues: “One way of measuring success is to have service level agreements (SLAs) in place that the organisation and any fleet supply partners sign up to, supported by the KPIs, performance standards and processes to measure quality of service, driver satisfaction, supplier competence, price and other issues.

“While SLAs and KPIs need to be ‘reasonable’ on



“IT’S IMPORTANT TO VIEW THE FLEET STRATEGY AS A FLEXIBLE FOUNDATION, WHICH CAN – AND SHOULD – EVOLVE AS THE COMPANY FLEET GROWS AND CHANGES”

EMMA LOVEDAY,  
VWFS FLEET



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both sides they also need to have teeth and sanctions for failures to perform to agreed standards.”

### KEEP STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

It's essential to ensure that all stakeholders are as fully engaged as possible in the fleet strategy.

Regular communication promotes engagement and regular updates and clear signposting for advice can help address any concerns or misconceptions which, in turn, can increase participation and satisfaction.

Loveday explains: “Stakeholders and, in particular, fleet drivers are the people who will drive the success of the company's fleet strategy.

“Getting them on board with the strategy and its aims, as well as providing practical support through any changes, will make drivers feel a central part of the process and empowered.

“This is a key factor in keeping them engaged for the long term and ensuring that their contribution to the delivery of fleet performance excellence can proactively underpin wider business success.”

Staton maintains that the easiest way to monitor the operational quality of a fleet strategy is to ask colleagues directly for their feedback.

“This can take the form of driver surveys, focus groups or toolbox talks,” he adds.

### REGULAR REVIEWS

A fleet strategy should never be static. It should evolve with your business as circumstances change, technology improves and legislation gets updated.

Consequently, it's essential to revisit your strategy regularly and update it based on new data as you continually strive for improvement.

Jones adds: “There's been a great deal of discussion recently about clean air zones as well as the phase-out deadlines for internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles – it's important to keep up to date and react as appropriate.

“In addition to this, establishing regular review and check-in meetings can help bring governance and structure to any fleet strategy.

“After all, what might be seen as a priority at the

start of the year may not be in six months' time.”

Hyne concludes that fleet strategies should be under constant review.

“It used to be a case of providers checking their choice lists, ensuring good options were available for different employees and seniorities, and making sure the right badges and fuel types are available once a year,” he says.

“However, with constant price changes, new cars coming on to the market, original equipment manufacturers coming on to the scene and the rapid evolution of telematics and connected vehicles, reviewing a strategy on an annual or quarterly basis is no longer enough.

“Not only is the fleet industry changing rapidly, it's now changing in ways that were inconceivable not too long ago.

“Fleet managers and providers need to keep their finger on the pulse to ensure they have sight of emerging trends and are consistently offering the best solutions to employees through their fleet strategy.”

# How to build a workplace charging solution

Meticulous planning and advice from experts can minimise costs, future-proof investments and avoid the risk of making costly mistakes

**A**s new research indicates that 50% of businesses are looking to install charging hardware for electric vehicles (EVs) at their premises, fleet decision-makers stand on the brink of building the future or blundering into the construction of a costly white elephant. For every early adopter that made a success of their charging programme, it seems there's another with a tale of woe about installing the wrong charger in the wrong place, an unfortunate yin to the decarbonised yin.

The reassuring news is that fleets can now sidestep potential pitfalls by working with experts who can guide them through the entire process.

"We've installed more than 14,000 EV charge points, and having the experience and understanding of usage patterns, as well as the complexities of sites and installations really helps," said Naomi Nye, EV expert, Drax Electric Vehicles.

This specialist knowledge, from initial design to implementation, management and optimisation of charging infrastructure provides vital support for customers who are wrestling with the cost and operational implications of transitioning their company cars, vans and HGVs to battery power, as the clock ticks on bans to the sale of new vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICEs).

"The earlier you can bring in specialist

support to help you, guide you and support your EV strategy moving forward, the better," said Nye.

Success depends on data and planning, she added, with the process starting

with a comprehensive appraisal of what types of journeys vehicles are doing, the mileages they are covering, the payloads they are carrying, and where they dwell long enough to be plugged in.

"It's thinking about charging when vehicles are stopping, not stopping to charge and disrupting the working day," she added.

Drax does this work on behalf of clients, analysing whatever data is available, such as telematics feeds, to identify the optimum locations for chargers, as well as the number and speed of chargers required for today and tomorrow. Future-proofing investments to avoid duplicating civils work or having to upgrade chargers is a key part of its advice.

These insights are only part of the process, however, with businesses having to assess the space available to accommodate charge points at their sites, as well as the power capacity of their car parks and depots on a site-by-site basis.

"Being an energy company, we really understand energy, and charge points are simply a conduit of energy," said Nye, adding that Drax is also the UK's largest supplier of renewable electricity.

If the decisions surrounding EV infrastructure installation seem daunting, there is some relief in the knowledge that organisations do not have to build an all-encompassing solution on day one, but can progress in phases.

There may be some easy wins or even trials to get the ball rolling on fleet electrification.

There are also a series of smart solutions that can help to avoid paying the six-figure upgrades to local power grids that have grabbed EV-sceptic headlines.

"There's some really clever load-balancing technology that can optimise the power available," said Nye. "Customers might be able to introduce solar power to their sites, or battery storage, or both, to lighten the load they place on the grid."

Moreover, these investments do not have to leave an enormous dent in corporate capex budgets.

"We can help arrange different financial solutions in collaboration with third parties," said Nye. "So, we can facilitate leasing solutions where customers don't



**“WE CAN  
TYPICALLY  
SPOT A PROBLEM  
WITH A CHARGER  
BEFORE ANY  
CUSTOMERS DO**

**NAOMI NYE,  
DRAX ELECTRIC VEHICLES**







**When not in use for the business chargers can be opened up to neighbours to generate extra income**

pay anything up front, but pay in monthly instalments instead."

These costs could be lightened further, she added, by opening up charge points when not in use to neighbouring businesses, generating an income stream.

Drax is agnostic about the charging hardware that its customers choose to install, although it will suggest preferred technology that has proved to be robust in use with similar fleet applications – remember, charge points are outside in all weathers and used around the clock, not always kindly.

Moreover, the open source nature of chargers that meet the OCPP (Open Charge Point Protocol) standards means Drax can adopt hardware that customers have already installed into its back office solutions, so there is no need to rip it out and start again.

The software that links chargers to the back office is a vital element of managing workplace charging, including charger uptime and maintenance, as well as cost and carbon reporting.

"We are constantly monitoring charge points, which send us something called a 'heartbeat' for a health check," said Nye. "We can typically spot a problem with a

charger before any of our customers do, and we can often repair it remotely with a reset. We can also do firmware upgrades over the air."

Increasingly, these IT solutions are playing an essential role in complying with new regulations that govern charging, to protect the grid from surges in power demand that could lead to blackouts. Smart charging regulations means that connectivity to back office systems such as the one Drax operates can automatically control the charging speeds at specific charge points or at sites, while randomised delay starts stagger the start times of charging by a few seconds, so a line of vehicles doesn't start to charge simultaneously.

There's no escaping the fact, however, that charge points are also physical units that require inspection, service and maintenance (Drax has its own nationwide team of engineers), with Nye advising fleets to set comprehensive SLAs and KPIs for charger uptime that align with their operational requirements.

An organisation with spare chargers, for example, can take a more relaxed approach to charger downtime and the response speed of its supplier than a fleet

with mission-critical vehicles that have to be ready at the start of their shift.

This umbrella cover has to extend to drivers who take their company cars and vans home, rather than back to a depot.

"We have a domestic charging solution for our customers, and it's really important that a fleet manager has got access to that charging data. Plus, we work with other companies that can reimburse drivers so EV charging doesn't affect their home energy bill," said Nye, emphasising the importance of making the EV driver experience as smooth as possible to make an EV strategy succeed.

And for drivers who can charge neither at home nor work, Drax works with partners that provide a single payment card for use at public chargers, enabling it to capture all charging events, whether domestic, depot, or on the road.

All of this data is then available to customers via Drax's My Electric Vehicle portal, where customers can access data and reports covering costs, power drawn, charger uptime, utilisation, and CO<sub>2</sub> savings for environmental reporting.

"We provide customers with total visibility across their complete infrastructure," said Nye.

**Click here to find out more – [energy.drax.com/ev](https://energy.drax.com/ev)**

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# Create a sustainable mobility strategy

Getting employees out of their cars and into other modes of transport can have cost, health and wider environmental benefits for an organisation. *Andrew Ryan* reports

**W**hile the ultimate aim of a sustainable mobility strategy is to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, there is much more to it than just transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs).

This ignores the benefits using alternative transport modes can have on the wider environment, such as cutting costs and congestion, while having employees walk or cycle also has health and wellbeing benefits.

The recent emergence of solutions such as mobility-as-a-service (MaaS) and shared transport looked likely to turbocharge the use of alternative sustainable travel technologies, but their adoption has been much slower than many experts predicted.

"We don't see such great demand and buzz around mobility solutions – and particularly shared mobility – since the Covid pandemic," says Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP).

