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MUSTANG MACH-E

Ford's first all-electric car heralds start of EV product onslaught

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How Paul Ayris halved crash rates and damage costs in just 12 months

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THE BIG PICTURE

We've some exciting news in this month's issue: the Fleet News Awards will be live this year at an awe-inspiring new venue!

We're off to Ascot, hosting the UK's more prestigious awards at arguably the UK's most prestigious racetrack. The important date for your diaries is Tuesday July 6 (full details on page 15).

I've already spoken to a number of fleets about our plans and it's creating a real buzz. Remember, the 2020 Fleet News Awards was the last fleet event before we went into the first lockdown; we think our 2021 awards will be the second major fleet event as we emerge from the clutches of the pandemic.

Note, second and not first event – that honour goes to Company Car In Action (CCIA) which is scheduled for June 23-24 at its historic home of Millbrook Proving Ground. This will be your first opportunity to test drive many of the new full electric and plug-in hybrid cars that have launched over the past 12 months and we anticipate some exclusive first drives of electric cars that will be coming later this year.

With momentum building towards the 2030 ban on sales of new petrol/diesel cars and vans, CCIA really is a must-attend event to help you start formulating or accelerating your EV strategies.

But back to the Fleet News Awards. In another break with tradition, we're jettisoning the black-tie format and are encouraging everyone to come dressed in their best summer clothes. This will be a garden party to remember, hosted during the course of the afternoon with entertainment, thrills and a few surprises, wrapped around the celebration of the awards.

By July, most adults will have had their first vaccination – many will have also had their second – and the Government hopes to fully relax the coronavirus rules, removing all the legal limits on social contact.

However, regardless of the official easing of restrictions, *Fleet News* and Ascot will be working hard to ensure the garden party is a safe environment, guaranteeing an abundance of space to ensure social distancing and taking a comprehensive approach to sanitisation.

Our awards guests can be confident in the safety of their surroundings, enabling them to relax and fully enjoy the event as they meet old friends and make new acquaintances.

We can't wait – and I'm sure you can't either. More details will follow in the coming weeks – but email my colleague Michaela Brock – michaela.brock@bauermedia.co.uk – to register your interest in attending.

Stephen Briers, editor-in-chief, *Fleet News*

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Fleet News is published 12 times a year. Bauer Consumer Media Ltd is a company registered in England and Wales with company number 01176085, registered address Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynchwood, Peterborough, PE2 6EA. VAT no 918 5617 01.

Bauer Consumer Media Ltd is authorised and regulated by the FCA (Ref No. 710067).

 ISSN 0953-8526.

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Printing: PCP, Telford

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Burning question:
When restrictions on foreign travel are lifted, where do you plan to head off to?

EDITORIAL

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VAUXHALL Fleet

Fuel economy and CO_2 results for the Mokka-e range 100kW (136PS). Mpg (l/100km): N/A. CO_2 emissions: 0g/km. Electric range up to 201 miles (WLTP). Fuel economy and CO_2 results for the All-new Mokka petrol and diesel range: Combined mpg (l/100km): 47.1 (6.0) – 65.7 (4.3). CO_2 emissions: 137 – 114g/km.

The range and electric consumption figures mentioned comply with the WLTP test procedure, on the basis of which new vehicles are type approved from 1 September 2018. EV range assumes that vehicle has been pre-conditioned prior to journey. They may vary depending on actual conditions of use and on different factors such as: vehicle load, accessories fitted (post registration), speed, thermal comfort on board the vehicle, driving style and outside temperature. *You can obtain 15-80% of the vehicle charge in 30 minutes from a 100kW rapid charging station. The vehicle will rapid charge at a rate of up to 100kW, depending on the power of the rapid charging station used and will take longer to charge at a lower power. Rapid charging stations are available across the UK at various locations and their power rating varies, typically from 50kW and sometimes up to 350kW. For further information on public charging stations across the UK, please visit www.zap-map.com. †2021/22 Tax Year. **3 Day Test Drive terms and conditions apply and vehicles are subject to availability. Please contact your Vauxhall Retailer for further information. All figures quoted correct at time of going to press (April 2021).

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COMMERCIAL FLEET

Carmakers respond to PiCG cut by reducing EV prices to beat new cap

BMW makes biggest reduction, lopping almost £7,500 off sportier versions of its i3 model

By Gareth Roberts

Carmakers have been rushing to cut electric vehicle (EV) prices, so they remain eligible for the plug-in car grant (PiCG).

The available funding has been reduced from £3,000 to £2,500 and now excludes models that cost more than £35,000. Previously the cap was £50,000.

It means, for example, the Tesla Model 3, with prices starting from £42,500, and the new Ford Mustang Mach-E, which is priced from £40,295 (see first drive page 54), will now not qualify for the incentive.

However, Nissan, Vauxhall, Peugeot, BMW and Hyundai, which had electric cars priced just above the new £35,000 threshold, have reduced vehicle costs to remain eligible for the grant.

Ford said the Government decision to cut the grant, meaning that the Mustang Mach-E now misses out, was disappointing.

"Robust incentives - for both purchase and usage - that are consistent over time are essential if we are to encourage consumers to adopt new technologies, not just for all-electrics but other technologies too like PHEVs (plug-in hybrid electric vehicles) that pave the way to a zero-emissions future," a Ford spokesman explained.

The Tesla Model 3 is one of the cars now excluded from the Government grant

EV PRICE CUTS

Citroën was the first carmaker to react to the changes, cutting the cost of its e-C4 Shine Plus so all versions of the electric car remain eligible.

The e-C4 Shine plus previously had an on-the-road price of £35,545 but is now priced from £34,995 making it eligible for the £2,500 grant.

Citroën UK managing director Eurig Druce said he was "disappointed" the grant had been reduced.

"For this period of transition to be a success and for electrification targets to be met, both the industry and consumers need clearer long-term guidance and support on how we will get there," he added.

Announcements of price cuts for electric models from fellow Stellantis brands Peugeot and Vauxhall quickly followed.

Peugeot revised pricing for all its e-2008 models and enhanced deposit contributions for the e-208 range in response.

The manufacturer cut e208 list prices by £450, to ensure every Active Premium, Allure and Allure Premium derivative remains eligible.

Prices before PiCG for the Active Premium now start from £30,730, while Allure models start from £34,430 and Allure Premium variants from £34,880.

Vauxhall, meanwhile, revised the pricing across the entire Mokka-e range to ensure all derivatives remain eligible.

Prices for the Mokka-e SE Premium now start from £33,040, while the Mokka-e Launch Edition starts from £34,995.

To ensure the Vivaro-e Life qualifies for the new plug-in grant, Edition models have also been reduced by more than £2,000, with prices starting from £34,995.

The Vivaro-e Life Combi will be the same specification level as the Edition model and will also start from £34,995.

The Corsa-e is already priced below the grant threshold.

Julie David, managing director of Peugeot UK, said the plug-in car grant had helped many make the switch to EVs, which is why she is keen to ensure its plug-in cars remained eligible for the grant.

Vauxhall managing director Paul Wilcox added: "We believe in making sure our vehicles are as accessible as possible to the greatest number of people, especially when it comes to zero emissions-in-use motoring."

> "WE BELIEVE IN MAKING SURE OUR VEHICLES ARE AS ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE TO THE GREATEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE"
>
> **PAUL WILCOX, VAUXHALL**

BMW's i3 has seen the biggest price reduction, with prices slashed to ensure customers can still take advantage of the grant.

MAINTAINING EV DEMAND

The biggest reduction has come from BMW, which slashed the pricing of its i3 electric car to ensure customers can still take advantage of the grant.

The base i3 is now priced from £33,805 (before the grant), a reduction of £5,880.

Sportier i3s models have been cut even further, with prices starting at £34,805 before incentives – a saving of almost £7,500.

BMW says there are no changes to the car's specification levels. All models come with heated seats, parking sensors, LED lights and sat-nav as standard.

With some models falling outside of the new threshold, Nissan has decided to cut prices for the 40kWh and 62kWh versions of the Leaf.

Its 40kWh models would have still qualified, being less than the £35,000 threshold, but prices have still been reduced by up to £1,350, with pricing now starting from £28,495 (excluding the grant).

The 62kWh Tekna and Connects variants, however, would not have qualified for the grant, so have had prices cut by up to £2,765. Tekna is now priced from £34,945 and Connecta from £32,945, without the grant applied.

Hyundai has also followed suit, reducing the prices for certain Kona Electric and Ioniq Electric models.

The Kona Electric 64kWh Premium now costs £34,995, while Kona Electric 39KWh prices have also been reduced with the SE Connect now costing £30,395 and Premium at £31,745.

The range-topping Kona Electric Premium SE is the only electric Hyundai model not to be eligible for the grant, with a price of £37,145.

The Ioniq Electric range sees prices cut for the Premium model to £32,995 and the Premium SE to £34,995.

Ashley Andrew, managing director of Hyundai Motor UK, said: "When it comes to electric vehicles, cost is a big consideration, so it was important for us, in light of the changes to the PiCG, to provide our customers with some additional savings which, we hope, will help to maintain demand for zero-emission vehicles."

TAX ADVANTAGES REMAIN

The changes to the electric car grant, which were introduced without warning, have attracted widespread criticism from the fleet industry (*Fleet News,* March 25).

Fleet trade and training body, the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), labelled it "too soon" to cut support for EVs.

Vauxhall Vivaro-e Life Edition models have seen price cuts of more than £2,000

Nick Hardy, sales director at Ogilvie Fleet, was not surprised by the changes, but told *Fleet News* it was "unbelievable" to give so little notice.

"Not surprisingly, those manufacturers that were close to the new limit have taken the opportunity to 're-price' some of their cars and get them back to a more sensible point," he said.

However, he added: "Some of that has been funded by lessening discounts so the net cost of the metal (before the grant) hasn't necessarily altered. Drivers won't complain though, as the P11D has also come down as a result."

Hardy believes financial support is still key and will be needed for some time yet, but low benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax rates are driving an "ever-increasing" fleet demand for EVs.

"We haven't seen any form of reduction in the demand of EVs, though there has, of course, been some change in the types of vehicles being asked for or allowed," he said.

"A number of the cars that were in the £35,000-£50,000 bracket have fallen off many client's policies now, especially those nearer to £50,000."

By allowing drivers to contribute or upgrade, however, Ogilvie Fleet reported that those EVs priced above the new threshold are still in demand as – even with a contribution from the employee – the net cost to the driver is far lower than taking a petrol or diesel equivalent.

Dylan Setterfield, head of forecast strategy at Cap HPI, says that there are still "multiple incentives" in place for fleets.

He believes the scale of the capital allowances and Class 1A National

Nissan has cut prices for the 40kWh and 62kWh Leaf despite the former still qualifying for the grant

Insurance Contributions (NICs) benefits mean most companies will still want their drivers to be able to take advantage of low BIK rates and are likely to adjust company car bandings to compensate for vehicles which now fall outside the PiCG subsidy.

"Although many of those who were considering quotes before March 18 will now be back to square one, there is probably less impact towards the previous threshold of the £50,000 list price as monthly lease rental bandings will tend to be wider," he said.

LIST PRICE 'VACUUM'

Setterfield suggests it is possible the grant changes will result in a list price 'vacuum' between £35,000 and £40,000 in the same way that one developed between £50,000 and £55,000 under the previous subsidy.

"At the other end of the price bracket, we expect some list price inflation for those vehicles which were previously constrained by the £50,000 limit and this could benefit used values in a small number of cases," he said.

"The biggest factor that is likely to influence used car supply and demand in the future is the availability of supply of new cars.

"Manufacturers may be tempted to divert supply to other, more profitable markets which are applying larger and increasing incentives, rather than build vehicles for the UK market."

However, he says that, although the reduced speed of adoption would be expected to have a positive impact on used values due to reduced supply, used car demand in this situation is also stimulated by the new car demand. "More cars on the road drive increased awareness and also fuel increases in used car demand," he explained.

"The situation is complex and further changes can be expected in March 2022, but our current expectation is that there is no overriding impact on used values in either direction.

"We expect BEVs to continue to reduce in price by more than internal combustion engine cars, but to retain a significant premium for the foreseeable future, partly due to the intrinsic value of the battery itself."

Setterfield says there will be a lot of variation on an individual model level, but, broadly, he sees the impact on used values as a result of the PiCG changes as neutral.

> "MANUFACTURERS MAY BE TEMPTED TO DIVERT SUPPLY TO OTHER, MORE PROFITABLE MARKETS (AWAY FROM THE UK)"
>
> **DYLAN SETTERFIELD, CAP HPI**

Overnight PiCG cut gave businesses and individuals no time to react

ASHLEY BARNETT,
HEAD OF CONSULTANCY AT LEX AUTOLEASE

The Government's £582 million funding commitment until 2023 to support the uptake of plug-in vehicles is an important step along the Road to Zero.

Naturally, we expected policymakers to review the grants available as confidence in electric vehicles (EVs) continues to rise, but the timing of the recent grant changes caught the industry by surprise and could put the brakes on the momentum gathered in recent months – we won't see the full impact for around three months.

While the overnight reduction from £50,000 to £35,000 still meant lower range entry-level models from many manufacturers would continue to qualify for a subsidy, the changes did impact vehicles with bigger batteries and longer ranges.

The greatest challenge of the change in subsidy criteria is the fact that it was made with immediate effect, which, although understandable because of the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles' (OZEV) previous experience resulting in a flood of applications, it has meant that companies/people whose order wasn't with the manufacturer on the day have lost out.

There would have been a significant number of vehicles in the quote/order process that will now miss out on Government grants, resulting in either cost implications for businesses across the UK or people not progressing with an EV order and opting for alternative technology or holding back the purchase decision.

It has, however, been encouraging to see manufacturers respond positively and promptly to the announcement and review their pricing models.

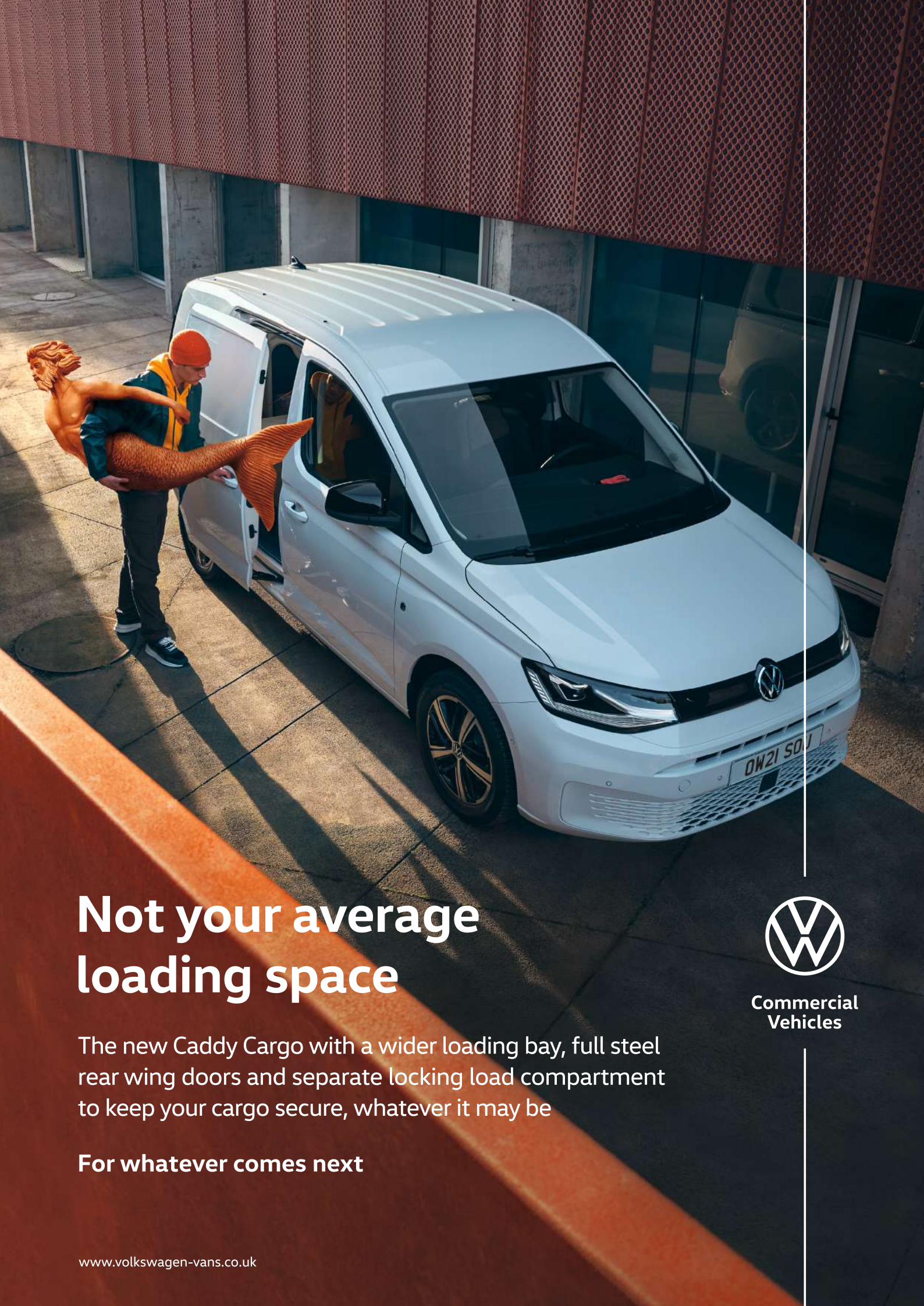
We've already seen Škoda, Hyundai, Peugeot, Vauxhall and Volkswagen change the pricing of their models to meet the revised £35,000 threshold.

Ultimately, the more choice drivers have with longer-range vehicles will help to turn the electrification dial.

Government departments and industry bodies need to continue to work together to maximise the opportunities to encourage EV uptake and reassure manufacturers that the UK is leading the EV charge.