"It's taken a back seat as everything has been dwarfed by decarbonisation, particularly electrifying fleets.

"There's always encouragement from an employer around cycle-to-work schemes and taking the bus or train wherever possible, but it hasn't got the same injection and pace as it had pre-Covid.

"I think it will definitely come back, but at the moment I think Covid has shaped a market in the UK that is predominantly car-centric."

Unlike in the UK, mobility solutions had already become established in some mainland European countries before the Covid pandemic, particularly Benelux and Germany where there are now well-developed markets.

"The UK is probably a step or two behind at present, but there are signs that is beginning to change," says John Peters, head of consultancy at Arval UK.

"In conversations with businesses we are seeing increasing willingness to look at non-traditional mobility options, especially as getting around city centres becomes increasingly challenging.

"In our view, mobility options are now a known and proven quantity, and the expertise exists to

employ them rapidly and successfully where there is a business need.

"Really, what is holding back wider adoption in the UK is simply awareness."

## THE RIGHT OPTION

Energy Saving Trust (EST) recommends introducing a sustainable travel hierarchy to outline the order in which modes of transport should be considered, and has produced an example (see bottom of facing page) to help organisations develop their own.

While it focuses on moving people around, the principles can also apply if an organisation is transporting loads or equipment.

The hierarchy works by starting at the top for the most sustainable method, and if this is not suitable then the employee goes down the order until they find a suitable solution.

It begins with digital communications, such as telephone calls, messaging or video conferences, as these eliminate the need to travel altogether.

If this is not possible, EST suggests considering walking or wheeling (for wheelchair users), then cycling, using public or shared transport, driving/car sharing in EVs, driving/car sharing ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles, then, finally, air travel.

Many employees who regularly travel for business may already have an EV as a company car so may automatically default to that option – and it fulfils the desire to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – but EST says it is important not to automatically dismiss the options above it in the hierarchy.

This is because as well as achieving the objective of cutting emissions, opting for digital communication, walking and wheeling, cycling, or using public transport also has wider benefits.



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These choices either take all vehicles off the road or – in the case of public transport – significantly reduces their numbers, cutting congestion and pollutants such as particulate matter from tyres.

Walking, wheeling and cycling – collectively known as active travel – also has health benefits for the employee.

Research has found that walking regularly can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease by 35%, while cycling builds muscle and is linked to improved heart and lung capacity. Active travel can also manage stress and weight, adds EST.

## BEAT THE TRAFFIC

In towns and cities, cycling can also be faster than driving as bikes can use cycle paths to get to their destinations, avoiding traffic queues.

Courier CitySprint reports that e-cargo bikes can deliver up to 50% faster than a small diesel van in urban areas and save four tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per bike, per year, while Oxford estate agency Strutt & Parker leases an electric bike to enable staff to carry out client meetings.

“My team and I need to travel across the city to meet clients and attend appointments in the most efficient and sustainable way possible,” says George Hughes, head of sales at Strutt & Parker.

“Our first electric bike is now being used, and the team’s feedback is fantastic.”

However, active travel will not be suitable for many business journeys because, for example, of the distance or route involved, or the employee may need to carry equipment or supplies which are too big or heavy for an e-cargo bike.

In these instances, EST’s travel hierarchy suggests the next best options are to either car-share or drive an electric vehicle, and if a zero-



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## SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL HIERARCHY

Digital communication



Walking and wheeling



Cycling



Public and shared transport



Electric vehicles and car sharing



ICE vehicles and car sharing



Air

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C emission option is not available, then to use an ICE vehicle.

It is at this point that an employee who does not have a company vehicle may decide to drive their own car for business use and then claim for the mileage travelled afterwards. This is known as grey fleet.

Many organisations discourage this as they find difficult to have control over risk and emissions. Instead, they often offer an alternative vehicle, such as a pool car, a vehicle from a car club, or daily rental vehicles.

### REVIEW GREY FLEET TRAVEL

"Reviewing grey fleet travel is central, because using their own car is so often seen by employees as the default choice – particularly if they commute by car," says Andy Bland, head of business rental UK & Ireland at Enterprise Mobility.

"Selecting lower-emission options has to be just as easy and convenient as grey fleet to nudge employees towards using them.

"Sometimes just ensuring EVs are at the top of the list when an employee books a vehicle online is enough to prompt a better choice."

Hollick says some businesses are reducing the number of vans they operate in London in favour of engineers using public transport.

Operational models are being adopted where technical staff undertaking visits to domestic and business premises have parts shipped to the customer's address in advance and are able to complete jobs with just a toolkit they can carry, he says.

"We'd underline first of all that this is probably not a widespread trend, but it is an interesting one that we are seeing in London and which is probably also viable in the centre of a handful of other major UK cities," adds Hollick.

"Driving, maintaining and storing vans in concentrated urban areas is increasingly difficult, and some businesses have been looking for new solutions.

"One of these is to only use vans where necessary and for engineers to get around by public transport. In any mega city, the best way of moving people is generally by tube, train or bus.

"It's something that can work effectively, but does have obvious limitations. Employees may need tools and other equipment that can't easily be moved around by hand or on public transport, for example, while delivering parts to customer premises ahead of the visit can be a hit-and-miss affair.

"However, there are also instances where it can work well."

### DATA IS KEY

When creating a sustainable mobility strategy, fleet decision-makers should approach it in a similar manner to any other area of fleet management, as well as integrate it within their overall fleet strategy, says Peters.

"The starting point should be to ask how mobility can contribute to your business objectives," he says.

"Typical examples could include a logistics company delivering parcels in a city centre, a hotel group wanting to enhance its services with premium bikes offered on-site, or a real estate business that needs its employees to get around cities more efficiently.

"Consideration should be given to factors such as how mobility options might meet these objectives, likely feedback from customers who will be using these assets and identifying suppliers who can provide the products and services required.

"Once potential solutions have been identified, trials and experimentation are often a useful exercise that provide real-world feedback on mobility concepts and here we work closely with companies to choose metrics, gather data and examine the results before arriving at longer-term decisions."

An organisation's data is key to developing a strategy specific to their operations, adds Bland.

"Understanding how employees get to work and then how and when they travel for business once they're at work is at the heart of an effective policy – and that means having accurate data to hand," he says.

"We're seeing more and more fleets wanting a travel policy overhaul. The starting point is consultancy to identify the best choice for every fleet trip that is now required, providing a much broader range of options that stretch from cars to micromobility."





ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/GIBSONPICTURES

## CASE STUDY: GUY'S AND ST THOMAS' NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust introduced its first green travel plan last year to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improve staff wellbeing.

The strategy includes a travel hierarchy to set out how it will prioritise decisions around patient and staff travel, from the least to most carbon-intensive methods.

"Our green travel plan sets the foundation for how we will deliver sustainable travel," says Lawrence Tallon, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust deputy chief executive.

It uses a similar format to the Energy Saving Trust example (see previous spread), where employees begin at travel avoidance (including remote working, teleconferencing and virtual consultations), before progressing through the options of walking and wheeling, cycling, public transport, motor vehicle – shared, motor vehicle – single occupant, and flights, until they find a suitable method.

The trust, which has five hospitals in central London, has set a number of targets to support its strategy. These include:

- **Travel avoidance:** Ensure all staff have viable remote options in line with the NHS People Plan targets.
- **Walking:** The trust will promote walking as the default mode of travel for all journeys within 1km (0.6 miles, a 15-to-20 minute walk). Also ensure all its acute hospital sites exceed all minimum standards for pedestrian comfort and safety by 2025.
- **Cycling:** Expand provision of active travel facilities, including providing e-bikes for

community-based staff at a minimum of four locations to carry out their home visits. Also ensure at least 10% of all journeys between trust sites are cycled by 2027.

- **Public transport:** Ensure at least 70% of all journeys between trust sites are made by public transport by 2027, monitored through annual staff travel surveys.
- **Motor vehicles:** Achieve a year-on-year reduction in staff private car use by 2024. Encourage shared mobility and lift-sharing options for staff.
- **Flights:** Ensure that rail travel is the default mode for all domestic mainland business journeys that cannot be done virtually by 2024.

These targets will be monitored by at least one dedicated sustainable travel officer, with staff travel surveys being conducted annually.

The Trust is trialling an e-cargo bike at its Elmcourt health centre in West Norwood where nine members of its @home service are using it instead of pool cars, public transport or personal bikes to visit patients in their homes.

While its travel hierarchy covers staff mobility, the trust is also embracing sustainable ways of moving medical supplies.

For example, a twice-daily riverboat service brings operating theatre equipment along the River Thames, with the last-mile delivery to the hospital sites from the boat terminal done by e-cargo bike.

By taking three diesel delivery trucks off the road, the initiative saves 37 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions each year.



An e-cargo bike is being trialled by nurses performing home visits

# Simplifying the transition to electric vehicles

How Grosvenor Leasing is using its experience and expertise to offer tailored solutions to cut carbon emissions

**W**hile fleets are driving the UK's transition to electric vehicles (EVs), the rate of adoption has slowed as the market has moved from enthusiastic early adopters to more mainstream buyers.

These organisations are more hesitant to switch from their tried and trusted petrol and diesel models to zero-emission vehicles, often citing concerns over whether current EVs are able to support their operations with their range and payload capabilities, while questions remain over charging infrastructure and costs.

However, EVs are not a technology which fleets will be able to continue to ignore as the shift to them is now inevitable.

This is fuelled by legislation, with the Government's Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate, which stipulates that 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans sold must be zero emission vehicles by 2030, coming into law at the start of this year.

The Government has also committed to restoring the 2030 phase-out date for the sale of new petrol and diesel cars, although it remains unclear whether the deadline will also be brought forward from 2035 to 2030 for fossil-fuelled vans.

This means organisations need to put in place plans – if they do not already have them – to adopt EVs, with expert advice

key to ensuring the transition is as smooth as possible.

Grosvenor Group, the UK's largest privately-owned contract hire and fleet management specialist, is one of the pioneers in this area, launching its 0Zone solution in 2017.

This proactively advises, guides and supports its customers into zero emission vehicles, by analysing duty cycles and driver work patterns, geographical use and how vehicles are used, as well as the financial implications of moving into EVs.

The quality of advice from the 0Zone team has been a key factor in so many of Grosvenor's customers having the confidence to move to plug-in technology.

The insights gained through the solution have seen 0Zone become embedded throughout the wider business.

"The 0Zone team gives us that organisational learning and through this we talk to customers so we can understand what their challenges are and how we can innovate to develop solutions to help them," says Lee Brown, managing director of the Grosvenor Group.

Its award-winning Oscar365 fleet management system and OscarGo driver app also provide valuable insights and data to ensure businesses maximise the value of changing to EVs.



**Grosvenor's head office in Kettering**

These learnings have helped Grosvenor Leasing develop two new products – EValuate and Electric Van Flexible Switch – to help customers continue to press forward with their EV transitions.

EValuate allows customers to order high-quality used electric cars and vans – typically two to three years old – on flexible hire terms, from one month to three years, with all the benefits and support of leasing.

The service also enables customers to start with a short-term rental and extend to a longer-term lease if the vehicle meets their needs.

Under Electric Van Flexible Switch, customers can source an internal combustion engine (ICE) van through a flexible contract and switch that to an EV without penalty when suitable zero-emission technology becomes available.

This ensures commercial vehicle operators can maintain vehicle replacement cycles while remaining able to react quickly when an electric van which matches their requirements is introduced to the market.

"Generally, the people who are not driving EVs and plug-in hybrids are not doing so because they may not feel the charging infrastructure is sufficient, or the right vehicle is not available to suit their needs," says Brown. "Our solutions allow them to dip their toes in the water when the circumstances are right to see if electric vehicles work for them."

Grosvenor can also help to expand the benefits of EVs to all staff through its market-leading salary sacrifice service.

"The main objective of our scheme





**“OUR CULTURE IS TO LISTEN TO FLEETS, UNDERSTAND OUR CUSTOMERS, AND THEN HELP THEM ACHIEVE THEIR AIMS**

**LEE BROWN, GROSVENOR LEASING**

is to make it as pain-free and easy to implement as possible,” says Brown.

“It comes with Insurance and risk protection, but also we have protection for employees that are on long-term sick leave or parental leave. From an employee’s perspective that’s a great benefit.

“We benchmark salary sacrifice against personal contract hire, and sal/sac will yield savings of 30% to 40% for employees.

“As long as the Government doesn’t tax EVs to the point where they take away all the financial incentive, I think salary sacrifice will continue to grow.”

Grosvenor also offers a salary sacrifice scheme for charge points, which is available to both employees who take a car through sal/sac as well as those who take a traditional company car.

As a result of its EV-focused initiatives, more than 80% of all new car deliveries to

Grosvenor Group customers arhave plug-in technology.

The Grosvenor Group also provides specialist fleet management through its standalone business Interactive Fleet Management (IFM), which launched in 2010.

This can act as an organisation’s fleet department, managing all vehicles, drivers and suppliers, supporting customers that outright purchase their vehicles or use other leasing companies or other procurement methods.

These initiatives helped Grosvenor Leasing be named Leasing Company of the Year – up to 20,000 vehicles in the 2024 Fleet News Awards.

But it is not resting on its laurels.

The company is carrying out a major proposition and brand review as it prepares for a future of mobility solutions, while it is also investing in a major software development programme.

This will upgrade its award-winning technical offering in order to lead the market with its driver app and fleet management system, which will have a real focus on sustainability and carbon reporting.

“As much as we are a technology-based business and we are investing heavily in technology, we are very much about the personal touch,” says Brown.

“There are many examples of companies investing in technology to replace people, but we are looking at the opposite.

“We will use technology to make the underlying processes far more efficient, which frees people up to spend time consulting with and advising customers.

“Listening to our customers is one of the best qualities of this business. Our culture is to listen to fleets, understand our customers, and then help them achieve their aims.

“That will never change.”



FleetNews



AWARDS  
2025

# FLEET NEWS CHAMPIONS THE BEST PEOPLE AND COMPANIES IN FLEET

Enter the Fleet News Awards 2025 to promote everything that's great about your fleet, vehicles or services

**T**he Fleet News Awards is back with new categories and new opportunities for fleets, manufacturers and suppliers to enjoy the huge benefits that go with winning and being shortlisted.

Entries for the 2025 awards are now open. Go to [awards.fleetnews.co.uk](https://awards.fleetnews.co.uk) for all the details.

This is your chance to savour the "pinnacle of success", according to Aaron Powell, fleet director at Speedy Services.

"Winning the Fleet and Transport Manager of the Year award at the prestigious Fleet News Awards is a massive honour," said Powell. "Being selected by industry experts for the work you do is amazing,

"It's hard to put into words the feeling when your name is read out as the winner. Everyone should strive to have this accolade from the Fleet News Awards – it is the

pinnacle of success for any fleet manager."

Like Powell, you can boost your business and personal profile, as well improving team motivation. All it takes is half an hour of your time to complete the entry form!

In addition to the fleet categories, the Fleet News Awards also hands out trophies for the best suppliers, manufacturers and vehicles.

Among the new categories are three additions to the supplier section: Technology Provider of the Year (for telematics, AI, cameras, routing packages, fleet management software), Graphics/Livery Company of the Year and Support Services Provider of the Year (for SMR/fleet management, tyres, training, risk management, accident management, charge points, fuel card solutions).

The van and truck categories have been merged under commercials with a new category – Best Truck up to 7.5 tonnes.

There are also changes to the judging

panel, with new faces including Kerry Teesdale, joint head of fleet at MJ Quinn, and Richard Crook, fleet director at DHL Express, on the supplier panels; Eddie Parker, Arval LCV consultant, on commercials; and Paul Titchmarsh, Cap HPI UK forecast manager, and Ben Edwards, Arval consultant, on cars.

Judges will be looking for examples of quality, innovation and evidence of improvements in each of the fleet, manufacturer, supplier and headline categories.

Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) and a judge on the fleet panel, said: "Putting together a convincing entry for the Fleet News Awards is not necessarily an easy job for a fleet manager. They need to show how they have approached the fleet objectives and issues facing them with great energy, enthusiasm, ability and innovation. Above all, they've got to illustrate – in hard facts and figures – how they have made relevant, measurable and impressive improvements.

"However, if they win, the reward is the fleet industry's highest level of recognition, something which carries considerable professional kudos both within and outside their organisations. If you can place a Fleet News Award on your desk, you know you've done an exceptional job of managing your fleet."

Audited by Brian Cooper of EY and chaired by Christopher Macgowan OBE, the Fleet News Awards has the outstanding credentials and credibility to make entering worthwhile.

But don't just take our word for it, we've also included more testimonials from previous winners (see pages 34 and 36).



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Thanks to our Gold and Feature Sponsors







## AWARDS 2025 TIMELINE

**AWARDS DEADLINE:**  
November 22

**JUDGING DAYS...**

**SUPPLIER:**  
January 21

**MANUFACTURER:**  
January 22

**FLEET INTERVIEWS:**  
January 29-30

**FINALISTS REVEALED:**  
mid-February on  
[www.fleetnews.co.uk](http://www.fleetnews.co.uk)

**AWARDS NIGHT:**  
March 12, Grosvenor House  
Hotel, Park Lane, London

To enter the awards, head to the website now: [fleetnewsawards.com](http://fleetnewsawards.com)