Maybe a regular temperature check on the future of the grant from OZEV would be useful to enable people to plan replacements and enable businesses to adjust systems accordingly.

Now is the time for sustained investment as we accelerate along the Road to Zero.



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Octopus launches Electric Dreams in bid to shake up the sal/sac market

Purplebricks and Huel are among companies to have already joined the fledgling scheme

By Gareth Roberts

Octopus Electric Vehicles is promising to shake-up the salary sacrifice market with the launch of a new electric car leasing service, Electric Dreams.

So far, 15 companies are already live on the Electric Dreams scheme, including Huel and Purplebricks, making it available to 1,491 employees across the UK.

Interest is reportedly high, although the number of cars currently funded is still low – about 30 – with the scheme having only just launched.

However, Fiona Howarth, chief executive officer at Octopus Electric Vehicles, believes it can bring something new to the market.

She told *Fleet News:* "We want to make a big difference and we want to help a lot of people get into electric cars. If we're not doing it in high volumes, we're not doing it right."

There is no risk fleet target for the fledgling business, but Howarth would expect to be knocking on the door of the FN50, with 500-plus cars being funded, within the next couple of years.

The company, which launched in 2018, has been acting as a broker for several leasing companies, allowing it to bundle other services the wider business offered, such as energy and charging infrastructure.

It originally launched its Go Green Car Scheme, in May 2020, a salary sacrifice product provided through LeasePlan.

However, being a broker was making it difficult for Octopus to really develop its offering further, according to Howarth.

"I feel we can bring something new to the market by challenging some of the existing models and the way things have traditionally been done," she said.

"My ambition is to make it as easy as possible for individuals and businesses to make that switch to electric."

In order to do that, she says it is important to understand where those "pain points" are for customers and then to find solutions for them.

"The obvious one is just having dedicated experts that understand the vehicles and know about charging," explained Howarth.

That helped shaped its initial offering to customers but, as Octopus's understanding of the market developed, Howarth recognised that funding methods, such as salary sacrifice, were "not straightforward".

"They're relatively challenging for some businesses to deliver and that complexity comes from there being two levels of service," she said.

"You've got the B2B (business-to-business) part and then the employee themselves, and what we found was providers were taking a tech approach to it."

For Howarth, there was not the level of customer focus, which she says is part of the DNA at Octopus.

Octopus Energy has more than 50,000 Trust Pilot reviews with a score of 4.8 out of five. "It's phenomenally high," said Howarth.

"Cars are complicated, and leasing is not straightforward. We found it challenging to bring that Octopus side into the leasing company when we've been partnering with other organisations."

The move away from broker to leasing company, Howarth explains, will allow Octopus to control the whole process.

Partners including Close Brothers and Lloyd Latchford will provide financing and insurance services respectively.

Electric Dreams is being made available to all businesses, but particularly those with fewer than 1,000 employees which may struggle to access similar schemes.

Octopus Electric Vehicles will continue to offer business contract hire leasing packages as a broker.

Howarth concluded: "We are thrilled to see so many customers offering our service to their employees already and the signs are that many more will sign-up in 2021."

> "I FEEL WE CAN BRING SOMETHING NEW TO THE MARKET BY CHALLENGING SOME OF THE EXISTING MODELS"
>
> **FIONA HOWARTH, OCTOPUS ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

CAR RETAILER LAUNCHES LEASING BUSINESS

Peter Vardy Group has launched a new leasing division, Peter Vardy Leasing.

Based in Motherwell, Scotland, the brokerage has become a BVRLA Leasing Broker Member.

The new 'any make, any model' online leasing platform is billed as the business's "latest start up", Peter Vardy, group CEO, explained.

"As part of our 2030 strategy, our renewed vision is to be a provider of mobility solutions for everyone," he said. "Not everyone wants to own a car, so we want to be the automotive retailer who offers consumers what they want, whether that is through subscription car programmes, leasing or car sharing.

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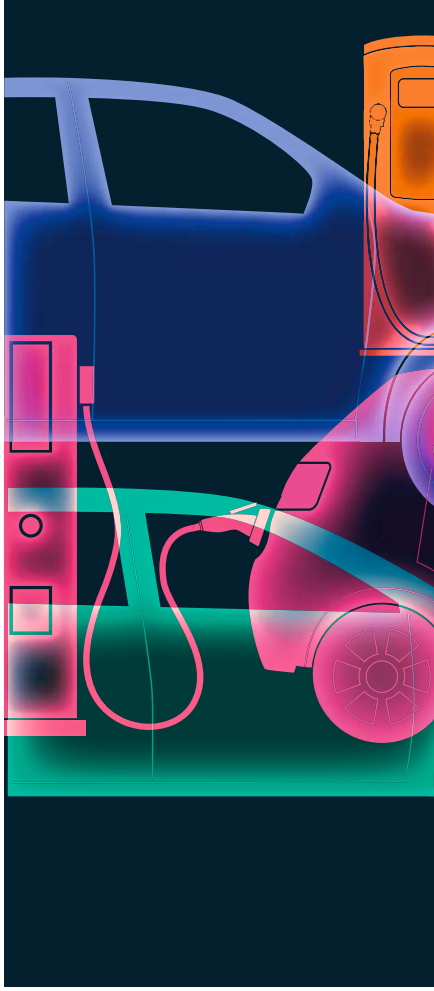
Covid-19 cements the importance of the car

OC&C's latest study suggests interest in EVs is 'unprecedented'



By Gareth Roberts

The company car market is predicted to grow significantly after new research reported a three-fold increase in drivers wanting to source their next vehicle through their employer.

The findings, from the OC&C Speedometer *'Battery Late Than Never'* report, also suggest that Covid-19 has helped cement the importance of a car, despite people driving less. More than two-in-five drivers (42%) said the pandemic has increased their belief that a car is essential.

It is not just drivers who see the car as essential either – the number of non-drivers who expect to own in the future has risen by 21% in the UK.

200%
increase in drivers sourcing their next car through their employer

55.3%
of new cars registered to fleet and business in March

57%
of drivers considering a fully electric car

The global report was published last week and is a follow-up to a 2019 study. It tracks how trends in consumer attitudes and behaviours toward vehicles and their mobility needs have changed.

Looking at UK-specific data, it shows that just 2% of consumers expected to source their next car through their employer in 2019, but, three years later, that has risen three-fold to 6% – a 200% uplift.

COMPANY CAR MARKET

It is a positive outlook for a sector which has been in decline for the past few years. The most recent figures, published by HMRC in September 2020, showed that the number of people paying company car tax had again fallen substantially, with HMRC reporting 30,000 fewer people receiving the benefit.

The benefit-in-kind (BIK) statistics, published by HMRC, showed there were 870,000 company car drivers in 2018-19 – a massive 30,000 year-on-year decline (fleetnews.co.uk, September 30, 2020).

The figures suggested that the number of employees receiving the benefit had fallen by some 90,000 in the past five years, from 960,000 in 2015/16.

The introduction of a new zero percentage tax rate for a pure electric company car in April 2020, along with lower rates for hybrids, however, has led many to predict a brighter future for the benefit.

The latest new car registration figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) highlight the relative strength of the sector (fleetnews.co.uk, April 6).

The number of new company cars registered to fleet and business was up 28.3% last month, compared with March 2020 (the month the pandemic hit), with 157,114 vehicles registered, an increase of 34,686 vehicles.

Overall, there were 283,964 new car registrations, including private sales, an 11.5% increase on the 254,684 vehicles registered in March 2020. Fleet and business registrations accounted for 55.3% market share in the month.

Year-to-date figures from the SMMT, however, show that fleet and business new car registrations are still 6.4% down on where they were after the first three months of 2020.

So far, 239,349 new company cars have been registered to fleet and business, compared with the 255,567 vehicles registered in the first quarter of 2020.

Jon Lawes, managing director of Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions (HCVS), says the latest figures highlighted how the industry has adapted to deliver in a Covid-safe environment.

"We've seen this first-hand, with 2020 being a record year for HCVS," explained Lawes. "Our leasing fleet grew by more than 19% on the previous year against a backdrop of a declining vehicle leasing market."

APPETITE FOR EVs

OC&C says the proportion of drivers considering an electric vehicle (EV) is "unprecedented" and is likely to translate into a fast acceleration in EV adoption.

Globally, more than 50% of drivers considered a hybrid when they last changed their car, and more than 40% report they will consider a pure EV next time.

The UK leads the West in EVs in the survey, with 57% of UK drivers considering fully electric for their next vehicle versus 45% in Germany and the US.

In the UK, new BIK tax rates will be persuading some to make the switch to a plug-in car, but the OC&C study shows range and tech improvements (38%), concerns about the environment (39%), Government regulation changes (36%) and better availability of charge points (35%) are the main drivers for consumers.

The OC&C data reflects the experience of leasing companies, which have reported a growing number of company car drivers choosing an EV.

Tusker, for example, has a risk fleet of approximately 20,000 cars and, while just one-in-33 (3%) were pure electric in 2019, it has since increased to one-in-five (20%).

Half of the leasing company's orders in 2020 were for pure electric cars. Hybrid vehicles, both plug-in and mild, accounted for 20% of its new vehicle orders, with petrol and diesel responsible for less than a third (30%) (fleetnews.co.uk, February 1).

In fact, zero-emissions-capable cars, including electric, hybrid and fuel cell models, now account for one-in-three of the available models in the UK, according to the SMMT.

BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

Barriers to adoption have shifted, with the OC&C report suggesting the percentage of people citing access to public charging infrastructure as an issue has fallen dramatically.

In 2019, it said that 64% of respondents in the UK saw it as a barrier to adoption; the latest study reports that it has fallen by 14 percentage points to half (50%).

An EV's range, while still the number one concern, is also seen as less of a barrier, falling seven percentage points, from 62% to 55% over the same period.

Meanwhile, more drivers see vehicle cost as a barrier, with more than half of respondents (51%) highlighting it as issue, compared with 49% in 2019.

The cost of electricity saw the greatest swing, with more than a quarter of respondents (29%) citing it as a barrier compared with 19% in

BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

50%
say public charging infrastructure is a barrier – down from 64% in 2019

55%
say range is a barrier – down from 62% in 2019

51%
say vehicle cost is a barrier – up from 49% in 2019

29%
say the cost of electricity is a barrier – up from 19% in 2019

2019 – a 10 percentage point uplift.

The Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) says the lack of an effective national strategy for creating kerbside charging infrastructure is emerging as the biggest barrier to adoption of EVs by businesses.

OC&C's study, however, suggests access to a charge point close to home or at the driver's property is becoming less of an issue for UK consumers, with 39% citing it as issue in the most recent survey, compared with 44% in 2019.

The current Government approach to install kerbside charging means 75% of the cost is met by a national fund and 25% is paid by local authorities. AFP chair Paul Hollick believes the strategy is not working.

He said: "We have national fleets who are AFP members and want to go 100% EV as soon as possible. The stumbling block they face is that nationally, around four-out-of-10 people live in apartments or terraced houses and don't have access to on-street parking.

"OUR LEASING FLEET GREW BY MORE THAN 19% ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR"

JON LAWES, HITACHI CAPITAL VEHICLE SOLUTIONS

"That means they are reliant on local authorities to install street charging facilities but, as you'd expect, the impetus and ability to do so varies massively from area to area."

A kerbside charger costs around £2,500 to install, meaning local government needs to find £600 per unit. In the wake of the pandemic, Hollick says many simply don't have the money, even if there is the will (see page 24).

CAR CLUB POTENTIAL

Exclusive access to a car still remains vital to 82% of drivers, according to the OC&C report, with most expressing concerns around accessibility, storage and privacy as key to their reluctance to consider co-ownership or access models.

However, the importance of exclusivity is starting to wane for a forward-thinking minority, with 13% of UK drivers happy to consider mobility solutions as an alternative to having their own car, be it car-sharing solutions, taxis or even short-term rental – a four percentage point increase on 2019.

OC&C says this reflects lower car usage in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, environmental and cost concerns, while the development of models such as Zip Car and Drover are also driving changes in attitude.

Consumers also continue to see a car as essential to travel, according to the report. The percentage of drivers who see a car as essential has remained stable between 80-90% since 2019. This is true even among the young; Gen Y and Gen Z drivers still care about having cars and driving, it suggests.

In fact, they have become more dependent on cars than they were. The percentage of 18-29-year-olds disagreeing that a car is essential has fallen from 11% to 5%.

MAR

17

UBER DRIVERS TO RECEIVE MINIMUM WAGE, PENSION AND HOLIDAY PAY

Uber has confirmed it will pay its drivers a guaranteed minimum wage, offer holiday pay and provide pensions following a court ruling in February.

18

ELECTRIC CAR GRANT CUT TO £2,500 AND ELIGIBILITY CHANGED

MOST COMMENTED

The Government announced a shock cut to the electric car grant, reducing it from £3,000 to £2,500 and excluding models that cost more than £35,000.

19

BMW i4 TO LAUNCH THREE MONTHS EARLY

The i4 will join the brand's existing i3, iX3 and upcoming iX SUV in 2021, alongside the Mini Electric.

23

JAGUAR LAND ROVER ACCUSED OF EMISSIONS CHEATING

Law firm Leigh Day has claimed that Jaguar Land Rover may have used emissions-cheating devices on a number of its diesel engines. The manufacturer denies the allegation.

24

POST-PANDEMIC FLEET VEHICLE 'FUNDING SHIFT'

Businesses are fundamentally changing the way they fund their vehicles due to the impact of Covid-19 and fleet electrification, says ARI.

25

FORD MONDEO TO BE PHASED OUT IN 2022

Ford has announced that it will stop producing the iconic Mondeo at the end of March next year as a result of changing consumer preferences.

30

FLEET TAX MANIFESTO TO BE LAUNCHED BY AFP

The Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) is launching a tax manifesto that will guide future campaigning of the trade and training body.

31

KIA EV6 PRICED FROM £40,895

The crossover-style car will spearhead a new range of electric models from the brand, each wearing the 'EV' moniker. Six are expected to launch by 2027.

APR

1

RIVUS FLEET SOLUTIONS OWNER AURELIUS BUYS AUTORESTORE

MOST SHARED

The owner of Rivus Fleet Solutions, Aurelius, has bought AutoRestore from Belron International for an undisclosed sum.

2

ELECTRIC COMPANY CAR AND VAN FUEL RATE 'SHORT-CHANGES' DRIVERS

MOST READ

Electric company car and van drivers are unable to meet fuel costs using the Government's advisory electricity rate (AER), according to analysis by TMC.

6

MARK HAWKINS BECOMES NEW HEAD OF FLEET AT RENAULT

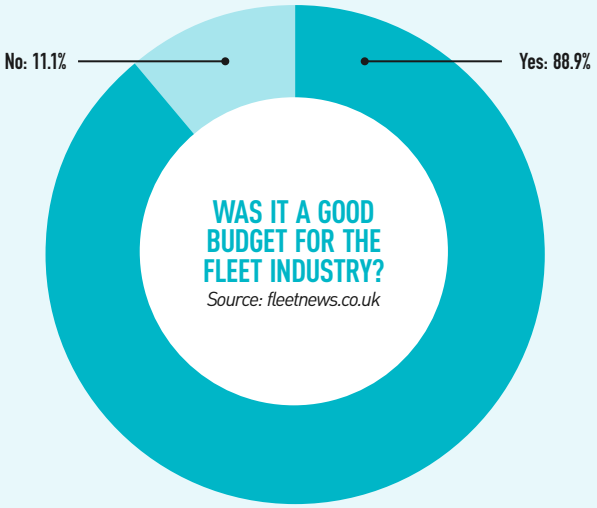
Renault has named Mark Hawkins as its new head of fleet, replacing Mark Dickens who becomes managing director of Elexent, a Renault-owned firm providing companies with electric vehicle charging solutions.

12

CITROËN UNVEILS C5 X AHEAD OF 2022 LAUNCH

The new model, which combines the attributes of large saloon, estate and SUV, is expected to cost from £27,000 when it goes on sale next year.

FLEET NEWS POLL



FLEET NEWS VIEW:

Our poll shows that the overwhelming majority of fleets – almost nine out of 10 – viewed last month's Budget as 'good' for the fleet industry. A freeze in fuel duty and tax relief from a new super-deduction allowance for fleets investing in vans and trucks were among the Chancellor's announcements. However, long-term visibility of company car rates beyond 2025 would have given decision-makers the clarity they need to invest now.

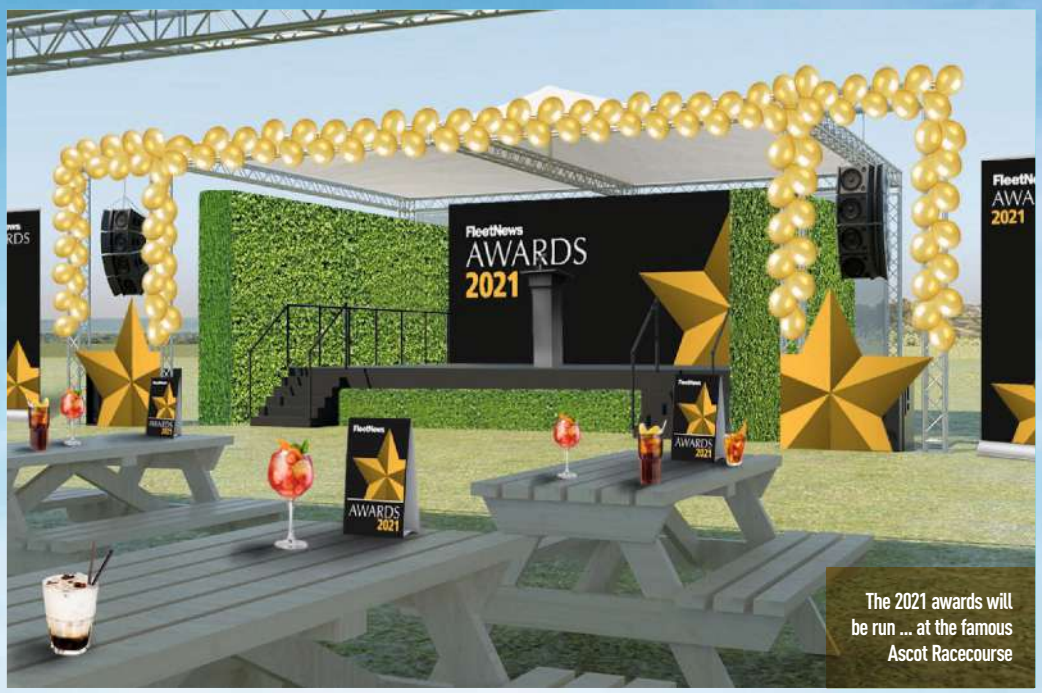
THIS ISSUE'S POLL: DO YOU HAVE A DASHCAM IN YOUR VEHICLE?