## THE CATEGORIES

### FLEET AWARDS

**Excellence in Fleet Safety and Compliance**

2024 winner: JJX Logistics

**Environmental Fleet of the Year**

Sponsored by FMG

2024 winner: Royal Mail

**Most Improved Fleet Operator**

2024 winner: Wheatley Group

**Fleet of the Year ( up to 250 vehicles)**

2024 winner: Univar Solutions

**Fleet of the year (251-1,000 vehicles)**

Sponsored by Northgate

2024 winner: National House-Building Council

**Fleet of the Year (more than 1,000 vehicles)**

Sponsored by KINTO UK

2024 winner: The AA

### SUPPLIER AWARDS

**Fleet Dealer of the Year**

2024 winner: TrustFord

**Rental Company of the Year**

Sponsored by Grosvenor Leasing

2024 winner: Enterprise Mobility

**Technology Provider of the Year (NEW)**

**Converter/bodybuilder of the year**

2024 winner: Bri-Stor Systems

**Graphics/livery company of the year (NEW)**

**Support Services Provider of the Year (NEW)**

**Leasing Company of the Year (up to 20,000 vehicles)**

2024 winner: Grosvenor Leasing

**Leasing Company of the Year (20,000-plus vehicles)**

2024 winner: Novuna Vehicle Solutions

### MANUFACTURER AWARDS

#### COMMERCIALS

**Best Small Van**

2024 winner: Toyota Proace City

**Best Medium Van**

2024 winner: Ford Transit Custom

**Best Large Van**

2024 winner: Ford Transit

**Best All-terrain Workhorse**

2024 winner: Toyota Hilux

**Best Truck up to 7.5 tonnes (NEW)**

#### CARS

Sponsored by Ogilvie Fleet

**Best Lower Medium Car**

2024 winner: Kia Niro

**Best Compact SUV**

2024 winner: Hyundai Kona

**Best Mid-size SUV**

2024 winner: Audi Q4 e-tron

**Best Premium Car**

2024 winner: BMW i4

**Best Executive Car**

2024 winner: BMW 5 Series

#### MANUFACTURER

**Zero Emission Manufacturer of the Year (NEW)**

**Most Improved Fleet Manufacturer of the Year**

2024 winner: MG Motor UK

### HEADLINE AWARDS

**Fleet Supplier of the Year**

(shortlist from supplier category winners)

2024 winner: The AA

**Fleet Manufacturer of the Year – Car (VOTED)**

Sponsored by Fleet Gateway

2024 winner: BMW Group UK

**Fleet Manufacturer of the Year – Van (VOTED)**

Sponsored by Samsara

2024 winner: Ford Pro

**Fleet/Transport Manager of the Year**

Sponsored by Reflex Vehicle Hire

2024 winner: Aaron Powell, Speedy

**Fleet News Hall of Fame**

Sponsored by The AA

2024 inductees: Ian Leonard and Julie Summerell

“Receiving the Fleet of the Year award is a tremendous honour for The AA. This recognition underscores our relentless dedication to providing top-notch service and support to fleets nationwide. It’s a testament to the hard work and commitment of our entire team. The AA is dedicated to instilling confidence in drivers, now and in the future. We are proud to be recognised as fleet of the year. It is the ultimate acknowledgment of being a leader in our market and we remain steadfast in our mission to set the standard for excellence in the fleet industry.”

**DUNCAN WEBB, FLEET DIRECTOR, THE AA – WINNER OF FLEET OF THE YEAR, 1,000+ VEHICLES**



## 7 BENEFITS OF ENTERING THE AWARDS

1. CREDIBILITY AND RECOGNITION OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

2. PERSONAL RECOGNITION; CAREER-ENHANCING

3. BENCHMARKING VERSUS COMPETITORS

4. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

5. FREE MARKETING FROM POSITIVE PRESS COVERAGE

6. INCREASED CUSTOMER AWARENESS

7. ATTRACT TALENT TO THE BUSINESS

# How EV design consultancy can help address a fleet manager's pain points in the EV transition

Switching to an electric fleet presents several challenges. With the right support, however, these challenges can be addressed. Mer's EV Design Consultancy helps fleet managers facilitate a seamless and cost-effective transition to an EV fleet.

## Common customer pain points

A major barrier to adopting an EV fleet is the high initial investment required, from the cost of the EVs themselves to the vital charging infrastructure needed to keep the vehicles on the road.

Setting up and maintaining this charging infrastructure can be complex and expensive. Businesses may struggle to find sufficient space on site for their chargers, and ensuring that the site or depot has an adequate power supply can present logistical challenges too.

Calculating the long-term savings of electrification versus the initial investment can be difficult. Businesses need to understand the full financial picture to make informed decisions.

Fleet managers might also encounter unforeseen expenses related to maintenance and infrastructure upgrades.

## Journey to a more efficient fleet

An expert EV design and consultancy service can support fleet managers in navigating these challenges. Mer's EV Design Consultancy offers



comprehensive solutions to optimise budgets, create customised infrastructure designs, and promote energy efficiency.

## Fleet optimisation

By finding the most cost-effective solutions, Mer helps fleet managers make informed decisions about their investments. Using data-driven insights and identifying which vehicles are best suited for electrification based on duty cycles and operational demands, we assist in selecting the right mix of EVs for the fleet in question. The result is a fleet composition that maximises efficiency and minimises costs.

## Thorough cost analysis

Mer's thorough EV transition analysis helps businesses understand the long-term financials ahead of procurement. Having a clear picture of potential savings and expenses enables fleet managers to plan

their budgets accurately and avoid unexpected costs.

## Visualise your infrastructure

From surveys to 3D designs to civil engineering plans, our full design service ensures the charging infrastructure is tailored to the unique needs of and challenges faced by each business and its fleet.

Through detailed planning and 3D visualisation, we create efficient and practical layouts for charging stations, so we can advise on the optimal placement and usage of the infrastructure, therefore enhancing its overall efficiency.

Taking a personalised approach means we can address issues related to space and power supply, to make the charging infrastructure practical and efficient.

## Energy efficiency

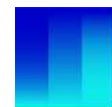
Assessing the viability of integrating renewable energy sources into the EV charging infrastructure reduces reliance on grid electricity. This not only leads to further savings and a lower total cost of ownership, but environmental benefits too.

Mer's consultancy is here to help guide fleet managers through installing the right infrastructure to power their fleet.

[Download our checklist](#) to get to grips with the steps to implementing EV charging infrastructure at your depot.



Email: [info.uk@mer.eco](mailto:info.uk@mer.eco) • visit: [uk.mer.eco](http://uk.mer.eco)  
or click [here](#) to contact us



mer

Pure energy from Statkraft



“These awards for Hilux and Proace City are appreciated and are a significant recognition for our LCV fleet and business strategy.”

**NEIL BROAD, GENERAL MANAGER  
ONE TOYOTA FLEET SERVICES, WINNER  
OF BEST ALL-TERRAIN WORKHORSE  
AND BEST SMALL VAN**

## THE JUDGES

- **Chairman:** Christopher Macgowan OBE
- **Auditor:** Brian Cooper, Ernst & Young

### Fleet Awards

- Stephen Briers, *Fleet News*
- Aaron Powell, Speedy and fleet manager OTY
- Paul Hollick, AFP
- Lorna McAtear, National Grid

### Supplier Awards

- Denise Lane, Euro Car Parts
- Kerry Teesdale, MJ Quinn
- Richard Crook, DHL Express
- Leroy Thomas, Affinity Water
- Sarah Gilding, South Yorks Police
- Dale Eynon, Defra Group Fleet Services
- Jo Coffey, City Electrical Factors

### Manufacturer Awards

#### CARS

- Matt de Prez, *Fleet News*
- Lorna McAtear, National Grid
- James Rooney, Network Rail

- Duncan Webb, The AA
- Nadim Mehar, Alstom
- Simon Harris, UK Vehicle Data
- Andy Cutler, Glass's
- Paul Titchmarsh, Cap HPI UK
- Ben Edwards, Arval consultant

### COMMERCIALS

- Matt de Prez, *Fleet News*
- Lorna McAtear, National Grid
- Duncan Webb, ISS
- Matt Hammond, Altrad
- Andy Picton, Glass's
- Ken Brown, Cap HPI
- Paul Kirby, van expert
- Matt Dillon, LeasePlan
- Eddie Parker, Arval
- Justin Laney, John Lewis Transport
- James Rooney, Network Rail

### Headline Awards

Judges as above, relevant to the category.



For more information visit: [fleetnewsawards.com](https://fleetnewsawards.com) or contact Sandra Evitt on 01733 468123 or [sandra.evitt@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:sandra.evitt@bauermedia.co.uk)

# OEMs face differing challenges to protect used BEV prices

Market exposure dependent on post-Covid sales success, as brands face heavily nuanced used electric market, says latest Quarterly Market Insight

The impact of the post-Covid manufacturer production shutdowns and component supply issues in 2021 and 2022 will continue to affect the fleet and leasing sector long into 2025 and beyond as carmakers take different routes in response to the global lockdowns.

Episode three of the *Fleet News* Quarterly Market Insights sponsored by Auto Trader heard from head of strategy and insights Marc Palmer about recent research carried out by the company into used car availability as a result of those variable trading outcomes triggered by the pandemic.

"We looked at the two-and-a-half million drop in new car sales, and what we thought that would mean for the supply into the used market later on," he said.

"We asked ourselves: was everybody impacted in the same way? Not all brands saw the same kind of drop off in new car volume."

By comparing 2024 volumes with 2019, Auto Trader found that by the end of this year, there will be 730,000 fewer Ford cars in the parc than there were five years ago – a decrease of 54%.

Pre-Covid, Ford had held the title of the UK's best-selling brand for several decades; during much of that time it was tracked closely by Vauxhall, but the Stellantis-owned brand suffered its own sales decline resulting in around half a million fewer models in the market when compared with 2019.

The car parc slump isn't just reserved for the former mass market leaders; premium brand Mercedes-Benz will have 300,000 fewer models in the market.

With fewer newer cars returning to market, these brands could see residuals strengthen. Conversely, other manufacturers which maintained – or even improved – their sales volumes will need to closely manage the return to market of ex-fleet cars.

"Brands like MG Motors and Tesla weren't really players in the market before the pandemic, so they've gone up,"



Watch the *Fleet News Quarterly Market Insight* briefing sponsored by Auto Trader now to hear views on:

- Key takeaways from the *Auto Trader Road to 2035* report (time on video 1.21)
- The impact of Covid on vehicle supply by brand (5.00)
- Used car pain points for brands with high volumes of BEVs (8.32)
- Latest on residual value forecasts (11.53)
- Impact of a turbulent new car market on values (14.26)
- Concerns about the public charging infrastructure (17.07)
- The importance of diversity and inclusion in fleet (22.26)

Palmer said. "There will be seven times more MG cars on the road, and seven times more Teslas."

He added: "And then you've got others who rode it out a bit better; their supply was more insulated from things like chip shortages and wiring. Brands like Kia and Hyundai came out of this period in better shape than a lot of the others."

Nevertheless, with used prices falling over the past two years, particularly for EVs, some leasing companies face a challenge to find buyers as cars come off fleet.

According to Rachael Jones, Auto Trader

director of automotive finance, 16% of the sub-five-year-old car parc is currently electric, rising to 20% next year. But some brands have much heavier proportions.

"MG, next year, 38% of their under five-year-old car parc is going to be electric. For Jaguar, it's 30%; BMW at 27%," she said.

"If demand doesn't meet that kind of supply coming back, there's going to be big pressure on those brands.

"We've seen it already this year and in the past 12 to 18 months. But with the drop in valuations of EVs, these losses are being realised by many lease companies across the UK, as they feed that market."

Jones added: "Our data points to a very nuanced used electric market due to large variances in supply and demand levels within different age cohorts. While demand for used EVs has increased c.55% over the past 12 months, interest in three-to-five-year-old models has rocketed c.130%."

In its *Road to 2035* report published in September, Auto Trader calculated that an EV registered this year will be worth 50% in three years' time with 30,000 mileage, but a petrol diesel equivalent will retain 66% of its value.

"The RV issue is still painful for many lease cos and those in fleet," Jones said.

Auto Trader's fully interactive analysis into the future of the parc, broken down by brand, fuel-type, and age, is available [here](#).

For more information, contact Rachael directly at [rachael.jones@autotrader.co.uk](mailto:rachael.jones@autotrader.co.uk)



# How true partnership frees up time for strategy

Outsourcing routine tasks can give fleet decision-makers the headspace required to tackle the strategic issues that truly matter, says JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions

**T**he role of a successful fleet partner is threefold. First, it must deliver optimum day-to-day management of the vehicles themselves. Second, it must ensure that drivers are mobile, safe and happy. And third, it must provide industry-leading best practice, knowledge and strategic advice.

In terms of delivering optimum day-to-day management of the vehicles, it is vital that fleet managers can trust that this is being managed effectively and not creating a deluge of daily tasks flooding into in trays and inboxes making it difficult for them to find the time and mental bandwidth to focus on fleet strategy.

A successful fleet partner will be able to, among many other things, guide

employees through car choices, approve tyre replacements and compile finance reports. Essentially, fleet partners should optimally deliver all other aspects of day-to-day management to prevent it creating a barrier to successful strategic thinking for those responsible for fleets.

To support your drivers, fleet partners should provide ease of access to services and the people managing those services if they need help.

Ongoing communication and information should be provided to educate and inform drivers on how to manage themselves and their vehicles safely and efficiently. When a vehicle is off the road the fleet partner will actively manage and communicate any updates until the vehicle is back in



**JCT600 VLS's head office in Yorkshire**



**“ WE CAN SHARE BEST PRACTICE OF WHAT OTHER FLEETS ARE DOING ”**  
BECKY EGGINGTON, JCT600 VLS



**“ WORK WITH A PARTNER THAT HELPS YOU ON THAT JOURNEY ”**  
CHRIS CADDICK, JCT600 VLS

operation while managing any alternative transport. It will also foster driver satisfaction by responding to enquiries consistently and promptly, removing the need for the fleet manager's involvement.

“Most companies will have clear objectives that they're working towards, such as saving costs or improving their environmental performance,” said Rebecca (Becky) Eggington, head of customer experience, JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions. “A good fleet partner will provide the resource, knowledge and experience to help a business align the fleet to these objectives,”

The size and agility of family-owned JCT600 VLS gives it the flexibility to create and deliver solutions for mid-sized fleets of 75 to 250 vehicles, that larger leasing companies may reserve for customers operating well in excess of those fleet profiles, added Christopher Caddick, head of business development at JCT600 VLS.

The process starts with a discovery phase that sets out to achieve a deep understanding of the customer's business, its ambitions and where the fleet fits into this picture. Even at this early stage, JCT600 VLS adopts a coordinated approach involving its sales, implementation, account management and operational



teams, so all functions have a clear vision of the customer's aims.

"Right from the very beginning we make sure we can provide the continuity that customers need," said Caddick. "It's hugely important that all of our teams understand not only the decisions that have been made, but also the reasons behind those decisions and, due to our size, we can be a lot more collaborative as a team. If customers or drivers need us, they get 100% of our attention."

Fleet needs naturally vary, with a broad spectrum stretching from perk company cars to operational cars and vans and even mission-critical fleets. Some are dogged in their determination to decarbonise, others are fixated on the recruitment and retention value of company cars and salary sacrifice schemes, while some have duty cycles that are proving problematic for electric vans.

"We're adept at working with different departments and stakeholders at our customers' businesses, and as a partner

rather than supplier we're there to support everyone in those discussions," said Eggington. "As experts, we can share best practice of what other fleets are doing."

Describing outsourcing as an à la carte set of options, rather than a fixed menu, she said JCT600 VLS aims to feel like an extension of the customer's fleet department.

"We're hugely passionate about the work we do for our customers, and we can only do that because our own employees are fully engaged. You can't separate customer engagement and employee engagement," she said.

"Our support could be as major as helping a customer design, implement and launch a new scheme or as minor as drafting an email to be sent out to internal stakeholders or drivers. We're a sounding board that customers trust."

One customer, for example, was hesitant about transitioning to battery electric vehicles, so JCT600 VLS helped it move

to plug-in hybrid cars, which lowered wholelife costs (WLCs) and delivered dramatic CO<sub>2</sub> and benefit-in-kind tax savings. Importantly, however, the change in powertrain also required an update of the fleet policy to introduce tight controls about managing their PHEVs to maximise the WLC in the real world.

Taking full advantage of JCT600 VLS's consultative approach leans towards a sole supply arrangement, a step that some procurement professionals might be reluctant to take, preferring instead to benefit from the perceived competitive tension and lower costs of multiple suppliers.

Caddick insists, however, that the all-encompassing solution that a single supplier can deliver is not only price-competitive, but also delivers time and financial savings throughout the life of the contract and massively simplifies the aggregation of data and management reports.

"We're very open about how we're structured commercially, and we're happy to share with our customers how we operate, how we set our pricing, where we make our money and the residual value risks we take," he said.

"We can offer fleets of, say, 75 vehicles, what the large lease companies will only offer to substantially larger fleets in terms of transparency."

Moreover, the internal time and resource savings of only having to deal with one supplier, allied to the holistic approach a leasing company will adopt when it supplies an entire fleet, such as around early termination, mileage management, re-writes and end of contract charges, more than offsets the occasional pound saved on a rental by shopping around for each new lease.

As a result, the longer a partnership continues, the more work JCT600 VLS typically finds itself doing on behalf of customers.

"Outsourcing does not mean removing the fleet manager, or whoever's responsible for the fleet," said Caddick.

"It's about working out which elements can be done by a partner to enable those running fleets to focus on everything the business asks them to do, whether that is pushing towards electrification, spending time and energy looking at cost-saving initiatives, bringing in new driver compliance and safety tools, or introducing a salary sacrifice scheme.

"So, work with a partner that helps you on that journey."

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**VAUXHALL**

# Software-defined vehicles: the next transport revolution?

SDVs have become the most talked about future technology among OEMs and could have major benefits for fleets. *Andrew Ryan* reports

**I**n recent years, fleet decision-makers have been hit with massive levels of hype around new technologies which are predicted to transform the way they move people and goods.

But much-talked about concepts such as mobility-as-a-service (MaaS) and self-driving vehicles have – as of yet – struggled to make any meaningful impact as either the technology, legislation or other factors have stymied their introduction.

Development work on them continues, however, and they are still expected to have a major impact in the future, but for now vehicle manufacturers are talking more about another concept: the software-defined vehicle (SDV).

“Between about 2016 and 2021, those in OEM circles were talking about CASE – connected, automated, shared, electric – but that phrase is pretty much dead now,” says Jack Palmer, principal consultant at analysts Frost and Sullivan.

“No one talks about that any more. If you go through OEMs’ annual statements or reports, they talk about the SDV, which brings together all of those concepts.”