Fleet News Awards Summer Garden Party 2021

See who will be 'first past the post' as awards switch to racecourse venue

WHEN:
Tuesday, July 6

WHERE:
Ascot Racecourse



The 2021 awards will be run ... at the famous Ascot Racecourse

By Stephen Briers

The Fleet News Awards is going to Ascot! For 2021, we are moving from our usual home at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London to host an exciting summer party at Ascot Racecourse where guests can celebrate the winners and network in safe surroundings.

The Fleet News Awards 2020 was the last major industry dinner before the first Covid lockdown and the 2021 awards look set to become the first major industry event following the third lockdown.

Ascot will provide the perfect setting for a summer celebration and recognition of fleet excellence. In a break with tradition, the dress code will also change from the traditional black tie to casual attire more befitting a garden party.

The event will be hosted on the Furlong Club Lawn, located in front of the grandstand, which overlooks the racetrack. Guests will arrive from midday on July 6, with the afternoon packed with entertainment, the awards presentation, a delicious five-star BBQ menu and a few extra surprises. It will come to a close around 18:30.

The Fleet News Awards 2021 will incorporate the Commercial Fleet Awards for the first time to create an unparalleled jamboree, honouring and recognising excellence across every part of the fleet sector from car to van to truck.

Stephen Briers, editor-in-chief of *Fleet News*, said: "During the coronavirus pandemic, we had a chance to reflect and review our awards proposition for 2021. We considered returning to the Grosvenor, but we believe this summer garden party will be a brilliant alternative, offering guests an afternoon of networking and a chance to meet old friends and make new acquaintances in a relaxed environment.

"For many guests, the Fleet News Awards is their industry highlight of the year and we're delighted to be able to host the 2021 ceremony live and in person."

To book your place at the Fleet News Awards Summer Garden Party, please email Michaela.brock@bauermedia.co.uk

IN THEIR WORDS...

"As a venue, Ascot is as versatile as it is inspirational. We are proud to provide a safe environment for any event, guaranteeing an abundance of flexible space in which to host a vast array of business and social occasions while abiding by social distancing regulations and other Government guidelines."

Road user charging: **the price of zero emissions?**

The switch away from petrol and diesel cars could cost the Government around £40 billion in lost taxation. Some experts believe the time is coming for national road pricing to plug that shortfall. *Andrew Ryan* reports

The shift to zero emission motoring is good for the environment, but not so good for Government revenues.

In 2018-2019, road vehicles raised approximately £40 billion in taxation: 6.3% of total Government revenue.

This was made up of £28bn in fuel duty, £5.7bn VAT on fuel and £6.5bn in vehicle excise duty (VED). This is equivalent to £1,000 per licensed vehicle per year or 12p per mile.

The move towards zero emission electric vehicles (EVs) – hastened by the Government's ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030 – threatens to create a funding black hole.

EVs are currently not subject to any fuel duty or VED. The only tax is VAT on electricity which, for many, is charged at the domestic fuel rate of 5%.

Effectively, if the same vehicle usage rates are assumed, this is equivalent to £60 per year or less than a penny per mile in tax revenue.

Government sources have recently suggested Chancellor Rishi Sunak is considering replacing fuel duty and VED with a new road pricing regime in order to tackle this potential shortfall.

This is not a new concept with the Smeed Report of 1964 recommending the implementation of targeted congestion charges in densely populated urban areas.

The UK's first congestion fee came into effect in 2002 when Durham County Council introduced a £2 charge to vehicular access into part of the city centre.

This has now grown to around 25 schemes in the UK, including London's congestion charge and

ultra-low emission vehicle zone, as well as the M6 Toll Road. But the previous attempt to introduce a national scheme wilted in the face of public opposition.

The Labour government of 1997 to 2010 looked at national road pricing in some detail and the then transport secretary Alistair Darling proposed a scheme in which every vehicle would be installed with satellite tracking.

The device would calculate individual road charges varying from 2p per mile to £1.34ppm dependent on location and time of day.

PUBLIC OPPOSITION

However, the scheme was abandoned in the face of strong public opposition with more than 1.8 million people signing an online petition against the proposal.

The Conservative Party has tended to oppose national road pricing and has not spoken positively of the idea while in government over the past decade, but, in policy circles, the debate never entirely went away.

Recently, there has been renewed interest in the idea, partly because of the drop in revenue the Government is facing, but also because local and national governments are having to tackle poor air quality in towns and cities. There is also the need to tackle congestion and its knock-on impacts.

Together, these factors have created a climate in which some sort of pricing for road use may not only be possible, but acceptable in a way it was not just more than a decade ago.

A survey carried out by Ipsos-Mori in September last year found 62% of people supported the introduction of schemes involving charging motorists a fee for driving in and around towns and city centres if they are designed to reduce traffic congestion and improve the local environment, for example, by reducing emissions or to raise revenue to invest in transport.

"This has not always been the case," says Ben Marshall, research director for transport and infrastructure at Ipsos-Mori.

"A survey we did in 2007 using the exact same question found higher levels of opposition than support."

He says current levels of support for road pricing are, however, far from rigid. "They fall to 39% if it is suggested the revenues collected are used to benefit the road user in the form of lower road tax," adds Marshall.

"Conversely, while 21% oppose schemes in principle, this drops to 15% if charges are higher for more polluting vehicles and just 14% if schemes are used to improve air quality.

"Advocates of road pricing ought to benefit from this more fertile ground. Road pricing might be inevitable, but if it is to avoid becoming a poll tax on wheels, it needs to make sense to the public emotionally as well as rationally.

"This means solving more than a Treasury problem, it means delivering tangible social benefits as well as fiscal ones."

The British Vehicle Rental & Leasing Association (BVRLA) says the appetite for an appropriate road pricing regime has also risen considerably among its members, while the rapid uptake of EVs and the impact of Covid-19 on travel patterns have shifted perceptions of how the future of vehicle taxation needs to work.

PRICING INQUIRY

There are signs that road pricing is gaining momentum in Government circles: the Transport Committee announced in December it would hold an inquiry into the implications of accelerating the shift to zero emissions vehicles and the potential for introducing road pricing schemes.

The inquiry will look at:

- The case for introducing some form of road pricing and the economic, fiscal, environmental and social impacts of doing so.
- Which particular road pricing or pay-as-you-drive schemes would be most appropriate for the UK context and the practicalities of implementing such schemes.
- The level of public support for road pricing and how the views of the public need to be considered in the development of any road pricing scheme.
- The lessons to be learned from other countries who are seeking to decarbonise road transport and/or utilise forms of road pricing.

The call for evidence closed at the end of February and the committee has not said when its findings will be made public.

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The timing of introducing national road pricing is also key. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) says there is a limited window in which to persuade people that exchanging the payment of VED and fuel tax for a direct charge to use the roads is fair and equitable.

This is because there will come a time when the adoption of EVs reaches a tipping point when "existing taxes are eroded to the point that we have virtually no taxes on motoring at all," says IFS.

It will be much harder for the government of the day to impose charges that will then be perceived as an increase rather than a fair exchange, it adds.

"The desire to encourage a shift to low emission cars makes it too tempting to levy low or no taxes on them," says the IFS.

"But the longer that goes on, the more revenue will be eroded and the more entrenched expectations of low taxes on motoring will become, making it ever harder to start taxing low emission motoring in whatever way the Government ultimately wants to.

"Managing that trade-off is the core long-term challenge for motoring tax policy."

FLEETS IDEAL FOR PILOTS

If the Government does make firm proposals for a national road pricing scheme, fleets are in an "ideal" position to pilot an initiative and make its broader deployment a success, says the BVRLA.

This is because they represent the majority of EV purchases and their internal combustion engine (ICE) fleet cars are younger, cleaner and more technologically advanced than the UK-wide parc.

The road pricing concept was supported by fleets in the Fleet Industry Manifesto written by *Fleet News*, BVRLA and Association of Fleet Professionals (then ACFO) in 2015.

> "IF (ROAD PRICING) IS TO AVOID BECOMING A POLL TAX ON WHEELS, IT NEEDS TO MAKE SENSE TO THE PUBLIC EMOTIONALLY"
>
> **BEN MARSHALL, IPSOS-MORI**

"Fleets have extensive knowledge of vehicle management, telematics and fully accounting for all costs associated with a vehicle," says the BVRLA.

"The BVRLA proposal of fleets pioneering any system and the slow introduction from pilots to full roll-out would allow the general public to gradually acclimatise to road pricing.

"Just as company car users and their rapid battery electric vehicle (BEV) uptake are normalising EVs, so a fleet-led approach would create national confidence and understanding around the finalised scheme."

For this to be a success, the Government would need to ensure that competition and data security laws enshrined fleets' ability to access and control the data produced by the vehicles they owned and operated, says the BVRLA.

With access to the necessary data and flexibility in approach, fleets could rapidly deploy road pricing pilots, but, without it, they would be unable to effectively manage road pricing.

The BVRLA believes the pilots should start as opt-in models which work for a specific use case such as company cars or daily rental before being made mandatory for that segment.

Fleets could be incentivised to take part in pilot programmes through reduced tax burdens for the period of the pilot.

This could be through rebates equivalent to their fuel duty and VED payments while the traditional taxation system and road pricing pilot co-exist.

"The learnings taken from across the fleet use cases could then be applied to a later vehicle parc-wide road pricing introduction," adds the BVRLA.

Whether the widespread public reaction to a formal announcement of a national road pricing scheme would reflect the positive noises being made remains to be seen, but the current momentum does suggest a proposal will be made in the not-too-distant future.

However, the Government continues to play its cards close to its chest.

"The Government is committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the transition towards zero emission road vehicles will make a vital contribution to this," says a Department for Transport spokesman.

"As we move forward with this transition, we will need to ensure that revenue from motoring taxes keeps pace with this change.

"Any changes to the tax system will be considered by the Chancellor and any further steps will be announced in due course."

RAPID CHARGING: CONVENIENCE AT A COST

Rapid charging attracts the headlines and the highest fees, but kerbside charging could provide the key to fleet EV uptake. *Andrew Ryan* reports

From the early days of battery electric vehicles (BEVs), one of their most heralded attributes has been their low fuel costs when compared with internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

This is shown through wholelife cost models with running cost calculators, such as that found at fleetnews.co.uk/car-running-costs-calculators, highlighting the potential savings.

For example, the Kee Resources-provided data shows the Hyundai Kona Electric will cost 3.47 pence per mile (ppm) to fuel. In comparison, the petrol mild-hybrid Kona 1.6h-GDi costs 9.78ppm.

Over an 80,000-mile replacement cycle, this means that running the BEV would save an organisation £5,048 in fuel costs alone.

> "CHARGING AT HOME CAN COST AS LITTLE AS A FEW PENCE PER KILOWATT HOUR"
>
> **STEVE GOODING, RAC FOUNDATION**

But, just as with an ICE car, the cost of refuelling differs, meaning fuel savings may not be as anticipated.

Research from the RAC Foundation earlier this year shows overnight charging at home can typically be done for as little as 8p per kWh, but can be as high as 69p per kWh at a public rapid charge point.

This means the fuel costs for a 100-mile journey in a 2018 Nissan Leaf could be anywhere between £2.67 and £23.

In comparison, the same journey in a 1.5-litre petrol Ford Focus would cost around £12 in fuel, while a similar Focus with a diesel engine might do it using around £10 of fuel.

"Consumers are so sensitive to the cost of filling

Computer-generated graphic showing how a BP Pulse charging hub might look

up that petrol and diesel prices are routinely displayed to the tenth of a penny," says Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation.

"Even at the extremes there is unlikely to be more than a 30% to 40% price differential between the keenest supermarket and the most expensive motorway service area.

"Not so with electricity. The cost of recharging your EV can differ dramatically with prices highly dependent on where and when you plug-in, what speed you recharge at and who is operating the facility and providing the power.

"The good news is that overnight charging at domestic rates at home can cost as little as a few pence per kilowatt hour.

"However, contrast that with the dizzying news that you could pay as much as 10 times that if you decide to 'fill up' at certain ultra-rapid charge points on the motorway network."

Consumer magazine *What Car?* has also recently released analysis of the cost of using the UK's public infrastructure (see page 24).

Among its findings were that a driver would pay £45.89 to charge an Audi E-tron from 10% to 80% capacity at an Ionity ultra-rapid charger.

However, the same charge on a domestic charger at an average night-time energy tariff of 7p per kWh would cost £4.66.

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

These varying costs mean the way employees are reimbursed for business mileage could have to change.

Instead of the 4ppm under the Government's approved electricity rate (AER), employers may have to refund the actual cost of charging.

Many organisations have policies which do not allow drivers of ICE vehicles to refuel at motorway service stations due to their price premium over other outlets and, for many BEV drivers, the occasions to use the public charging network may be limited.

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHARGING DEVICES

A further issue facing fleets whose drivers will need to rely on the public charging network is the uneven geographical distribution of charge points within the UK.

The Department for Transport (DfT) *Electric Vehicle Charging Devices Statistics* report says some UK local authorities have bid for Government funding for charging devices, while others have not.

"Most of the provision of this infrastructure has been market-led, with individual charging networks and other businesses such as hotels choosing where to install devices," says the report.

Zap-Map figures show London has the highest level of charging device provision per 100,000 of population, but is slightly below average in terms of rapid charger provision.

Scotland is above average in total devices per 100,000 and has the highest level of rapid device provision.

Public charging devices per 100,000 of population by UK country and region	
United Kingdom	31
Great Britain	32
England	31
North-east	31
North-west	19
Yorkshire and the Humber	19
East Midlands	23
West Midlands	20
East of England	21
London	69
South-east	31
South-west	28
Wales	26
Scotland	40
Northern Ireland	17

Source: Zap-Map/DfT

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Glow on charging cable for illustrative purposes only.

Several major charger suppliers are installing their equipment on street furniture such as lamps and bollards

For others, however, it will be essential as around 40% of household do not have off-street parking which means BEV drivers will not be able to have a charge point at home.

The size of the public charging network has grown enormously in recent years, but not necessarily in locations convenient for householders.

Melanie Shufflebotham, COO and co-founder of EV mapping service Zap-Map, says in 2016 there were around 5,000 chargers on the UK public network and now there are more than 22,000.

"Every month at Zap-Map we add around 1,000 chargers to our map, of which around 150 are the higher speed rapid chargers," she adds.

> "EVERY MONTH AT ZAP-MAP WE ADD AROUND 1,000 CHARGERS TO OUR MAP"
>
> **MELANIE SHUFFLEBOTHAM, ZAP-MAP**

THE RAPID INCREASE OF RAPID CHARGERS

The number of rapid (43kW or faster) chargers on the public network increased from around 250 in 2015 to around 4,000 by the end of last year, according to DfT figures.

This is due to enormous investment in this technology and the opening of new facilities such as Gridserve's first Electric Forecourt, which opened near Braintree in December.

This enables 36 EVs to be charged simultaneously with high power chargers that can deliver up to 350Kw of charge.

The site also includes a retail space including brands such as WH Smith, Costa Coffee and Post Office, as well as a waiting lounge, a children's area and exercise bikes.

Gridserve aims to open 100 similar sites over the next five years, with planning applications already submitted for sites near Norwich and Gatwick Airport.

Last month, BP Pulse announced it would expand its ultra-fast charging infrastructure across the UK with a series of new charging hubs developed in partnership with The EV Network (EVN).

The agreement is expected to deliver a significant number of new ultra-fast EV charging destinations in areas with high volumes of traffic.

Each site will have a range of ultra-fast charging bays with some becoming EV convenience and mobility hubs with food, drink and other facilities.

"Often people come to us and say 'we need more charge points, how many should there be?', but that's really the wrong question because it depends on the speed and the usage of the charge point."

Matteo di Renzi, CEO of BP Pulse, agrees. In a spotlight interview with *Fleet News* (see page 30), he says: "We should acknowledge the fact that we already have an impressive number of charge points across the country which are not utilised enough.

"If you look at our ultra-fast chargers which we believe will become the real workhorse of our fleet, their time utilisation (the amount of time someone is using them) is 15% or 16%. In terms of the amount of power they dispense in a day compared with the total power they could, it is 4% or 5%.

"There's still a lot of potential that can be extracted from the existing infrastructure. This doesn't mean we should stop investing because we still have a lot of work to do, but, when I hear that we need 400,000 charge points in the country, I have some reservations."

As well as the higher speed chargers (see green box above), the public charging network also includes lower cost and often free destination

charging – points located at sites such as supermarkets and hotels – and on-street chargers.

"Really keen early adopters of EVs were quite happy to go to the local supermarket to charge or to charge up once a week at a rapid charger, but those who have either a van or car provided to them by their employers are not so keen and need provision in place," says Shufflebotham.

"The good news is there is on-street residential charging being added in, but there's no question more needs to be done in that area."