Jonathan Davenport, senior director analyst at Gartner, agrees. “The biggest trend for sure at the moment is the SDV,” he says. “In the past, autonomous vehicle technology was the number one topic people were enquiring about.

“Now it’s definitely about SDVs and the impact they will have on the market.”

Each year, Gartner assesses new mobility technologies in its hype cycle series of reports and in its Hype Cycle for Connected Electric and Autonomous Vehicles 2024 document (see panel overleaf) it has described the benefit of SDVs as “transformational”.

Under its ranking system, it puts them as being at the peak of inflated expectations – a period of overenthusiasm and unrealistic projections, where a flurry of well-publicised activity by technology leaders results in some successes, but more failures, as the innovation is pushed to its limits – and five-to-10 years away from entering the mainstream.

## WHAT IS AN SDV?

It is already possible to make over-the-air (OTA) software updates to the on-board system of some vehicles, as well as applying software patches to improve safety or functionality.

Some manufacturers, including BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Tesla, also offer a limited number of software-based services that drivers can subscribe to, such as parking and safety assistance functions.

“The consumer demand hasn’t been fantastic for these, but it’s certainly there,” says Palmer.

However, the SDV concept takes this idea much further and is seen as a significant evolution by the automotive industry, helping to pave the way for further technological advancements such as autonomous vehicles.

Key to this is the architecture of the vehicle. Modern vehicles use an increasing number of on-board computers to make them work: a typical connected car has between 60 and 80 electronic control units (ECUs), all dedicated to a single function such as vehicle lighting, driving aids and power steering.

The idea with the SDV is to have a streamlined infrastructure using just one or two ECUs, which are much more powerful, more robust and more flexible than the vehicle needs when it is built.

As well as controlling the car’s functions and process the huge amount of data collected by

its various sensors, they will have the capacity to accommodate new functions without slowing the system down.

This will change the historic link between hardware and software development life-cycles.

“An analogy I use is what happened in consumer electronics about 20 years ago,” says Davenport.

“You had all your separate electronic items; your video camera, your digital camera, your calculator, your mobile phone, etc.

“The companies would encourage you to buy the new model after a couple of years so you could go from a 20MP camera to a 25MP camera, for example.

“That’s almost where we are with automotive today as if you want to get the new functionality you need to buy another car in a few years’ time.

“The change we are going to see with SDV is that we will get this continuous improvement driven by the software.”

Manufacturers will be able to offer OTA updates beyond what is currently possible, allowing them to make money from subscription sales of digital content and software-based features.

In addition, indirect monetisation benefits will be achieved through OTA updates that fix warranty or recall issues.

This will change the business model for OEMs, as they will want to drive revenue by selling software-enabled services during the vehicle’s life than just the one-time sale or lease of it. These services promise to deliver much higher gross margins.

Stellantis, for example, forecasts around €20 billion in incremental annual revenue, with a 40% gross margin by 2030, fuelled by software-enabled vehicles.

## Autonomous vehicles

While the SDV has replaced autonomous vehicles as the most talked about vehicle technology in manufacturer circles, the self-driving technology has undergone a recent revival, with Gartner expecting Level 3 and above technology to be entering the mainstream within the next five-to-10 years.

Level 3 categorisation sees the automated system monitor the driving environment and perform most driving tasks, but still requires a driver to be present and ready to take control of the vehicle if needed.

“Three or four years ago, autonomous vehicles was definitely the top inquiry topic; that’s what everybody wanted to talk about,” says Jonathan Davenport, of Gartner. “Since then, interest in them really waned and the people hadn’t really been talking about it so much.

“But in the past couple of months, right across the world, we have started to get more enquiries coming in again about autonomous vehicles, so it does seem like it is moving towards broader adoption.”

Davenport says the momentum is picking up despite the struggles associated with some robotaxi companies as several OEMs are set to deploy such tech in the future.

“When we see a Level 3 solution coming to market it is going to be interesting to see how it becomes adopted and how the business cases can be put in place by organisations which want to use it,” he adds.

“It will have tax implications for people using the vehicles because, as the value of the vehicle goes up, the amount of tax you have to pay increases.

“But organisations might want to push their employees to select vehicles that have autonomous driving because it will free them up to do things like emails while the car is driving itself, especially while travelling on motorways between meetings.”

Davenport says autonomous last-mile delivery robots are already being rolled out in the UK, while autonomous technology also has particular relevance to trucking.

“It’s much harder to create these autonomous systems for the big trucks and there’s almost this tension there because the business case makes the most sense for them,” he adds.

“You have the driver shortages, while the goods can be moved much faster if you don’t have to take into account driver rest brakes. And, because you could utilise these vehicles more heavily, there’s potentially a requirement for fewer vehicles on the road.”

# Why fleets need flexibility to meet future challenges

Few companies have fixed daily vehicle requirements, especially in the LCV sector, so contracts that can flex with business demand have become essential

**T**he impact of long Covid is not just being felt by the hearts and lungs of people who contracted coronavirus. The fallout from the pandemic is still being felt in the fleet sector. This is especially the case among light commercial vehicle (LCV) operators, where vehicle supply shortages followed by the double-whammy of eye-watering increases in the acquisition price of new vans and the challenge of transitioning to electric powertrains have resulted in ageing fleets.

The unavoidable consequences are higher maintenance bills and increased downtime, as decision-makers analyse the best strategies to renew their fleets. The former policy of like-for-like replacement, with the old LCV swapped for an identikit new model, no longer applies in these difficult market conditions.

Businesses are now seeking a much greater degree of flexibility in their supply arrangements, ensuring they can access all the vehicles they require when they need them, but avoiding the cost of vehicles standing idle outside peak season or in between contracts.

"Companies may have a number of long-term, settled contracts with their own customers, but they also have a lot of varying short- and mid-term vehicle needs," said Spencer Davi, UK sales director, Northgate. "That could be a

change of mileage, a change of vehicle derivative, or they may even finish a contract earlier and no longer need vehicles. They need flexibility to deal with these scenarios. Things can change quickly, so the question is: how do you best prepare and protect your business to adapt to changes?"

This flexibility increasingly involves different solutions within the same agreement, so that the highly predictable, core vehicle requirements of a customer are supplied on a long-term contract of 12 to 48 months, supplemented by vehicles on short- and medium-length arrangements that can flex up and down from just three months and upwards.

Importantly, this flexibility is not restricted to vanilla panel vans. With a huge fleet and 68 locations strategically located around the country, Northgate is able to supply vehicles with bespoke customisations, including livery, racking, tools and equipment – "we've even fitted reverse water osmosis machines to vehicles," said Davi – as well as specialist models, such as refrigerated LCVs and traffic management vehicles.

In the past two years Northgate has acquired both FridgeXpress and Blakedale, which has a bespoke fleet for the motorway maintenance industry, as well as adding a car hire string to its bow earlier this year.

"A growing number of fleet customers that used to purchase their vehicles are accustomed to having a quite specific derivative or set-up in them because they're carrying products, such as glass sheets for example, that are different to their competitors, and they are coming to us for something more bespoke," added Davi.

With its size and scale, Northgate is able to execute this transition in a single move through its 'We Buy, You Rent' facility. Customers are promised a fair market price for their current fleet, which Northgate sells through its Van Monster operation, and it then supplies replacement vehicles from its hire fleet.

Customers benefit not only from new vehicles, but also avoid the ever-present headache of vehicle maintenance issues, with Northgate taking responsibility for all of the service, maintenance and repair (SMR) work on the vehicles it supplies, backed up by 24/7 breakdown cover. With 51 workshops nationwide, and a rapidly growing fleet of mobile service technicians, the company has complete control of quality standards and the flexibility to schedule workshop appointments at times that minimise the inconvenience for customers (it naturally has ready availability of replacement vehicles, too).

Telemetry from its vehicles is enabling



The acquisition of Blakedale has brought a bespoke fleet for motorway maintenance into the Northgate fold

Northgate has developed a Drive to Zero Hub to guide fleet operators through the electrification process



Northgate has also developed its Drive to Zero Hub to guide fleet operators through the electrification process, including a suitability checker that analyses whether an eLCV can meet an individual fleet's mileage and payload requirements. The hi-tech application also forecasts whether any financial savings are achievable by swapping a diesel van for an electric one. Key to success in electrifying LCVs is a workable charging strategy, so Northgate's software platform has been designed to project a business's charging requirements over the coming years, taking into account its forecasts for eLCV adoption.

The system calculates the number, speed and cost of charge points required, where these should be installed, and the location of the nearest public charging station alternatives.

"Then ChargedEV, which specialises in the supply and installation of charge points and is another of our Group businesses, can support the customer," said Davi.

This end-to-end fleet solution, from vehicle supply, to customisation, service, maintenance, fleet management and electrification, may leave some procurement specialists searching for multiple suppliers to deliver on their needs, but, as Davi points out, the service levels, suite of solutions, availability and flexibility offered by Northgate mean they need to look no further. "Clients can try us out short term, on just a flexible basis if required, knowing they can leave if they don't believe the service level and options cover everything they require, but we're confident that's never really the case."

As a result, Northgate applies a relentless focus to account management, with every customer from SMEs to nationwide giants, supported by a dedicated account manager to offer advice, answer questions, provide reports and act as a conduit to the comprehensive range of services that the company offers.

"With a range of hire options, outstandingly flexible contract terms, fleet management, disposals and an award-winning fleet electrification programme, Northgate has a solution for every business," said Davi.

Northgate to get on the front foot with preventative maintenance, intervening before faults develop into breakdowns, and ensuring compliance with service and maintenance requirements.

The same connected technology is also available to customers, with an increasing number monitoring driver behaviour as part of their safety initiatives, and using the data to underpin decarbonisation initiatives by combatting engine idling and encouraging greener driving styles.

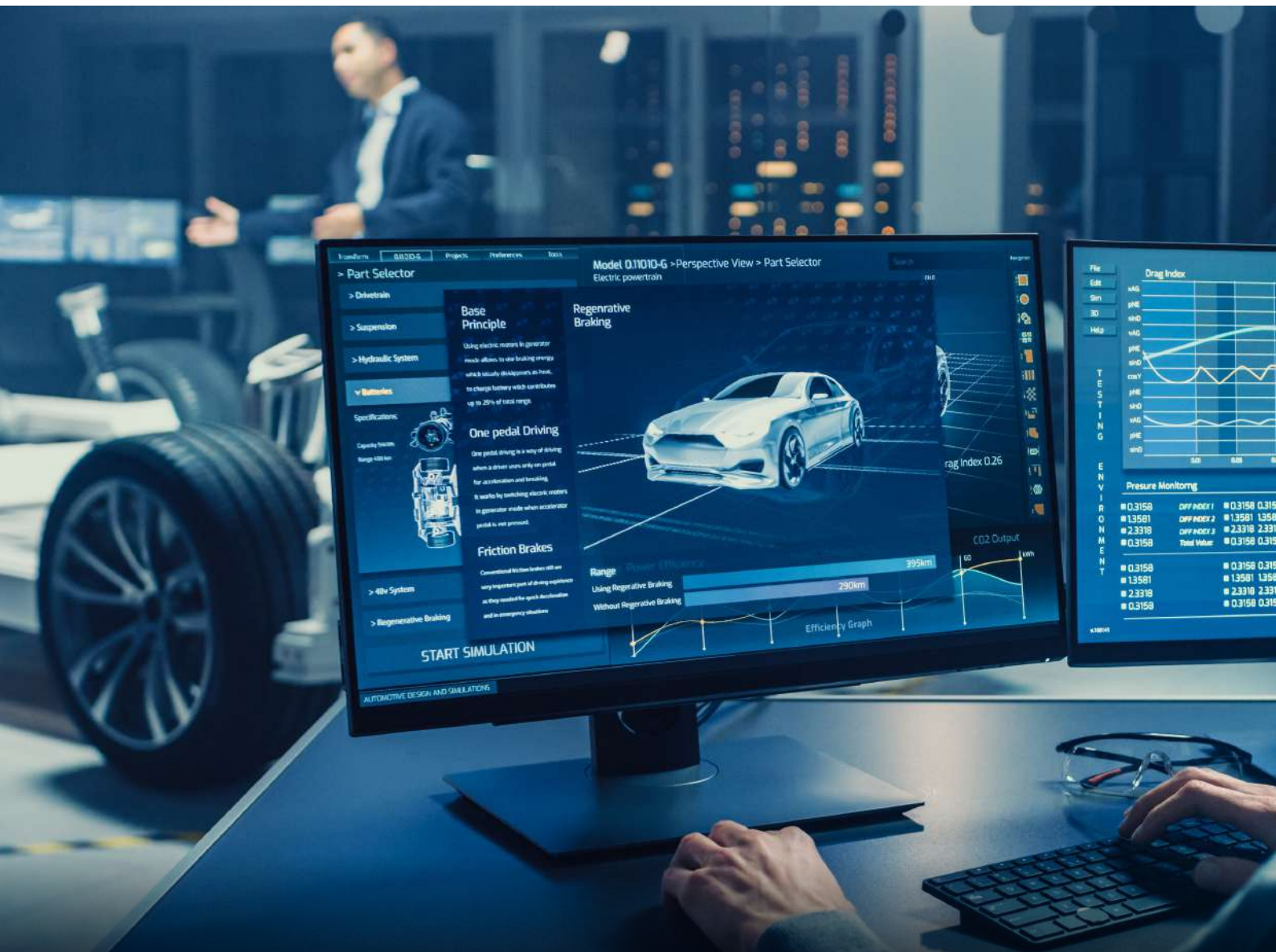
The ultimate step in sustainability is the electrification of vehicles, which is proving problematic for many LCV fleets. The Association of Fleet Operators has made no secret of the struggles that LCV fleets are facing in their transition to battery power due to vehicle costs, payloads and, especially, recharging solutions.

"The transition to EVs could initially be more costly at first glance, unless the customer has the right duty cycle profile," said Davi. "But there's a lot of people on board with the switch now, and we're committed to helping them electrify. We run EV days that give customers insights into electrification so they can make the right decisions for their business about whether transitioning to EVs is right for them."



**“ WE RUN EV DAYS THAT GIVE CUSTOMERS INSIGHTS INTO ELECTRIFICATION SO THEY CAN MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS**

**SPENCER DAVI, NORTHGATE**



**FLEET BENEFITS**

The focus on software – and with it data – could have major benefits for fleets.

Davenport says although some major manufacturers are developing their own operating systems, many others – including General Motors, Volvo, Ford, Honda, Mercedes-Benz and Renault Nissan Mitsubishi – are using Google’s Android Automotive.

This should not be confused with Android Auto, which is a mobile app developed by Google to mirror features of a smartphone on a vehicle’s infotainment system.

One potential effect is that multiple OEMs using the same operating system in their vehicles could change the way fleets use telematics.

Currently there is no way of getting consistent data collection from different brands of vehicles on a fleet unless fleet decision-makers use aftermarket devices, says Davenport.

“We always see two counter-trends in the vehicle telematics space,” he adds. “One is we see organisations trying to dig out the cost of their traditional telematics services so we’ve seen a movement from the black box to an OBD2 dongle, potentially even going to a smartphone application or maybe

sourcing data direct from the automotive manufacturer.

“The counter-trend is that the video telematics space is putting higher-performance computers in an aftermarket box into the vehicle.

“But what I think could happen with Android Automotive is that an application could be deployed into the different vehicles’ infotainment systems to request things like access to the forward-facing camera, access to the driver monitoring system etc., and so you could have a fleet management package that runs in the vehicle.

“The automotive manufacturers are still acting as gatekeepers to their application marketplaces, so that may impede this vision, but certainly in the longer term I think that’s what will happen as Android Automotive provides the common data platform that we’ve never really had in the past.”

Palmer identifies a further area where SDVs could benefit fleets – rental vehicles.

“One area I really see big potential for, but don’t see any conversation about, is on the rental side,” he adds.

“The concept of features on demand – the idea of flexibly buying or accessing features for a short

amount of time – surely makes sense for the rental sector.

“A customer could get a vehicle, upload their profile and then have all the features they want to use: this sounds like a fantastic use case.”

Gartner says the introduction of SDVs will also eventually lead to a new market for car hardware upgrades as eventually – and as with smartphones and computers – there will come a point when an SDV’s factory-installed computing hardware will not be able to cope with in-life software advancements.

On average, a passenger car’s useful life is around 12 years in the US and Europe, it says, and this will increase given the greater longevity of electric vehicles.

This means the widespread adoption of the zero-emission technology will bring a major long-term drop in the revenue from new car sales and after-sales for OEMs.

However, easy and price-competitive vehicle hardware updates will allow OEMs to keep selling new digital features/services to the owner to replace this lost revenue, as well as extending an SDV’s useful life.



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# Gartner Hype Cycle for Connected, Electric and Autonomous Vehicles 2024

Each year analysts at Gartner produce its Hype Cycle for Connected Electric and Autonomous Vehicles, assessing relevant technologies, the impact they may have and when they may become mainstream.

It uses five zones in its assessment, each defining where a product is in terms of development and commercialisation. These are:

**Innovation trigger:** A breakthrough public demonstration, product launch or other event that generates significant media and industry interest.