Operators such as Chargy, Connected Kerb and Ubtricity are among the leading suppliers of on-street charging. Their units are often incorporated into existing street furniture such as street lamps and bollards.

The research by *What Car?* also shows they can cost less to use than many rapid charge points. Chargy costs 33p per kWh, while Ubitricity's pay-as-you-go product is 24p per kWh.

NO EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

The Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) says the lack of an effective national strategy for creating kerbside charging infrastructure is emerging as the biggest barrier to the adoption of BEVs by businesses.

"A lot of attention is being given to creating a network of superchargers across the UK and that is important to the viability of EVs for fleets and for everyone else but, to our mind, the issue of kerbside charging trumps everything else," says Paul Hollick, chair of AFP.

"The vast majority of EVs are charged overnight and that facility needs to be made available to everyone."

The stumbling block is the proportion of people who do not have off-street parking. "This means there are around 40% of motorists who will find it very difficult to adopt an EV, no matter the strength of incentive, such as very low benefit-in-kind (BIK) taxation, that the Government might create for them or their employer to acquire an electric car or van," adds Hollick.

"It creates real problems at a practical level."

The Government is encouraging the provision of 7kW to 22kW kerbside charging facilities through funding schemes such as the On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme, and in February committed an extra £20 million to continue this initiative into 2022.

Run in partnership with Energy Saving Trust, the scheme was founded in 2017 and has been used to date for more than 140 local authority projects, supporting nearly 4,000 charge points across the UK. It is hoped the extra funding will double that number to 8,000.

The fund will meet 75% of the cost of installing kerbside charging, with local authorities responsible for the remainder.

Research by DevicePilot has found 29% of councils have a long-term plan in place for EV charging, but there is no duty on local authorities to provide charge points and it is up to them to decide, based on local priorities, whether to do so. This is why Hollick believes the strategy is not working.

"The Government is reliant on local authorities to install street charging facilities but, as you'd expect, the impetus and ability to do so varies massively from area to area," he says.

"This leaves fleets in a position where they are having to work out which of their drivers don't have access to kerbside charging and lobby local authorities individually for the installation of chargers in specific streets.

"This is proving time-consuming and not particularly effective. It is just not really working as a system and is proving to be a barrier for fleets.

"What we really need is for the Department of Transport to grasp the nettle and create a structured national programme for kerbside charging on as many streets as possible by the end of the decade."

PUBLIC CHARGING POINTS COSTS

Network and tariff	Monthly fee	Charge fee	Cost per unit	Total cost*
Source London Flexi 7.4kW**	n/a	n/a	7.3p/min	£40.66
Source London Flexi 22kW**	n/a	n/a	13.3p/min	£38.79
Ionity 350kW	n/a	n/a	69p/kWh	£35.74
Source London PAYG 7.4kW	n/a	n/a	8.4p/min	£35.28
Source London Full 7.4kW	£4.00	n/a	5p/min	£25.00
Source London PAYG 22kW	n/a	n/a	15.7p/min	£22.18
BP Pulse Subs 150kW	£7.85	n/a	27p/kWh	£21.84
BP Pulse PAYG 150kW	n/a	n/a	42p/kWh	£21.76
BP Pulse PAYG Contactless 150kW	n/a	n/a	42p/kWh	£21.76
Shell Recharge 43kW, 50kW	n/a	n/a	39p/kWh	£20.20
ESB subs London 50kW	£4.99	n/a	28p/kWh	£19.49
Source London Full 22kW	£4.00	n/a	10.9p/min	£19.40
Osprey 22kW to 50kW	n/a	n/a	36p/kWh	£18.65
Instavolt 50kW	n/a	n/a	35p/kWh	£18.13
Geniepoint London 43kW, 50kW	n/a	n/a	35p/kWh	£18.13
Geniepoint Rapid 43kW, 50kW	n/a	n/a	35p/kWh	£18.13
Geniepoint 7kW, 22kW	n/a	N/a	35p/kWh	£18.13
Char.gy PAYG 7kW	n/a	n/a	33p/kWh	£17.09
Ubitricity Membership 7.4kW	£7.99	19p	16p/kWh	£16.57
ESB Contactless London 50kW	n/a	50p	30p/kWh	£16.04
BP Pulse subs 50kW	£7.85	n/a	15p/kWh	£15.62
BP Pulse Contactless 50kW	N/a	n/a	30p/kWh	£15.54
Ecotricity 43kW, 50kW	n/a	n/a	30p/kWh	£15.54
ESB PAYG London 50kW	n/a	N/a	30p/kWh	£15.54
BP Pulse subs 7kW	£7.85	n/a	12p/kWh	£14.07
BP Pulse PAYG 50kW	n/a	n/a	25p/kWh	£12.95
Ubitricity PAYG 7.4kW	n/a	n/a	24p/kWh	£12.43
Pod Point 43kW, 50kW	n/a	n/a	23p/kWh	£11.91
BP Pulse PAYG 7kW	N/a	n/a	18p/kWh	£9.32

*Total cost for a 10-80% charge for a BMW ix3 with an 80kW battery.

**£10 sign-up fee, the cost per minute on 7.4kW chargers is capped at four hours between 8pm and 7am, making overnight charging cheaper

Source: What Car?

"TO OUR MIND, THE ISSUE OF KERBSIDE CHARGING TRUMPS EVERYTHING ELSE"

PAUL HOLLICK, AFP

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Charity begins at home(s) by keeping a close eye on vehicle costs

Telematics monitoring and targeted driver solutions help Paul Ayris to halve incident rates and damage costs over 12 months. *Stephen Briers* reports

Vehicles are in Paul Ayris's blood. His father owned HGVs so since a young age he has been around the yard environment.

It was no surprise, then, when he entered the haulage sector, working for several businesses before setting up his own company.

"When it's your money, that really focuses your mind on cost savings," Ayris says. It was the ideal foundation for a career in fleet management.

The move from haulage to fleet began with a four-month contract managing a fleet of 120 vans for LiveWest. As the housing association entered a growth phase, bringing many outsourced projects in-house, Ayris was asked to be part of the journey.

That was eight years ago.

Following a merger with another housing association two years ago, the fleet has grown to 383 light commercial vehicles (LCVs), from car-derived vans to 3.5-tonne panel vans, including some tail-lift tippers.

All are purchased outright, giving the organisation the same level of flexibility and control it enjoys across its business interests.

Paul Ayris (centre right) with LiveWest vans and drivers

"We looked into leasing and we continue to look at it, but due to the nature of our business – we are, essentially, a charity – we can borrow money at good rates," Ayris says.

However, a pilot of electric car-derived vans scheduled for early summer will take advantage of leasing due to the added complexity and risk. This will be supporting by investment in home chargers for drivers, as vans do not return to base.

"We have already trialled hybrid, but didn't get on with it because three-quarters of the time, the van was driving on petrol – it didn't fit our work profile," says Ayris. "So, we'll go from diesel straight to full electric. There is too much hang up on range – our team members do 40 miles, so they only have to charge twice a week for 200 miles. We can build that time into their working week or give them a charger at home."

LiveWest, which manages more than 38,000 properties in the south-west, from Gloucestershire to the Isles of Scilly, operates a five-year replacement cycle, although some vehicles have been on extension due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have a culture of ensuring drivers look after the assets so those vehicles that are getting to five years are still in good condition," Ayris says. "We didn't sell anything last year and used those vehicles for extra work instead of hiring. We depreciate over five years, so we only have the cost of running the vans now."

Such is their condition that Ayris is now considering lengthening the schedule to six years, while continuing to depreciate over five.

"We feel that six is nearer the mark for our vehicles and their mileage," he says. "It's a cost-effective solution compared with hiring and we know the vehicles are racked out for our needs."

The cultural change has been underpinned by Fleet Service GB (FSGB), headed by *Fleet News* Hall of Famer Geoffrey Bray and son Marcus. LiveWest started working with the Brays two years ago which has helped to drive through an improved asset and driver management process.

"We realised when we were sending five-year-old vans to auction that they were getting really good money because of their condition, yet we were replacing them with £20,000 new vans," Ayris says. "So, we knew even before Covid that there was an opportunity to stretch to six years.

"I have a forecaster I created using data from Fleet Service which I update every quarter. It factors in condition, repair costs, how often it has visited a garage, is there any underlying fault and mileage which helps to identify the vehicles to keep. The fact we buy means we can be agile in our decision-making."

Annual mileage averages 13,000 but many vans only do around 8,000 a year. Careful work scheduling and employment decisions mean the business is often able to deploy people close to home which both reduces mileage and improves the call-out service.

Mileage management is a key focus for LiveWest, which largely operates on a peninsula, with water to the north, south and west and with three large national parks to navigate. Consequently, it is always looking for new, more efficient, ways to operate.

The latest trial is an app that allows a resident to show a problem, say with their boiler, on their phone which enables the plumber or engineer to diagnose remotely and potentially suggest an easy fix rather than travelling to the location ➲

maybe just to press a reset button.

Lower mileage means less maintenance and improved vehicle condition, both of which are supported by the work of FSGB.

Every LiveWest driver sits in the Achieve Driver Management programme which proactively measures their performance against a range of methods including points on driving licences, speeding, parking charges and crashes.

Drivers can improve their record through a range of best practice parameters including completing four online 'how to' e-learning programmes a year, such as driving on rural roads, reversing and manoeuvring.

On FSGB's recommendation, LiveWest introduced driver eyesight checks. As a result, it identified some weaknesses and implemented corrective actions. Eyesight checks are now mandatory every two years, paid for by the company.

Achieve includes an app to help drivers to carry out daily vehicle inspections, submitting information on mileage, condition and damage, with photos, via a FSGB portal. Everything sits on a fleet dashboard which gives the company a real-time overview of fleet activity, while drivers can monitor their performance on the app.

"The first thing I do in the morning is open up my FSGB screen and my telematics screen and they tell me how my fleet is operating," Ayris says. "When you've got a dispersed fleet that doesn't come to the yard, you need this type of information and technology."

Through 24/7 continuous monitoring and the employment of targeted solutions, LiveWest has seen the number of driver 'events' reported via telematics significantly reduce.

Incident rates halved during a 12-month period, with at-fault accidents reduced by 40%. Driver-related damage costs also fell by 50% over the same period.

"We can see all the trends and identify the weakness which can be addressed with training or sanctions," says Ayris. "We are clear with drivers at the outset. We give them the right vehicle and equipment to do their job and show them how to use it correctly, but if they consistently fall foul of the system, then we have solutions to put in place."

While LiveWest receives instant notification about any incident via its telematics systems, drivers are required to provide their assessment 24 hours afterwards. This "allows the dust to settle", says Ayris, resulting in a "more sensible, realistic view of what happened".

For major repairs, the association has imple-

> "THE FACT WE BUY MEANS WE CAN BE AGILE IN OUR DECISION-MAKING"
>
> **PAUL AYRIS, LIVEWEST**

Working with Fleet Service GB has helped Paul Ayris to improve asset and driver management

FLEET MANAGER: Paul Ayris
TIME IN ROLE: Eight years
No OF VEHICLES: 383 vans
FUNDING METHOD: Outright purchase
OPERATING CYCLE: Five years
KEY PARTNERSHIP: Fleet Service GB

mented a recycled parts strategy with Green Parts, supported by its insurance company, which sources second-hand parts to reduce costs – for example a side door would cost £200 instead of £900 new.

The reduction in incident claims, better management of any third-party costs – controlled by FSGB – and a reduction in claims costs through the use of recycled parts has been recognised by LiveWest's insurance partner.

Over the year to March 2020, it gave the organisation a £10,000 rebate; Ayris is forecasting a £24,000 rebate in the current 12-month period.

"So, we'll be getting a £24,000 rebate and we'll only be spending around £12,000 on own-cost repairs," he says. "The strategy of taking a connected view of how we manage our road traffic collisions and how we manage the repair of the vehicle is really starting to work."

Outsourcing key elements of driver and vehicle management to Fleet Service frees up Ayris to take a holistic operational view on fleet performance and to focus on its strategic direction, with year-on-year measurements and trends analysis.

"I have more time to think about operating cycles, our manufacturer partners and the EV project, which will be the big one over the next few years," he says. "We go to tender every three years on all our projects so we can constantly review our contracts."

Freedom from the day-to-day elements of fleet management also enables him to identify new technology for trials, such as forward-facing cameras which have cut claims costs by eliminating 50-50 incidents.

LiveWest has installed 40, which will rise to 120 by the end of the year as vehicles are replaced. In some cases, the footage is used for training, educating staff about things they could do differently; for more serious incidents, the material can be shared with police to prove fault.

"If we didn't have the camera and there weren't any witnesses, it would be our word against theirs," Ayris says. "Just one incident justifies the investment."

He also looks for quick wins and scored a major success by switching from a sat-nav product to Google maps on drivers' smartphones. It saved £4 per month per vehicle.

Ayris has set out three priorities for the next 12 months, chief among them the electric vehicle pilots which begin with car-derived vans this summer and could, potentially, extend to large panel vans with partner Ford towards the end of the year.

Driver welfare will be a major focus. LiveWest has a culture of supporting its employees which has heightened over the past 12 months with people working from home. Ayris has started sending out information for toolbox talks encouraging drivers to look after themselves.

"From Highways England, I got a video of a guy doing a van check and he's asking 'do you check yourself?'," Ayris says. "The feedback was they thought it was humorous, but actually hit the point. It's a two-minute session that just makes people think a little bit.

"Driver welfare has an impact on how the vehicle is driven. If you've got someone who is wound up or thinking about issues, then they aren't going to drive that well and could have an accident."

Finally, in line with his philosophy of regularly retendering, Ayris will be carrying out telematics trials to assess how different systems perform against his current incumbent.

He will also be considering how to further develop the Fleet Service Achieve programme, particularly around analysis of individual scores. At present, for example, an e-learner would earn five points, but, if they had an accident, four would get knocked off, resulting in plus one.

Unless you drill into the score, you wouldn't see the negative, so LiveWest is now putting the achievement figures into a separate report. It hopes Achieve will, ultimately, be able to do this automatically.

"Achieve is very much ingrained into our process now," Ayris says. "We can develop it more for training purposes. We've got the 80% of people that are above the line, but now is the time to dip deeper and look at where their numbers are going up and down, and why. Achieve has been great so far, but we think we can make it even more efficient."

AYRIS ON...

...on Logistics UK Van Excellence

Four years ago, LiveWest embarked upon the then Freight Transport Association (now Logistics UK) Van Excellence programme.

It was important for Paul Ayris to show internally that he gets audited every year to a recognised standard.

"We have an organisation of around 1,500 people and there's just me in fleet," he says. "Everyone else is concentrating on mending houses and providing support so the external audit is very valuable.

"It is also a bit of prestige and means we have reached a level I am happy with, especially with my background in HGVs where regulation is tighter."

Ayris has transformed the management of the fleet over the past eight years. When he arrived, vehicle checks were occasional; he introduced daily checks. He also changed the mindset of drivers.

"For vocational/HGV drivers, driving is their role and the vehicle is their equipment," he says. "We have plumbers and electricians. But now, with telematics, we can show them that they spend a quarter of their working lives driving, so they now recognise they are also professional drivers – and it's the most dangerous part of their day."

BP Pulse aims to have UK's biggest network of ultra-fast chargers

CEO Matteo de Renzi outlines integrated energy strategy. *Andrew Ryan* reports

Matteo de Renzi is aware of the sense of responsibility that comes with being part of the BP brand

The transition of the UK's vehicle parc to electric is throwing up significant challenges to all players in the UK transport industry, whether they are vehicle manufacturer, supplier or fleet decision-maker.

Among those most challenged are the oil companies, who face a steady decline in revenue unless they can adapt to meet the demands of the changing market.

This is complicated further by the arrival of newer, innovative companies such as Instavolt and Gridserve, who have been set up specifically to offer charging solutions to the new wave of electric vehicles (EVs) without any legacy business to potentially hold them back.

However, BP – the UK's largest fuel retailer with more than 1,200 filling stations – is fighting back and has pledged to become an integrated energy company by 2030 before becoming net zero emission by 2050.

A key part of this transformation plan is its aim to build the biggest and most reliable network of ultra-fast chargers across the UK, as well as meet all charging needs for both fleets and private motorists.

"We feel a sense of responsibility that comes with the size of the business of the BP brand," says Matteo de Renzi, CEO of BP Pulse.

"If you look at the actions we are taking, we are really moving towards becoming an integrated energy company, not an international oil company."

BP made its first significant inroad in the UK's EV charging sector in 2018 when it acquired Chargemaster and its Polar network for a reported £130 million.

This gave it the UK's largest public charging network of 6,500 charge points which has since grown to around 8,000, with more than 63,000 home and workplace units also installed.

The company, which had been known as BP Chargemaster since the acquisition but was rebranded to BP Pulse in December, plans to increase this to 16,000 by 2030, including 1,400 ultra-fast chargers with a power output greater than 150MW. It aims to have 300 of these by the end of the year.

Its existing fuel forecourts have a key role to play in this expansion. "Not only do we have preferential access to the land, of course, but we can leverage from the broader BP agreements in terms of electricity," says De Renzi.

"But the most important thing is really around the user experience. Forecourts are where they are today for a reason as they come after the process of natural selection over almost 100 years.

"The fact you can go to an ultra-fast charger in a very convenient location is one of the most appreciated features of our offer.

"Users also have the opportunity to enjoy the convenience offer which is literally a few metres away and is manned 24/7. This is particularly important when you start thinking about more vulnerable customers.

> "WE ALREADY HAVE AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF CHARGE POINTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHICH ARE NOT UTILISED ENOUGH"
>
> **MATTEO DE RENZI, BP PULSE**

Convenience of charge point locations is very much in BP Pulse's favour

"Spending 10 to 15 minutes in your car behind a hotel in a dark corner is not always a great experience. You'd rather spend that time under a bright canopy where you feel safe."

CHARGING HUBS

As well as installing ultra-fast chargers on existing fuel forecourts, De Renzi says BP Pulse is also building charging hubs "mainly for fleets, but also the general public".

This initiative began with a partnership with Uber in London which saw a hub open in Park Lane.

Its location was determined using data from the Uber platform to understand where drivers want to be when they need to charge, says De Renzi.

"A few other hubs will follow in London and in the rest of the country," he adds. "This is a great model because it allows us to offer a solution for a problem that exists – a lack of ultra-fast charging infrastructure in specific locations – but, equally, it's great for us because it gives us an almost guaranteed demand from day one.

"This is one of the biggest challenges we have in building infrastructure ahead of the curve because, although demand is ramping up very fast, today the assets are still under-utilised.

"We are extending this model to other big mobility providers and other fleets will also be able to benefit from these big charging hubs with preferential access and rates."

ORGANISATION: BP Pulse
CEO: Matteo de Renzi
NUMBER OF PUBLIC CHARGE POINTS: 8,000
NUMBER OF BP FUEL STATIONS: 1,200
KEY FLEET PRODUCTS: Home, workplace and public charging solutions

BP Pulse, which had the most used public charging network in the UK last year, powering around 50 million miles, has also made £2m available to upgrade and replace existing charge points across the country.

It has already agreed more than £400,000 in infrastructure investment to replace more than 50 legacy charge points which are typically owned by local authorities and were originally installed with Government grant funding.

BP Pulse has also signed an exclusive memorandum of understanding (MOU) with American company FreeWire Technologies to deploy its Boost Charger in the UK.

This technology features a 160kWh lithium-ion battery which charges from a low-power grid connection and is then able to act as an ultra-fast EV charger when needed.

"FreeWire is one of those beautiful products which is very easy to explain, but extremely difficult to put together," says De Renzi.

"It allows charging up to 120kW, which is almost the same you could experience on an ultra-fast charger on the rest of our network, but without the need of a very complex and expensive high voltage connection.

"This means that even the more rural areas, or the areas where it would be difficult to deliver high power to, will be able to enjoy their own ultra-fast charging points with a non-invasive solution."

The first FreeWire charge point has been installed outside BP Pulse's office in Milton Keynes although it is not open to the general public yet.

The company aims to have the first unit installed and available to the public in Q3 or Q4 this year and then significantly ramp up provision of the solution from 2022 onwards.

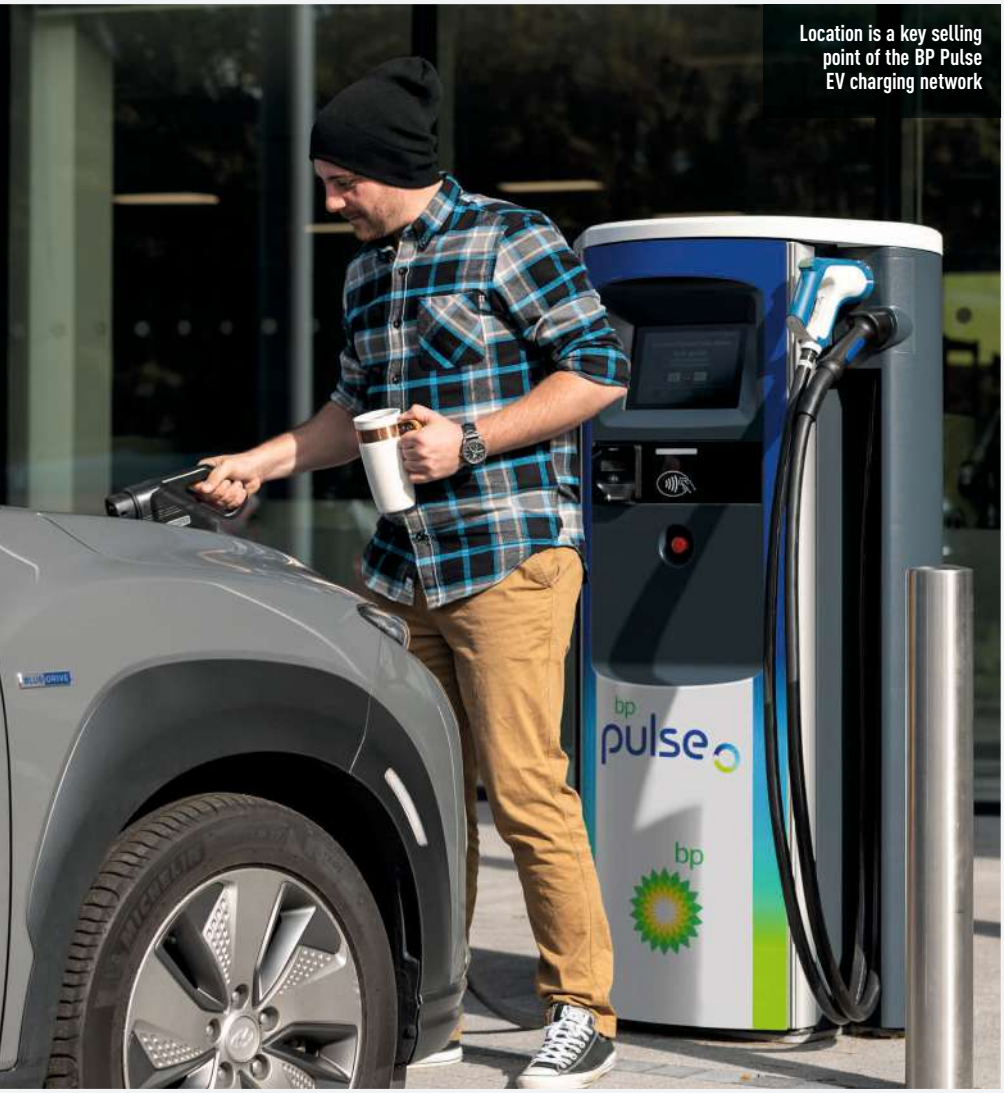
MEETING DEMAND

According to Zap Map, there are around 23,000 public charge points in the UK and there has been much debate around how many will be needed by 2030, when the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans is due to be banned.

Influential think-tank the Policy Exchange earlier this year said the country will need 400,000, but De Renzi disagrees.

"We should acknowledge the fact that we already have an impressive number of charge points across the country which are not utilised enough," he says.

"We see a strong shift from traditional low ↻



Location is a key selling point of the BP Pulse EV charging network

power AC charging towards the rapid and ultra-fast solution which better fits the needs of the driver in the day.

"If you look at our ultra-fast chargers which we believe will become the real workhorse of our fleet, their time utilisation (the amount of time someone is using them) is 15% or 16%.

"In terms of the amount of power they dispense in a day compared with the total power they could, it is 4% or 5%.

"This is because the infrastructure is so much ahead of the cars' ability to taken on that power, so they, basically, stay there enjoying a fraction of the power of that charge point.

"Today, only if you have a Porsche Taycan, Audi e-Tron or Tesla could you really enjoy that charge speed, but when you have a company like Hyundai announcing that its future EVs will be capable of ultra-fast charging, other mass market brands will likely follow.

"There's still a lot of potential that can be extracted from the existing infrastructure. This doesn't mean we should stop investing because we still have a lot of work to do, but when I hear that we need 400,000 charge points in the country, I have some reservations."

Public charging currently accounts for around 40% of all charging, says De Renzi, with 40% at homes and the remaining 20% in the workplace.

He expects this to change "quite significantly" as more light commercial vehicle (LCV) fleets electrify as this will mean more EVs are charged at depots.

"In 2025, for example, we believe something around 25% to 30% of energy will be dispensed at workplaces because the large fleets taking on electric LCVs will have significantly moved the dial," says De Renzi.

BP Pulse offers fleets a range of charging solutions, including for home, workplace and public charging, and is currently developing new AC solutions for workplace charging which will be launched later this year.

"We see that different clients have very different needs," says De Renzi. "Today, drivers of ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles have just one need: they need the pump with the nozzle and the cashier, but the demands for EVs are wider.

"For example, SMEs may rely on maybe a couple of AC chargers for their own parking places, but then it maybe becomes an on-the-go and home charge type of solution."

In October last year, BP Pulse was awarded a contract worth up to £21 million by Police Scotland to supply charging infrastructure across its estates, which will see 1,000 charging points installed at 265 locations in Scotland, including 35 ultra-fast chargers.

"This was a very complex deal in terms of execution because it's a mix of infrastructure, but, equally, it's the opportunity for a combined on-the-go charging solution where the fleet can roam and then charge across our network when needed."

De Renzi says workplace charging can also benefit fleets as load balance optimisation can be lucrative, while vehicle-to-grid could optimise the overall value chain around energy.

"There is also an opportunity coming up with some large fleets that have a significant amount of estate and power available," he says.

"They could, potentially, become partners in order to develop charging hubs for their own fleets, which they would use typically overnight, but then become hubs for the general public during the day.

"This is the type of flexible arrangement that will optimise the whole infrastructure."

DE RENZI ON...

...interoperability

One of the common complaints among EV drivers has been they sometimes need four or five apps on their phone to ensure they are able to fully utilise the public charging network.

In 2019, the Government outlined an ambition that all new rapid charge points should provide debit or credit card payment, and BP Pulse reacted by pledging it would retrofit all its existing UK-made rapid chargers with contactless payment as well as introduce it on all new rapid and ultra-fast chargers.

"[Contactless payment], for me, is the most elegant way of offering roaming because you just need to have a bank card or an electronic digital wallet on your phones," says De Renzi.

"This should really solve the interoperability issue and anxiety of having to deal with multiple cards or accounts in order to manage your needs.

"We also need to acknowledge that it's economically unviable to fit credit card readers on all devices, particularly the AC chargers because it's impossible to make the economics stack up.

"I read an interesting article that was saying that should the Government force adoption of credit card readers on all devices that will be the death of large public networks.

"We see a strategic value in exploring some partnerships with other players, which we are doing.

"I trust that combining two or three good and reliable networks is more than enough to guarantee to the drivers that level of confidence needed to take away range anxiety."

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UNLOCK EFFICIENCIES WITH BLENDED FUNDING

Using multiple funding methods is becoming an increasingly popular way to increase fleet flexibility and cost savings. *Ben Rooth* reports

Procuring vehicles using just one funding method is the most time-efficient and simplistic approach for a fleet to take, keeping administration and inconvenience to a minimum.

It is also the most popular way among fleets. *Fleet News*'s most recent Fleet200 research found this was done by around two-thirds of organisations.

But this also means a significant number use two or more funding methods. This approach can increase flexibility and efficiencies, says Christopher Caddick, head of business development at JCT600 Vehicle Leasing Solutions.

"As an industry, we are well versed in adapting to change, but the current climate has meant we have seen even more demand on those running fleets to increase efficiencies for both employer and employee," he adds.

"A blended funding approach can be the perfect tool to achieve this and with the spotlight firmly on company finances, getting the right vehicles on the right funding method into the hands of the right employees, delivers the lowest cost, highest value solution for both parties."

This keeps the key fleet stakeholders, whether they are HR, finance and procurement or the employee themselves, happy, he says.

"Whether it is traditional company cars, salary sacrifice, employee car ownership schemes with employee finance arrangements, or affinity schemes or multi-scheme policies, a blended funding approach has never been more important," adds Caddick.

> "AS AN INDUSTRY, WE ARE WELL VERSED IN ADAPTING TO CHANGE, BUT THE CURRENT CLIMATE HAS MEANT WE HAVE SEEN EVEN MORE DEMAND ON THOSE RUNNING FLEETS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCIES FOR BOTH EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE"
>
> **CHRISTOPHER CADDICK, JCT600 VEHICLE LEASING SOLUTIONS**

Rory Mackinnon, sales director at ARI Fleet UK, asserts that a blended funding approach is the best way to maximise working capital as there is "no one-size-fits-all solution for businesses or asset types".

He warns that if an organisation is locked into one funding method, the chances are it will not be running some of its vehicles in the right way and that will cost money.

Taking a blended funding approach also allows working capital to be managed more effectively.

"It enables you to choose the right finance product for the right vehicles," says Mike Coulton, fleet product and policy manager at Volkswagen Financial Services.

VALUE OF SALARY SACRIFICE OR AFFINITY SCHEMES

While not directly funded by the employer, salary sacrifice and affinity schemes can also be used to provide employees who may not be eligible for a company car with a new vehicle.

Under a salary sacrifice scheme, employees forgo a proportion of their pre-tax salary for the vehicle, with the agreement usually also including maintenance and insurance.

"It can be a very tax-efficient method of accessing a vehicle, particularly with low benefit-in-kind (BIK) rates available on electric vehicles (EVs)," says Richard Cox, consultant at Arval UK.

"Because of that, right now, employers have increased appetite to offer a salary sacrifice scheme and employees are keen to use it as part of a blended car offering."

Caroline Sandall, specialist consultant at LeasePlan UK, has witnessed a great uptake of salary sacrifice schemes recently due to EVs.

"Along with potential savings on national insurance contributions (NICs) , they can replace existing company car arrangements, offer something new to cash takers and provide an accessible scheme for other employees who are not eligible for car or cash benefits," she says.

Affinity schemes are usually funded by personal contract hire and based on a direct relationship between a funder and an individual.

"Unlike salary sacrifice, an affinity scheme is at arm's length from the employer and allows them to give access to a product for their employees – like cars, e-bikes or other products," says Cox.

It is important that vehicles and products provided to employees as part of an affinity scheme are available on the open market and not provided by way of employment, which would incur a benefit.

Both salary sacrifice and affinity schemes should primarily be regarded as an extension of an organisation's benefits package, adds Cox.

"Salary sacrifice, in particular, is an attractive addition to a benefits package because with the current BIK tax rates for electric vehicles, a scheme helps to demonstrate a business's sustainable approach to mobility while offering employees access to vehicles through their salary," he says.

Cox says a salary sacrifice scheme is, effectively, an extension to a company car scheme not a replacement. "They are not, typically, suitable for job-need cars where the business will make the decision on what is required for the role," he adds.

Volkswagen Financial Services also sees salary sacrifice sitting alongside a traditional company car scheme.

"There are no real advantages to replacing the latter with the former," says Mike Coulton, fleet product and policy manager at Volkswagen Financial Services.

"However, as a valuable employee recruitment and retention tool, adding salary sacrifice to your suite of funding options is a very cost-effective way of making you stand out as an employer of choice.

"It also encourages employees to drive lower emission vehicles, which can help businesses achieve lower CO_2 targets too."

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Ben Creswick, managing director, JCT600 VLS

Using a blend of funding structures ensures that UK businesses can provide the best vehicle choice, on the most competitive funding arrangements, to deliver the lowest cost vehicle provision across all its differing employee populations.

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FIND THE RIGHT BLEND

When a company is looking to procure vehicles, there are a number of different funding options it can consider.

Here we look at the main traditional ones:

CONTRACT HIRE

This is a lease funding option that is structured so the company hires the vehicle for a predetermined period and mileage at a fixed monthly rental.

These payments are set by the leasing provider at the outset of the agreement and usually take into account all costs associated with the vehicle with the exception of maintenance costs, which can be included in an optional agreement if required.

At the end of the agreed term, the company returns a vehicle to the leasing company and settles any end-of-contract charges due based on its mileage and condition.

CONTRACT PURCHASE

Contract purchase is a deferred purchase funding option that is structured so the company makes fixed monthly payments for a predetermined period and mileage.

At the end of the agreement, it has the option to purchase the car for a price agreed at the outset, or hand it back to the leasing provider.

OUTRIGHT PURCHASE

This sees the organisation directly buy the car and is usually either funded through borrowings or use of the company's own cash resources.

An outright purchase involves a large upfront payment and, when it is sold, the company will receive the full amount of the sale proceeds.

HIRE PURCHASE

Hire purchase is a deferred purchase funding option that is structured so the company makes fixed monthly payments for a predetermined period and mileage.

At the end of the agreement it has typically paid the full cost of the vehicle and interest and ownership transfers to the company. It is possible to include an optional maintenance agreement if required.

FINANCE LEASE

Like contract hire, finance lease allows the company to lease a vehicle for a fixed monthly fee. However, it differs in that the arrangement transfers substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership of the vehicle to the company.

There are two main types of finance lease, usually selected dependent on the cashflow needs of the company: a fully amortised finance lease and a finance lease with a balloon payment.

In a fully amortised finance lease, the rentals are based on the full cost of the vehicle spread over the term of the contract and take no account of any anticipated residual value.

At the end of the agreement, the car must be sold to a third party and the company will receive an element of the sale of the sale proceeds as agreed with the leasing provider at the outset.

In a finance lease with balloon payment, the lease rentals are based on part of the cost of the car with a balance (the balloon) being offset towards the end of the agreement, usually to reduce the size of the monthly rentals.

At the end of the agreement, the vehicle must be sold to a third party and sale proceeds that are in excess of the balloon payment can be retained by the company. If the proceeds fall short, the company will be responsible for making up the difference.

"For example, contract hire is a great option for company car fleets, while salary sacrifice is an opportunity to offer employees who do not require, or are not entitled, to a company car a great benefit too."

He has seen a shift from outright purchase to contract hire and other leasing options.

"This is particularly the case for ultra-low emission vehicles where the changes to capital allowances for zero emission vehicles have resulted in significant savings over purchasing the same vehicles outright," adds Coulton.

However, despite the advantages of blended funding, it also has disadvantages. These tend to be associated with the providers, the employees, the complexity of the schemes and the additional administrative burden that is created.

"The main issue you have to be aware of is multiple providers all doing different things," says Mackinnon. "Obviously, you want the right funding method for the vehicle and usage, but not at the cost of massively increasing administration and management processes, or the complexity of trying to run many divergent ordering and invoicing systems side-by-side."

This makes it important for regular reviews to be carried out to ensure the disadvantages do not outweigh the benefits.

"Administrative complexity must always be taken into consideration, especially where financial margins are slim," adds Caroline Sandall, specialist consultant at LeasePlan UK.