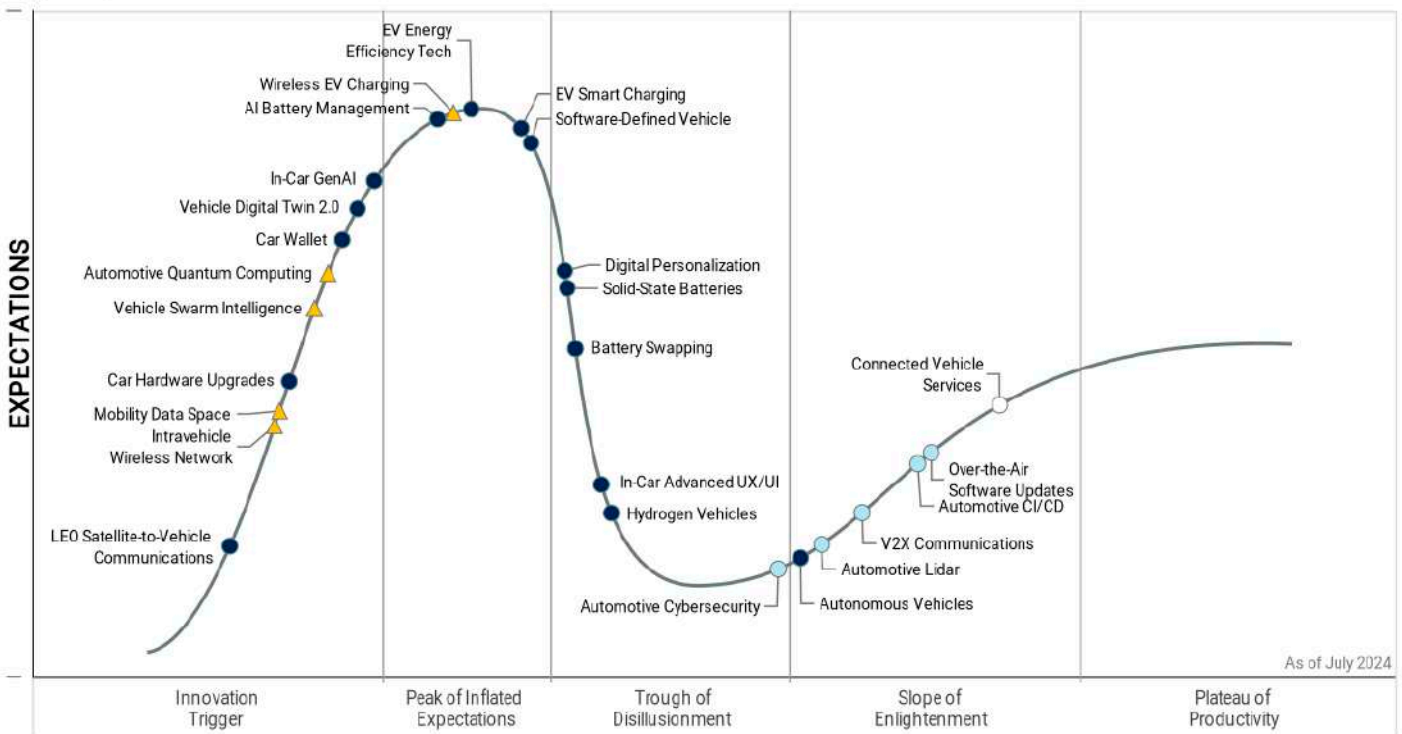
**Peak of inflated expectations:** During this phase of overenthusiasm and unrealistic projections, a flurry of well-publicised activity by technology leaders results in some successes, but more failures, as the innovation is pushed to its limits. The only enterprises making money are conference organisers and content publishers.

**Trough of disillusionment:** Because the innovation does not live up to its overinflated expectations, it rapidly becomes unfashionable. Media interest wanes, except for a few cautionary tales.

**Slope of enlightenment:** Focused experimentation and solid hard work by an increasingly diverse range of organisations lead to a true understanding of the innovation's applicability, risks and benefits. Commercial off-the-shelf methodologies and tools ease the development process.

**Plateau of productivity:** The real-world benefits of the innovation are demonstrated and accepted. Tools and methodologies are increasingly stable as they enter their second and third generation. Growing numbers of organisations feel comfortable with the reduced level of risk; the rapid growth phase of adoption begins. Approximately 20% of the technology's target audience has adopted, or is adopting, the technology as it enters this phase.

## Hype Cycle for Connected, Electric and Autonomous Vehicles, 2024



As of July 2024

TIME

Plateau will be reached: ○ <2 yrs. ● 2-5 yrs. ● 5-10 yrs. ▲ >10 yrs. ✗ Obsolete before plateau

# Creating best value relationships

Many companies are turning to Leasys as their supplier of choice to reduce their workload and maximise fleet efficiencies

Fleet requirements vary from business to business and while some larger companies have a dedicated fleet manager, the same can't be said for some smaller organisations.

Fleet responsibilities in many of those smaller companies will come under the remit of other departments such as HR, finance, or procurement and, in these situations, many organisations seek professional support and choose to partner with a supplier such as Leasys.

The powerful, FN50 top 10 multi-brand vehicle leasing company was formed from a merger with sister company Free2move Lease, and prides itself on offering a best-

in-class customer experience and an impressive portfolio of innovative new products and services.

The merged company is owned jointly by Crédit Agricole Personal Finance & Mobility and vehicle manufacturer Stellantis, whose brands in the UK include Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Citroën, DS Automobiles, Fiat, Fiat Professional, Jeep, Maserati, Peugeot, and Vauxhall.

Although a multi-brand leasing company, its close links to Stellantis brings real advantages to the business. A detailed insight into production schedules and delivery dates of its brands, workshops and retail network allows Leasys to help its fleet customers with

pricing, planning and maximising uptime. Similarly, those close relationships allow Leasys to pinpoint delivery dates so it can arrange for contract extensions until a key-for-key handover is possible.

Working with the customer and understanding an individual fleet's needs is vital to a long and successful business partnership.

Leasys sales director David Robertson says: "It's about listening to and understanding the customer's individual requirements. Many SMEs have a fleet manager who has another role in another function, such as HR. We engage with those customers differently than we would with a large company, who will have a dedicated fleet manager."

Recognising that many SME fleets require a range of different support services, Leasys will take over core fleet management tasks such as co-ordinating service schedules, managing enquiries about tyres, and handling administrative hassles such as parking or speeding fines, etc. This allows fleet customers to stay focused on their primary role knowing the running of the core fleet management and administrative tasks are being taken care of.

And bundling service and maintenance costs into the monthly rental for an additional, small, fixed inflation-proof



Karen Musacchio,  
director of customer  
care and quality



David  
Robertson,  
sales director



Shane  
Coomber,  
marketing director



payment provides fleets with a smooth and hassle-free leasing experience.

Focused uniquely on leasing and fleet management, Leasys can devote its resources to these business solutions, protecting customers from the uncertainties of depreciation and fluctuations in the used car market, and maximising vehicle uptime.

"The fact that we are so focused on B2B and leasing means all of our teams are concentrated on how we advance that product and how we improve the customer journey," says marketing director Shane Coomber.

Leasys offers a customer portal, My-Leasys, where customers will be able to find all their key documentation, including contracts, invoices, and communications and all Leasys contract hire agreements include a dedicated Driver Helpline for service booking and driver assistance.

This same philosophy extends to larger fleet and corporate businesses who are assigned a dedicated Leasys Key Account Executive to support with topics such as contract amendments, fleet reports, pooled mileage, driving abroad, fines management etc.

"Our set-up for both fleet managers and drivers is designed to make us really easy to deal with – we want our customers to

enjoy working with us," says Leasys director of customer care and quality Karen Musacchio.

It's that fundamental understanding of the needs of business customers that means Leasys is flexible in its approach to contracts, an absolute necessity on many occasions, such as during the vehicle supply shortages of recent years.

"We start conversations six months before the end of the contract, and if the new vehicle has an especially long lead time, we will discuss extension options so customers can have a key-for-key changeover," says Coomber. "We work very closely with customers to make sure they have no mobility issues and can now also provide flexible, short-term rental vehicles offering a tailored service for business customers."

Coomber adds that Leasys' merger with Free2move Lease in 2023 has only served to strengthen its fleet offering. "We were two very experienced organisations with two very experienced teams, and we now have a good balance and structure to support all of our customers," she says.

Its focus since the merger has squarely been on delivering the products and services clients want, whether SMEs, larger corporate fleets or personal contract hire customers.

Leasys continually looks to offer an

increasing number of solutions to its fleet customers as Robertson explains.

"Customers everywhere are looking for cost and time savings in their fleet operations and management, so the more support we can give helps them meet these objectives," he says. "We have a lot of expertise in our team to support clients and our consultative approach means we understand their needs."

One of Leasys many strengths is helping fleets on the journey to electrification, and it is committed to helping fleets reduce their carbon emissions.

Those links with the Stellantis retail network allow it to provide a wide range of vehicle makes and models to suit every driver and fleet choice requirement. These not only include an impressive array of electric and plug-in hybrids, but also a strong line-up of desirable vans.

**Learn more about Leasys' year of achievements and exceptional growth [here](#)**

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### Three Theatres for 2024



#### Fleet Fundamentals Theatre

Sessions in this theatre will look at some of the everyday basics of running a fleet, such as safety, compliance and electrification. It will allow delegates to benchmark their own fleet against those of their peers.



#### Strategy & Leadership Theatre

Sessions in this theatre will look at areas of the sector having the greatest effect on the way fleets operate, offering advice and insight to give fleet decision-makers the confidence to make the right decisions and form the best strategies.



#### Fleet Matrix Theatre

Aimed at HR, finance and procurement professionals, sessions in this theatre will recognise that fleet responsibilities can be part of other departments across an organisation.

### Features for 2024



Micromobility Zone



EV Café



Public Sector Hub



Fleet Club Gold



AFP Hub

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