"Operating more than one type of scheme may not necessarily double up the resource required, but there's an impact.

"The benefits expected at the outset should offset any set-up costs or ongoing resources needed to manage."

The main risks linked to blended funding arise when employees' choices are not managed correctly, believes Caddick.

The major concern is employees making uninformed – and costly – choices which poorly marry up with their personal circumstances.

He says this can be greatly mitigated with a well thought out, practical implementation of the blended structure and a driver-ordering portal that can both display all the options available to the employee in one place and provide the

> "THE CONCEPT OF JUST LUMPING FUNDING AND MAINTENANCE ON A SIMPLE, ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL DEAL FOR THREE OR FOUR YEARS IS OUTDATED"
>
> **RORY MACKINNON, ARI FLEET UK**

TRADITIONAL FUNDING METHODS: KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Source: LeasePlan

	Contract hire	Finance lease (fully amortised)	Finance lease (with balloon)	Contract purchase	Hire purchase	Outright purchase
What is the upfront payment/deposit?	Typically 3 months advance rentals (c. 8% of car cost)	Typically 10%-15% of car cost	Typically 10%-15% of car cost	Typically 3 months advance payments (c. 8% of car cost)	Typically 10%-15% of car cost	100% of car cost
Who owns the car?	The leasing provider	The leasing provider until final payment is made	The leasing provider until final payment is made	The leasing provider until final payment is made	The leasing provider until final payment is made	The company
Typically, who meets maintenance costs?	Leasing provider (assuming optional maintenance agreement is taken)	The company	The company	Leasing provider (assuming optional maintenance agreement is taken)	The company	The company
Who retains the residual value risk?	The leasing provider	The company	The company	The leasing provider	The company	The company
Who is responsible for administration of the car? e.g. arranging road fund licence and disposal	The leasing provider	The company	The company	The leasing provider	The company	The company
Does the company own the car at the end of the contract?	No, it is returned to the leasing provider	No, it is sold to a third party	No, it is sold to a third party	Yes, subject to making final payment	Yes, subject to making final payment	Yes
Is the car treated as on or off balance sheet	Off balance sheet (unless the company reports under International Financial Reporting Standards)	On balance sheet	On balance sheet	On balance sheet	On balance sheet	On balance sheet
How does the company claim tax relief for car costs?	Monthly rental can be offset against profits for tax relief	Monthly rental can be offset against profits for tax relief	Monthly rental can be offset against profits for tax relief	Tax relief is provided via capital allowances	Tax relief is provided via capital allowances	Tax relief is provided via capital allowances
Can the company recover VAT on the rentals/ payments made?	Yes, subject to a 50% restriction	Yes, subject to a 50% restriction	Yes, subject to a 50% restriction	No	No	No
Can the company recover VAT on an optional maintenance agreement?	Yes, 100% of VAT can be recovered	Yes, 100% of VAT can be recovered	Yes, 100% of VAT can be recovered	Yes, 100% of VAT can be recovered	Yes, 100% of VAT can be recovered	Yes, 100% of VAT can be recovered

ability to compare their options side-by-side, so the employee can make a truly informed decision.

INCREASING UPTAKE

Leasing companies have seen an increasing number of fleets adopt a blended funding approach with changes in policy being driven by the availability of financial rewards for the business, or employee pressure due to financial rewards for them.

"Blended and, crucially, more flexible funding, is definitely becoming more popular," adds Mackinnon.

"Over the past four years, we have seen a lot of customers who were previously using only contract hire move either the maintenance to a more flexible and transparent pay-as-you-go model or switch their funding to a finance lease or conditional sale model.

"Customers who made this move have seen this change really benefit them during this pandemic as what they planned for the fleet has changed significantly, with many vehicles being parked up for months at a time."

A blended funding model allows for the flexibility to change the way fleets are run in line with an ever-changing environment, and also one that may be different in the future to what was planned.

Leasing providers expect a blended funding approach to continue to gain momentum in the short-to-medium term.

"In the next decades, as fleets evolve and electrify, and all sorts of previously analogue business practices become increasingly digital, nobody is entirely sure what their fleet mileage profiles, usage and costs will be," says Mackinnon.

"The concept of just lumping funding and maintenance on a simple, one-size-fits-all deal for three or four years is outdated.

"In the long term, although we may see a homogenisation of available efficient structures, in its most basic form a blend between company and personal funded vehicles within a business will always be needed to suit different employee populations."

The popularity of the blended funding options will remain dependent on the taxation of electric vehicles to fill the lost HM Treasury revenue from the phasing out of ICE vehicles, among other factors.

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FLEET OPTIMISM RISES IN THE FACE OF COVID CRISIS

Latest research identifies most popular mobility solutions for fleets. *Stephen Briers* reports

Almost 40% of UK businesses predict their fleet size will grow over the next three years, according to the 2021 Arval Mobility Observatory (AMO) research.

The survey, which interviewed 300 UK fleets, found that, while the Covid-19 crisis has impacted on businesses of all sizes and across all sectors, many remained optimistic about their prospects.

The level of bullishness accelerated among larger companies.

Nevertheless, coronavirus was the major event of 2020 prompting fleets to implement a series of policy enhancements to tackle new concerns around sanitisation and social distancing.

Risk assessments were carried out following guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Executive as many businesses realised their existing practices were not robust enough. They were not alone: World Economic Forum research on global disaster planning found that nothing was fit for purpose; all plans had to be rethought as businesses struggled to cope with the pandemic.

Close to nine-out-of-10 large businesses (with more than 1,000 employees) had already completed a coronavirus risk assessment at the time of the research, while the remainder were planning to undertake an assessment. However, this dropped to 59% among the smallest companies (with fewer than 10 staff), where 20% said they would not be completing one.

Shaun Sadlier, head of Arval Mobility Observatory in the UK, says: "We saw businesses reacting quickly to make sure their fleet was safe for drivers so they could get back operating as soon as possible."

He adds: "While smaller van operators are trailing their larger counterparts in this area, a very large percentage of them have still undertaken risk assessments which, considering that the resources available to them are probably much less comprehensive, is very much to be welcomed."

FLEETS FORECAST GROWTH

Despite the pandemic, this year's AMO research indicates that fleets are more optimistic about growth than they were a year earlier, which points to a high degree of resilience in the sector.

While the AMO does not differentiate between cars and vans, Arval's own experience is that vans are the major catalyst for growth due to strong demand for home delivery and continued requirement for construction and utilities services.

Covid-19 is cited as a big reason for both growth and contraction, with two-thirds saying their future fleet size is either 'totally' or 'partially' linked to the coronavirus crisis.

Among those forecasting growth, 34% point to their desire to provide a safe commute for employees.

Meanwhile, 49% of companies anticipating a drop in future fleet size say Covid is to blame.

Overall, 39% of survey respondents predict their fleet will grow over the next three years, while 11% expect a decrease. The positive balance of 29 points (not 28 due to rounding of percentages) is eight points higher than a year earlier.

Bigger companies are by far the most optimistic with 59% of those with 1,000-plus employees forecasting growth (11% a fall) and 53% of companies with 100-999 staff (9% a fall). That results in a net balance of 48 points (2020: 23) and 44 points (2020: 25) respectively.

"A potential explanation for this disparity between smaller and larger organisations is that respondents who are optimistic name factors such as business expansion (cited by 67%), growth of alternative means of car provision and the importance of the company car in their employee benefits strategy," says Sadlier.

Almost one third of respondents (32%)

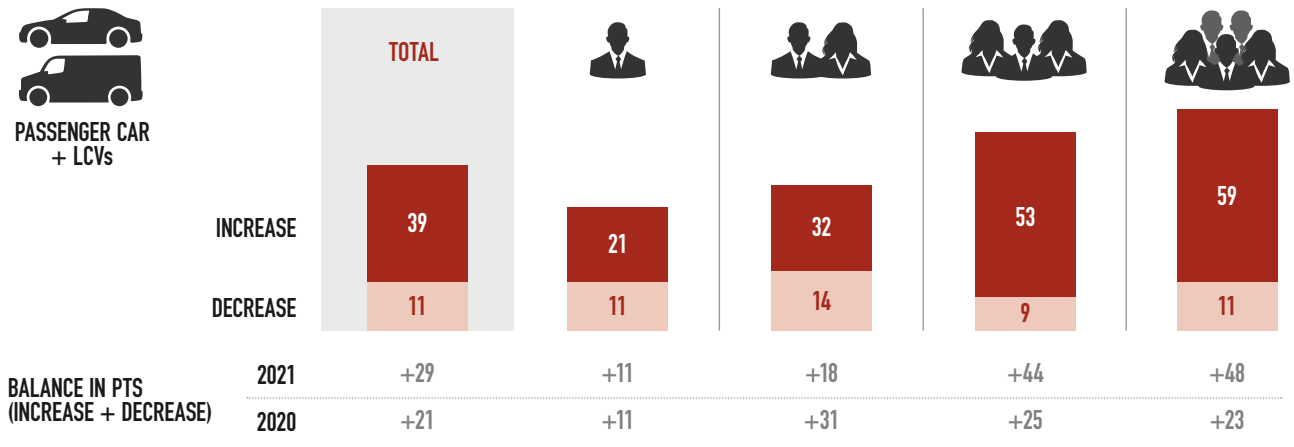
39% of respondents say their fleet will grow over the next three years

11% expect their fleet size to decrease in size

49% of companies say Covid is the reason why their fleet will shrink

34% of growth points to a desire to provide a safe commute for employees

FLEET GROWTH POTENTIAL (%)



In the next three years, do you think that the total number of vehicles in your company fleet will increase, decrease or remain the same?

intend to propose offering vehicles to employees with no company car eligibility while 27% plan to start offering shared vehicles to staff.

Businesses operating in the trades, such as retail industries, are most likely to increase their fleet sizes, while those in 'industry', such as mining, oil/gas and manufacturing, are most likely to decrease their fleet size.

In addition to the direct impact of Covid, the more bearish businesses point to a rise in home office working (38%), drivers opting for cash (23%) and a tightening of policy resulting in fewer staff being offered a company car (18%), aligned to the introduction of alternative mobility options (17%).

"This indicates that larger fleets have identified the likelihood of fleet growth in a world where low taxation on electric vehicles (EVs) is set to increase company car uptake, as well as converting cash allowance takers to salary sacrifice schemes," Sadlier says.

"Small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) have perhaps not as yet had time to devote to these areas and may well be preoccupied with overcoming the effects of the pandemic."

He adds: "When it comes to cars, will people do the same mileages? Absolutely not. But they will still want a company car and EVs offer benefits, especially on tax. The car is still seen as a real benefit for drivers and a way to attract the right calibre of staff and we expect that to continue."

Research carried out with 5,197 fleet decision-makers in 20 countries, including 300 in the UK, between October 27 and December 14. This feature focuses on the UK responses.

COMPANY SIZE

Fewer than 10 employees

10-99 employees

100-999 employees

1,000+ employees

CAZ AND TAX ARE BIG CHALLENGES

Covid delayed the introduction of clean air zones (CAZs), but with Bath now live and Birmingham to follow in June, as well as next stage zero emission zones to debut in Oxford this summer, UK businesses have put them at the top of their worry list, leapfrogging last year's biggest challenge, rising congestion due to lack of road infrastructure.

With the increase in people working from home plus three lockdowns in the past 12 months driving down traffic levels, congestion has, not surprisingly, slipped to fourth in fleets' list of biggest concerns over the next five years.

Sadlier says: "It perhaps indicates that fleet managers expect traffic levels to remain lower for the next five years and potentially beyond."

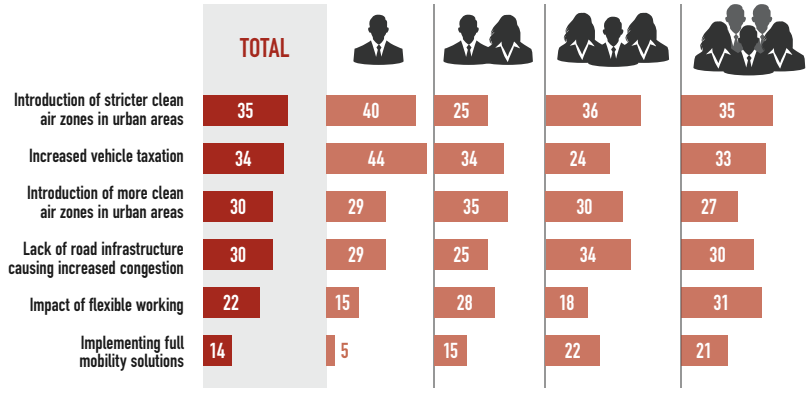
CAZs feature top of the list and in third, for different reasons. Fleets are most fearful of the introduction of stricter CAZs, but they also cite the potential widescale roll-out to more cities as a concern. The two CAZ responses sandwich increased vehicle taxation, which has risen from fifth last year to second.

Nevertheless, as Arval points out, most fleets are already running CAZ-compliant Euro 6 diesel, hybrid, plug-in hybrid or electric vehicles.

"Even for those affected, they are likely to be a transitional worry as older vehicles are replaced," Sadlier says.

"By the end of this decade, the vast majority of company cars and ↪

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR FLEETS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (%)



What do you see are the main challenges facing fleets in the next five years?

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

Top five findings from Arval Mobility Observatory's 2021 Barometer

By Shaun Sadlier, head of Arval Mobility Observatory in the UK

The Arval Mobility Observatory is an independent mobility think tank which conducts what is widely recognised as one of the most authoritative pieces of research in the fleet and mobility sectors – its barometer.

After the onset of the pandemic, we talked to 5,200 fleet decision-makers in 20 countries. A huge amount of information has been distilled into five key trends for the UK, something that is especially useful as we work to understand the impact of the coronavirus crisis. Our top five findings are:

1. **Fleets are more optimistic now than before the pandemic** – 39% believe their fleet will grow over the next three years, compared with 29% in early 2020

2. **Clean air zones and taxation are the top concerns for fleets over the next five years** – however, just 30% are now worried about congestion against 43% in last year's survey

3. **Rapid electric vehicle uptake is planned** – by 2024, respondents expect 42% of their company cars to be completely electric alongside 37% of their vans

4. **Employee car schemes are dramatically increasing in popularity** – 37% of fleet managers say they offer an initiative of this type compared with 20% in 2020

5. **There's been a jump in propensity to use operating leasing** – more than half of car and van fleets expect to 'certainly' or 'probably' use more in the next three years, almost doubling in the past 12 months.

To find out more from the Arval Mobility Observatory and its research visit **arval.co.uk/amo-insight.**

Arval Mobility Observatory

probably vans too, will be electrified, which will help to solve the emissions problem automatically."

He adds: "It is interesting that taxation is seen as a challenge. Again, the emergence of EVs of all kinds will potentially massively reduce tax liabilities for fleets over the next few years."

ELECTRIC IN DEMAND

UK business is looking to accelerate uptake of electric light commercial vehicles (LCVs) almost as quickly as cars.

With both facing the same 2030 deadline on the ban of sales of new petrol and diesel models, companies of all sizes are paying heed to the need to shift their fleets to electric, although the speed of change is quickest among the larger organisations.

Seven-out-of-10 fleets expect to have implemented plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and hybrid within three years and two-thirds will have introduced full electric, of which 23% are already running battery electric vehicles (BEVs). However, it still leaves a third of fleets that do not expect to have any BEVs and 30% with no PHEVs by 2024, just six years before the internal combustion engine (ICE) sales ban comes into force.

Nevertheless, the rate of BEV adoption continues to rise: last year 53% were already operating or were planning to adopt BEV; in 2019, it was just 41%. Now it is 66%.

66% of companies planning to adopt BEVs

58% of 200 or so Arval company car drivers are now in a BEV

80% of Siemens' 80 BEV drivers previously had a PHEV

37% offering salary sacrifice to non-company car drivers

Those that do expect to be running BEVs predict that 42% of their company cars and 37% of their vans will be electric. This peaks at 54%/48% for the largest organisations.

"This underlines the extent to which fleets are not just accepting, but very much embracing an electric future," says Sadlier.

"For cars, it is not far from being business as usual. The technology is accepted, so it's just about adjusting fuel reimbursements and car policies to make them work for fleets.

"LCVs are more of a surprise, although there are some significant fleets making strong forecasts about being 100% electric within short timescales. Since Q4 2020, we are seeing month-on-month increases in interest for electric vans."

Operating cycles are a key consideration, with some fleets implementing shorter cycles for any diesel replacements in order to switch to electric as soon as models become available.

This has been the approach of British Gas, with head of fleet Steve Winter telling *Fleet News:* "Due to the lack of suitable large electric vans that currently work on our total cost of ownership (TCO) model, we have taken the decision to lease a number of diesel VW Crafter vans on a short lease with the flexibility to transition to the e-Crafter when launched and recycle racking across the two vehicles."

Sadlier also suggests reallocating diesel vans within a fleet to take advantage of driver mileage profiles that suit an electric model.

"Fleets may need to move more vehicles around in order to maximise the opportunity to bring EVs onto their fleet," he adds.

Arval is seeing more companies tighten their car policies on PHEVs to ensure drivers travel on electric as much as possible, especially for short journeys. It is also seeing PHEV drivers switch to BEV at renewal time, confirming the belief that PHEV is a stepping-stone technology.

Siemens head of UK Mobility Services Wayne Warburton says PHEV enables employees to get used to charging their vehicle without worrying about range. Of the company's 80 BEV drivers, more than 80% previously had a PHEV.

"We are definitely seeing PHEV drivers move to full electric on their next car change," Warburton adds.

Arval gives its company car drivers the option to switch from PHEV to BEV after 18 months. Take-up is high, resulting in a rapid move with electric; around 58% of its 200 or so company car drivers are now in a BEV.

More recently, Arval is seeing a growing number of drivers leapfrog that step and go straight from petrol/diesel to pure electric.

COMPANY CAR IS STILL KING

The economic uncertainty caused by Covid aligned to the higher upfront price of buying an EV has highlighted the cost and risk differential of running a company car compared with alternative mobility solutions.

Consequently, the financial benefit of having a company car has leapfrogged 'ease of motoring' to become the main reason why drivers stay within their business scheme, according to fleet decision-makers.

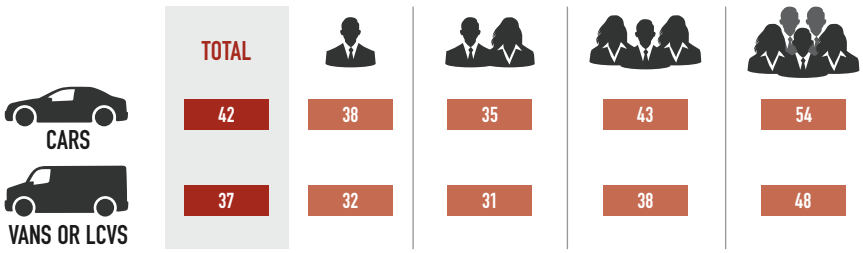
Also prevalent is 'no risk of ownership', mentioned by more than twice as many respondents as a year ago.

"The top reason mentioned as to why employees continue to favour their company cars is based around financial security and convenience – simply put, not having to finance your own vehicle is the main factor and it's clear that fleet managers view this as a major advantage for drivers," says Sadlier.

He adds: "A lot of drivers want to move to electric, but the cost of finance is higher."

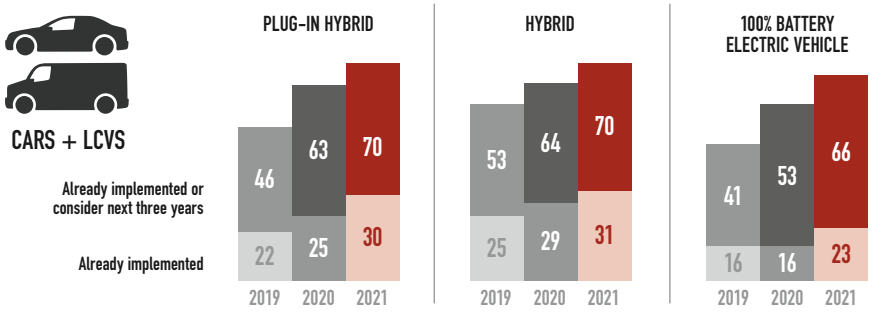
Not having to finance their own vehicle was cited by 30% of respondents, up from 20% in 2020. Meanwhile, 21% listed no risk

EXPECTED SHARE OF 100% BATTERY ELECTRIC (%) (NEXT 3 YEARS)



In your opinion, what percentage of your passenger car fleet will be 100% battery electric vehicles in three years (100% BEV)?
In your opinion, what percentage of your light commercial vehicle fleet will be 100% battery electric vehicles in three years (100% BEV)?

ALTERNATIVE FUEL TECHNOLOGIES USAGE - DETAIL PER TECHNOLOGY (%) (EVOLUTION VS. PREVIOUS YEARS)



Among the following alternative fuel technologies, which ones do you use or are you considering using?
Response scale: Already implemented, considered in the next three years, considered but later, not interested

of ownership, up from 10% a year earlier.

Less important is ease of motoring, named by just 16%, down 14 percentage points.

"This shows that, at a time when the unpredictable economic situation prompted by the coronavirus crisis has left some people feeling vulnerable about their employment situation, they are now favouring the financial benefits of the company car over the convenience of taking cash or other alternatives," Sadlier explains.

However, almost half of employers are offering their staff mobility options despite the apparent slowing in demand for shared solutions, including public transport and car sharing, due to the sanitisation and social distance demands of Covid-19.

Companies are increasingly considering three modes of travel – commute, business and personal – and how they might offer solutions that are environmentally-friendly and cost-efficient. Examples include e-scooters from transport hubs to the office or electric buses to ferry staff around.

"This is a new development for the UK, and it appears to be based on four broadly equal factors: a desire to make business travel more environmentally responsible, supporting employees in their aspirations to have more flexibility around their mobility, increasing productivity and reducing overall travel costs," says Sadlier.

Of the companies that have implemented an alternative mobility solution, 46% offer it to all employees (a proportion which rises to 57% among the largest companies) while 32% offer it only to those eligible for a company car. A further 14% offer it to both company car drivers and a small number of other eligible employees.

SAL/SAC BACK IN DEMAND

The proportion of organisations offering salary sacrifice and other finance solutions to non-company car drivers has almost doubled year-on-year from 20% to 37%, according to the 2021 AMO.

The impetus has come from the impact of low benefit-in-kind (BIK) taxation on EVs, although the increase is concentrated among larger companies. Almost eight-in-10 (77%) now offer a finance solution, compared with just 9% of the smallest companies.

"This is to be expected because setting up schemes of this kind may not be as high priority for businesses with less resource and staff to benefit from it," says Sadlier.

"Affinity schemes are an HR-driven tool to attract and retain the right calibre of staff and, in our experience, it's really salary sacrifice and personal contract hire (PCH) that is being implemented."

Of those offering a solution, 53% offer salary sacrifice and 39% a PCH scheme, while 55% offer a cash allowance.

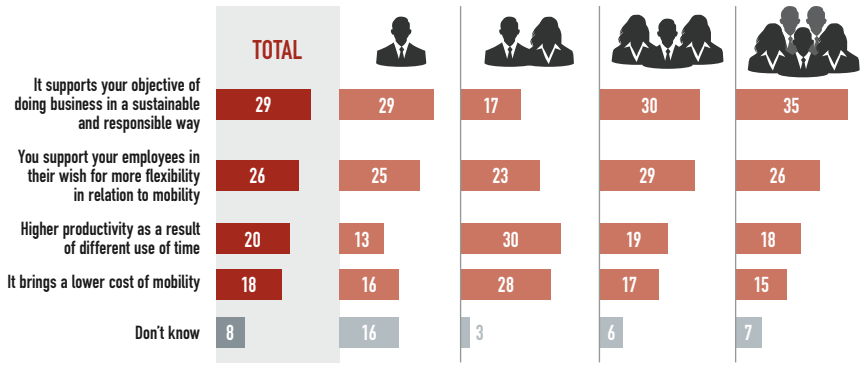
Salary sacrifice hit a plateau three years ago after several years of rapid growth, but demand began to resurface around six months ago with interest also coming from smaller companies.

"We are seeing companies with several hundred employees showing an interest – it's an additional market that hasn't been involved in salary sacrifice before," Sadlier says.

"We expect the level of interest to continue to grow because it's being driven by electric vehicles and the favourable tax rates."

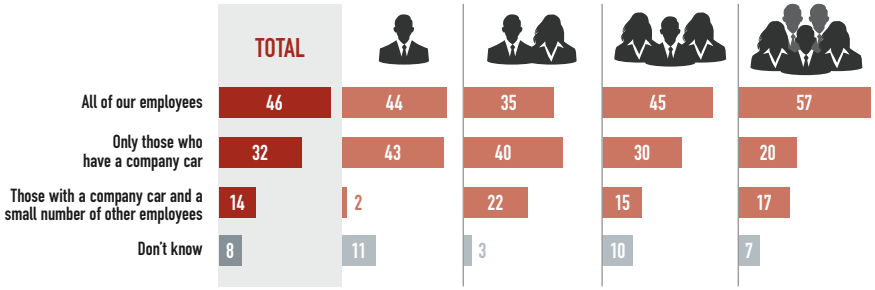
Arval Mobility Observatory is one of the most authoritative research and industry information exchange platforms in the fleet and mobility sector. It collects and provides objective and accurate information, helping to understand the new mobility paradigm and the mobility solutions available.
For details of the full report: arval.co.uk/amo-insight

MAIN REASON TO OFFER A MOBILITY PLAN OR BUDGET TO EMPLOYEES (%)



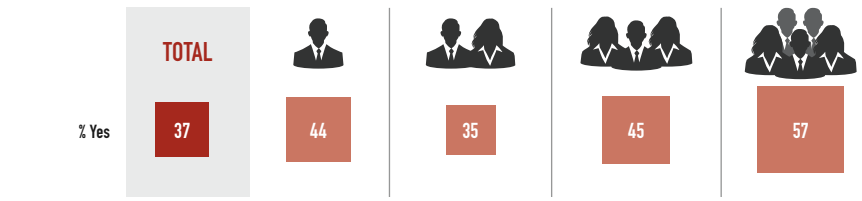
What is the main reason you offer a mobility plan or budget to your employees? Basis: Companies with a mobility plan

TYPES OF EMPLOYEES FOR THE MOBILITY PLAN (%)



Which of your employees do you offer a mobility plan to? Basis: companies that have already implemented at least one alternative mobility solution

PROPORTION OF COMPANIES OFFERING SOLUTIONS FOR NON-COMPANY CAR DRIVERS TO FINANCE A PERSONAL CAR (%)



For the non-company car driver employees within your company, do you offer any solutions to enable them to finance a personal car?

ROAD SAFETY CAN LEARN A LOT FROM OUR RAILWAYS

The UK's rail network has taken great strides forward in eliminating incidents. There are pointers for the new Fleet Benchmarking tool. *David Williams* reports on behalf of DfBB

A new Fleet Benchmarking tool hopes to emulate the safety success achieved in the rail industry by drawing on lessons learned from rail's experience of benchmarking, including data-gathering, analysis, decisive action and effective collaboration.

April marks the first opportunity for UK businesses to test the new tool, which officially launched at the end of March following months of behind-the-scenes development.

Funded by the Department for Transport (DfT), in partnership with Driving for Better Business, *Fleet News* and Roadsafe, the new tool overhauls the way that fleet managers, company directors and business owners measure their individual road safety and environmental performance against other organisations.

THE RAIL EXPERIENCE

The rail industry put extensive benchmarking procedures in place decades ago, delivering huge improvements in safety.

Tavid Dobson, lead safety management systems specialist at the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and a key member of the new Fleet Benchmarking advisory panel, says there are lessons to be learned for the fleet programme, including the importance of obsessive data-gathering, laser-sharp analysis, acting decisively on the results of the analysis and, above all, promoting effective collaboration.

"Railways are years ahead of roads on safety, but they had one major advantage," says Dobson. "It's a closed system. Unlike the road network, we know about every movement of every train."

It is revealing that between 2009 and 2019, there were 20 workforce fatalities in the UK rail industry – and half of those occurred on the roads.

> "IT'S ALL ABOUT COLLABORATION. YOU CAN'T COLLABORATE ON YOUR OWN"
>
> **TAVID DOBSON, RAIL SAFETY AND STANDARDS BOARD**

"It's very rare that trains collide because, as a result of extensive data gathering and analysis, safe systems were put in place," Dobson says. "That closed system meant we could develop and bring maturity to how we capture events that occur on railways. Now it's the turn of the roads."

At the heart of that maturity is SMIS (Safety Management Intelligence System), a risk and evidence-based approach to safety management run by RSSB. It's rail's equivalent of benchmarking.

SMIS provides the rail industry with a rich evidence base that it uses to better understand risk and take safety-related decisions – before incidents happen. New SMIS went live in 2017, replacing a system built in the late 1990s. At the heart of its success is a duty – applying to all infrastructure managers and rail undertakings -- to input data into SMIS. More than 250,000 records have been entered since 2017.

When there is an incident, SMIS facilitates analysis into how often similar events occurred in the past. RSSB uses this intelligence in its 'Learning from Operational Experience' programme. Specialist risk groups constantly study the railway risk profile, routinely reviewing SMIS intelligence. They set in motion further work aiming to steer the industry in the right direction for effective risk management.

Dobson says it is trusted safety intelligence that allows this approach and he believes the new Fleet Benchmarking tool, supported by DfBB's Online Gap Analysis tool, can deliver similar gains in road safety if fleets act on the findings.

"What is key to rail's benchmarking – and this applies to benchmarking for fleets – is that it is not only analysing events. We also analyse 'activity data', or ongoing human behaviours that might lead to future events. You look at another organisation's performance and you use that as a common denominator to measure what your performance is like, where you might be at risk. That is how the rail industry developed its safety systems and it's how the road sector can now do the same," says Dobson.

"I'm not saying it's not important to measure events, but we found on the railways that as events and incidents reduce, you get less data to analyse. This means you must find better data, which you use to prevent incidents occurring in the first place. It's an important distinction."

CLOSER ANALYSIS OF DATA

By copying the rail industry's rigorous self-analysis, the fleet sector will be in a "far better position than it's ever been" – not least thanks to closer analysis of data flowing from wider use of telematics.

"For the first time, the road industry will find itself leading research and development of

HOW BENCHMARKING WILL HELP FLEETS

Peter Fenton, finance director at Marine and Industrial Transmissions, says the biggest benefit will be the ability to pool resources with thousands of other organisations.

He believes it will help in areas including management, safety, maintenance and cost control, for the Kent-based company, which runs 17 vans and six cars.

COST: "It's difficult finding reliable data on mpg or maintenance costs. I dip in and out of running the fleet which takes about 5% of my time; I have little feel for what I would consider good, bad or indifferent. Seeing simplified data from many other firms will make a huge difference."

SAFETY: "Understanding other firms' safety records will make it easier to have informed conversations with our drivers. It will help us on issues like driver training."

MANAGEMENT: "We are going through a lot of health and safety improvements and want to get ISO 45001 this year. Benchmarking will help me focus on the drivers and give us a number of KPIs we can target."

Fenton adds: "There are lots of things we'd like to do to improve, but when you begin, you feel 'where do I start on this process?'. Benchmarking will really help. It's not the end result but the start of a journey towards lots of changes; fleet performance, maybe the longevity of vehicles, driving capability,for example.

"The ultimate goal is to save money while reducing our on-road risk, by comparing statistics with other organisations and seeing where and how we can improve."

Peter Kelly, group compliance manager at Elis, which serves the hospitality, healthcare and workwear sector, knows more about benchmarking than most, having launched the company's own internal system five years ago. It's resulted in Elis winning prestigious accreditation plaudits.

With 370 HGVs, 200 other vehicles and 5,000 employees across three divisions and 32 sites, Elis had 'no clue' on basic data including fuel

ISTOCK.COM/BILL OXFORD

performance measurement, using activity indicators. It's a fantastic opportunity that will influence the way organisations manage risk and a big change of emphasis," Dobson says.

If there's one overriding lesson that road can learn from rail, it's the need for collaboration.

"It's the biggest factor in creating change because it lets people learn from each other. With benchmarking you're not just investing in safety on your own; you're teaming up with people trying to achieve the same goals with mutual benefit for all. Smaller organisations, with a few vans, will no longer feel they're on their own – they will be part of a bigger club."

Dobson adds: "Rail took masses of data and turned it into common standards everyone can use. It will be the same for road, for organisations of all sizes."

GAPS AND WEAKNESSES

Not every organisation constantly delivers the best in road or rail. Benchmarking will enable fleets to measure themselves, identifying gaps and weaknesses, by precise data gathering and analysis.

"That is what benchmarking is about; it's how we achieved safer railways," Dobson says.

"The great thing is that in future nobody will be doing this in isolation – everyone can pull together. But its success will be directly proportional to how well organisations work together.

"It's all about collaboration. You can't collaborate on your own!"

consumption and 'event' rates. Elis had diverse working practices and telematics providers, making comparison and measurement impossible.

With CEO backing, all data – and communication via management to drivers – was unified, enabling direct comparison, right down to individual driver level. Truck cameras were also installed. Being able to compare data was, says Kelly, "transformative".

MANAGEMENT: "The first milestone was seeing how divisions performed comparatively from a fuel consumption and driver behaviour perspective. We didn't just install telematics, but analysed the data, which was sent, monthly, to depot managers, regional managers and the UK MD. Everyone saw how everyone else performed in the league. Nobody wanted to be bottom! It introduced competitive fun; everyone was engaged which was vital."

DRIVERS: "Before benchmarking, drivers rushed to finish more quickly. After analysing the data – and drivers saw it on their tablets – that stopped. Depot managers had benchmarking data to coach individual drivers needing attention. Drivers became less stressed, safer, and sick days improved 20%."

FLEET: "The UK MD sees how regional directors perform, and we know more about our fleet than ever, letting us manage it better. For regions not performing so well there's a reason; we can find out why through benchmarking and address it."

COSTS: "Thanks, in part, to the cameras and, in part, to benchmarking, insurance costs are down by £1 million per annum. Fuel savings are £250,000 pa."

TELEMATICS: "It's not about installing telematics; it's what you do with the data; benchmarking it makes the difference."

Kelly adds: "National benchmarking will be transformative, taking safety and cost savings to the next level. Just as our league tables have done, benchmarking will encourage everyone to do better. We've never had an opportunity to see how other firms perform; sharing data will let us all improve. We shall certainly look for new ways of improving, using data from other companies."

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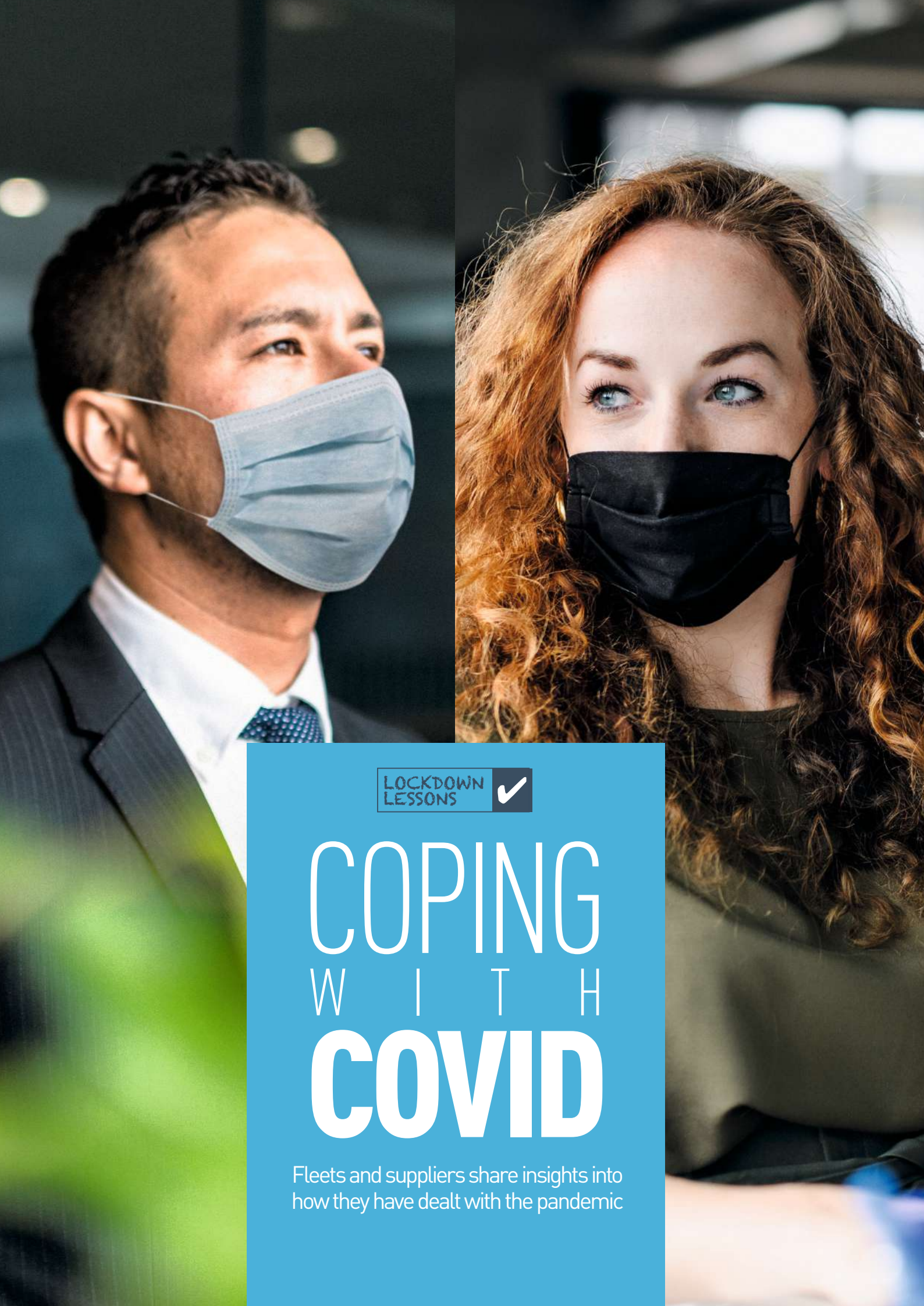

LOCKDOWN LESSONS

COPING WITH COVID

Fleets and suppliers share insights into how they have dealt with the pandemic

Lockdown learnings for UK businesses

Fleets share insights into how they have been dealing with the pandemic. *Stephen Briers* reports

The past 12 months following the first 'stay at home' Covid-19 instruction have thrown up countless challenges for fleet decision-makers.

Some have seen a surge in demand for services, resulting in a need to co-opt more vehicles at short notice to cope with requirements. Others have seen field-based staff now working from home, with their cars barely turning a wheel.

During the height of the pandemic, UK organisations stepped up to help save lives and keep the country running.

These progressive essential services companies range from bluelight to postal, delivery firms to telecommunications, and utilities to housing associations.

They have been quietly working away in the background implementing new process and keeping the vehicles on the road that we rely on: the ambulances, the fire engines, the police vehicles, the vans delivering food, parcels and medication, the refuse trucks and gritters, the plumbers, electricians and gas engineers.

It's a world where, as John Gorton, head of transport at Kent and Essex Police, puts it, "the vehicle is a transmitter"; where:

- Simply handing over a set of car keys presents a risk.
- Initiatives that have brought efficiencies to fleets, like van sharing, have had to be dropped and new ways of working found.
- Communication and staff morale has, arguably, never been more important.

So, a year on from the first UK lockdown, what lessons have been learned?

BE AWARE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Fleet operators are conscious that their drivers, workshop staff and other fleet team members may be feeling anxious, suffering from fatigue or feeling lonely and missing 'office chat' if they are working remotely.

Royal Mail Fleet kept track of how staff felt by asking them to give scores for tiredness and morale during team meetings so they know who may require extra support.

At South Yorkshire Police, staff have access to an app which includes hints and tips for wellbeing and mindfulness techniques.

Meanwhile, the fleet team at National Grid has a daily Webex call, with work discussion banned, to "help lift spirits" and "have a bit of banter and humour to help relieve the impact of lockdown", says fleet manager Lorna McAtear.

Justin Laney, general manager – fleet at John Lewis Partnership (JLP), increased the number of "huddles" from one during office times to two for home-based workers via video. It gives the chance to share a brief update on what is happening within the department and to ask questions.

"We prioritise video calls, partly because so much of human communication is non-verbal, but also because for someone working on their own from home it can be very lonely. Some of these calls have 50 people all on video. That works really well," Laney says.

"Within the teams, if there is something to celebrate, we'll do that within the huddle. It is always good to celebrate good stuff.

"Every Friday, the company hosts virtual drinks with a quiz. It brings everyone together on a social level and is good fun."

While Yodel's fleet has been in full operation during the pandemic, head of fleet operations Ian Leonard offers words of advice for fleets whose drivers are due to return to work in the next few weeks, saying "put your people first".

He adds: "The return to normality will be a big shift and those who haven't driven for long periods of time will have to adjust.

"I also recommend checking vehicles thoroughly before putting them back on the road as nothing impacts vehicle performance more than standing idle for a prolonged period."

> "SOME OF THESE CALLS HAVE 50 PEOPLE ALL ON VIDEO. THAT WORKS REALLY WELL"
>
> **JUSTIN LANEY, JLP**

CRISIS MANAGEMENT/PLANNING IS VITAL

Covid-19 has been a true test of resilience, even for public sector organisations who plan for emergency situations like pandemics.

When Covid-19 hit, the police service put its contingency plans into action (essentially a command structure whereby a chief officer oversees every aspect) but plans have to be continually adjusted as the situation evolves.

As John Gorton points out: "No matter how good your planning is, it never survives contact with the 'enemy'. You always end up having to adapt."

In its response to the pandemic, Defra implemented a full incident management structure, with fleet establishing its own incident management team to maintain core services.

Dale Eynon, director at Defra Group Fleet Services, says: "This cell deals with keeping the assets on the road, managing supply chains, and working with the end users to ensure continuity of service."

The majority of the fleet remains operational, namely vehicles and plant that are part of Defra's critical incident response or are related to protecting the health and safety of the workforce or others.

Some vehicles are on standby and are used as required. Responding to an incident or maintaining critical infrastructure (such as trash screens, which collect debris on rivers) often now requires two vehicles to ensure employees don't travel together.

Vehicles that are not in use are started up at least once a week to make sure they have full batteries etc. Drivers also undertake risk assessments/inspections to ensure they are safe to use. Where they require maintenance, this is booked in with Defra's service provider.

Sarah Gilding, head of joint vehicle fleet management at South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, set up a central Covid-19 team at the outset of the pandemic to deal with contingency planning. It sends daily updates to all staff such as PPE availability, staff absences and the number of local infections.

"We have analysts looking at the absence figures and we plan for how we would cope if we lost 10%, 30% or 50% of our staff," Gilding says.

"As a police force and fire and rescue service, we have business continuity plans and we carry out exercises to try to test for situations like this. I've sat in those exercises and thought 'well, this will never happen, will it?'. And this is beyond any expectation.

"We've certainly been tested to the limits in terms of technology and resilience."

Jan Kozlowski, ComCab London operations director, urges fleets to have to have a pandemic response as part of their contingency plans.

"Viruses like Swine Flu or Sars have flared up before," he says. "I think it would be naive to assume there will never be another virus in the long term. Our contingency plans will remain in place for the foreseeable future."

SANITISATION AND SOCIAL DISTANCING ARE NEW NORMS

South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue has minimised the instances in the workshop where more than one person works on a vehicle. In cases where that is unavoidable, masks give added protection.

"We've introduced other distancing measures," says Gilding. "For instance, officers no longer drive into the back of the compound, we're asking them to wait outside the front of the building, and we've changed meal breaks so there are not as many people having breaks at the same time."

Graham Telfer, Gateshead Council fleet manager, has also changed the process for vehicle maintenance.

"We have one centralised depot for maintenance, but to maintain safe distances we're working a 50% team reduction in shifts, so across the total team of 35, we'll have a team of 10 one week on, then the week after another team of 10 will come in," he says.

"There's some scope built in for eight or nine people to be off self-isolating if they or members of their family have symptoms.

"We got ourselves into a pattern, so we don't find ourselves over encumbered and the scheduling thrown into disarray."

SUPPLIER PARTNERSHIPS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

These are unprecedented times. But the fleet operators have been effusive in their praise of suppliers.

Well Pharmacy, the UK's third largest pharmacy chain, had to take on a number of new staff to fill gaps in its workforce. The challenge was to get them full trained within days.

However, internal departments and support from Well's fleet suppliers "made this process easier", says fleet manager David Sharples. DriveTech, for instance, carried out driving licence checks instantly with the DVLA as part of the screening process.

Well's lease provider, Lex Autolease, set-up a critical workers helpline. This "ensures our essential workers have the ways and means to maintain their vehicle, so it is fit for purpose", Sharples says.

Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, which makes up the majority of Well's fleet, and TrustFord also offered their demonstrator fleets should it need to boost vehicles numbers, and Wilko offered staff and vehicles to help with pharmacy deliveries.

"It's great to see everyone working together for the greater good," Sharples says.

Leonard says the support from Yodel's dealer networks, such as Mercedes-Benz and Daf, as well as its tier one conversion and specialist vehicles suppliers, including Cartwright Fleet Services, Terberg and Jungheinrich, have been essential to maintaining service levels.

He says: "We have really experienced a fantastic service from our dealer network throughout the pandemic.

"Our suppliers have really stepped up and offered us excellent service and, as a result, we have not yet needed to defer anything. Our service providers have continued to work for us as before.

"WE HAVE ANALYSTS LOOKING AT THE ABSENCE FIGURES"

SARAH GILDING, SOUTH YORKSHIRE POLICE AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

NEW WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In the long-term, fleet operators expect there to be less need to travel for face-to-face meetings as video conferencing has worked well for staff meetings and keeping in touch with suppliers.

Staff currently working from home may wish this to continue beyond lockdown and expect flexible hours.

Fewer miles could mean fewer cars or different ways of funding them with potentially more interest in flexible contracts.

Telematics will play a greater role in determining vehicle utilisation and will be increasingly important in helping organisations find savings in the wake of the financial pressures many will face.

Eynon says: "As well as all the terrible sadness about the loss of life that has occurred in this pandemic, I always like to reflect on the positive challenges and opportunities that have come from this experience and believe the fleet industry will emerge a stronger, more vibrant service that can make better use of technology to deliver its services."

Julie Davies, Amey group fleet and plant compliance manager, has settled into using video conferencing rather than site visits to carry out compliance checks.

This includes checking in with the transport manager at each Amey depot to audit 10% of the fleet to check for insurance documents, maintenance and driver licencing, among other checks.

She selects five vehicles or 10% of the fleet at random and the same number of drivers.

Davies says: "I use suppliers' online systems to look at documents and maintenance schedules, along with our online pre-use vehicle checking portal. It's been a learning curve for me, but I am confident we're able to continue the same level of checks and audits that we would do in a normal situation."

Gate checks are still carried out, but with the assistance of the depot transport manager who will screen share with Davies to show images of notice boards and to documents such as insurance certificates and operator licences.

She says: "If anyone was to audit me, I can show them the evidence, there's always traceability."

Video conferencing will change how Davies manages suppliers when face-to-face meetings are allowed to resume.

Meetings were previously face-to-face each month, but may be reduced to once a quarter, with the monthly catch-ups now on a video call.

SSE had a work from home solution within its business continuity plan, which put it in a strong position when the crisis hit a year ago.

Simon Gray, SSE head of fleet and travel, says: "The lockdown prompted the fleet team to commit to a minimum of 50% reduction in travel once we return to some form of normality.

"I am an advocate of working from home as there is no point travelling to sit in an office and answer emails which can be done at home in the same way. While video conferencing does have its limitations, it should allow us to question our own travel arrangements to cut costs and reduce our environment impacts."

Funding flexibility has also become a greater priority for many fleet operators, with some considering shorter term leasing options.

Matt Hammond, head of fleet at Altrad Services, says: "I can definitely see an increase call for short term two-three-day hires and a greater requirement for pool cars at strategic locations."

Chris Connors, head of facilities and fleet at Countryside Properties, adds: "There definitely needs to be a shift in approach in my opinion. We need flexibility to keep the company car relevant to the perk users. I am not so sure it will be six-12 months leases as that is, effectively, a long-term rental approach, but we need to be less rigid."

Leonard believes companies will look to review their business models, with particular attention to home working and video conferencing.

While he thinks it is still too early to say what the long-term impact on fleets will be as a result of Covid-19, Yodel has experienced millions of consumers having to shop online more.

People who might have not been familiar with e-commerce now have become regular e-shoppers and this will continue to drive up parcel volumes and future demand for delivery.

"I believe the past few months have shown we have been able to operate as close to normal as possible while under pressure through unprecedented circumstances," Leonard says.

HOW FRONTLINE FLEETS HAVE CHANGED THEIR WORKING PROTOCOLS

- Create new regimes for cleaning vehicles, offices and workshops.
- Introduce social distancing measures.
- Source personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Review MOT, maintenance and servicing schedules.
- Engage with unions.
- Recruit staff or partner with other organisations.
- Stock up on bunkered fuel and introduce contactless fuel cards.
- Respond to the latest Government and industry developments.
- Liaise with suppliers.
- Delay tenders.
- Put projects on hold and accelerate others.
- Provide equipment and test new technologies for those working from home.
- Monitor staff absences and have strategies to cover them, and support those who are ill.
- Find ways to boost staff morale and support their mental health.

Never a better time to embrace change and make switch to EV

bp addresses the key concerns of undecided fleet decision-makers

Over the past year, we have seen just how quickly behaviours change, consumers adjust and businesses develop when there are challenges to overcome.

Research published in bp's *Future of Fleet Report*, revealed some challenges from fleet decision-makers across the UK and how they want to overcome current barriers to make the switch to electric vehicles (EVs).

GREEN AMBITION

Post-pandemic, the adoption of sustainable transport and cleaner and greener air is higher on the business agenda. Our research showed that 71% of fleet managers who have switched to EVs, did so because they wanted to 'be greener', proving a positive desire to do what is best for the environment as well as the business.

Our industry is in a moment of significant change; with the sale of new petrol and diesel cars set to be banned by 2030, the switch to EV is on the radar of many decision-makers. bp's Fuel and Charge card and app offers a seamless solution for fleet vehicles of all engine types. With a focus on end-to-end integration, mixed fleets have a one-card solution for all charging and fuelling needs.

STEPS TO AN ELECTRIC BUSINESS

We surveyed fleet managers and found the top concerns they have when it comes to making the move to electric.

1. Upfront cost (27%) – the cost can seem overwhelming at first. Therefore, you should consider the long-term gains, weigh the upfront cost against savings on fuel, tax and maintenance. Additionally, the Fuel and Charge card and app means you can switch some of your fleet now and some later – reducing the upfront cost.

2. Long haul journeys (25%) – the charging network is growing across the country – bp pulse has the largest network of ultra-fast chargers, with the goal of having 700 by 2025, and 1,400 by 2030. The Fuel and Charge app also helps drivers to find charging points close by, to give them peace of mind.

3. Charging at home (24%) – savings are most effective when charging is carried out overnight at home. bp offers customers fully integrated support through the installation of home charging via bp pulse.

4. Size of fleet vehicle (17%) – historically, EV models have been limited, however fleet managers now have more choice with an impressive range of cars, vans and trucks available with more being manufactured all the time.

The past 12 months have seen all of us become more flexible, needing to adapt more quickly than ever. There has never been a better time for fleet decision-makers to embrace change and take their first steps on the road to net zero, and bp's Fleet Solutions is here to support along the way.

"Our industry is in a moment of significant change; with the sale of new petrol and diesel cars set to be banned by 2030, the switch to EV is on the radar of many decision-makers"

To find out more, please see visit: bp.com

bp

Road to recovery: navigating the post-pandemic fleet landscape

Jayne Pett, director at Fleet Operations and TraXall UK, looks at the importance of knowledge and expertise in steering companies in the right direction on the post-pandemic road to recovery

Covid-19 has irrevocably reshaped the fleet landscape, with companies facing unprecedented challenges and new fleet pain points coming to the fore.

Not only are companies tasked with making the switch to more mobility-focused, electric-powered, data-driven fleets, but they are having to do this at a time when resources are increasingly stretched and fleet requirements are becoming more diverse.

There are now a myriad of considerations for businesses and fleet managers, and having a bespoke, fit-for-purpose fleet strategy is essential if companies are to emerge from this crisis efficient and future-proofed.

The focus for fleets should be on thriving – not just surviving – in this period of turmoil and acquiring the right expertise is the route to achieving this objective.

Protecting the bottom line

The need to adopt the most appropriate fleet strategy against a backdrop of economic uncertainty is one of the key challenges faced by fleets today.

Evolving fleet needs, for example, alongside sustainability considerations, has resulted in widespread reluctance to commit to long-term contract hires.

Rather than acting as a blockade, this situation opens the door to more flexible options, including mid-term leasing, hybrid schemes and mobility solutions.

In the current climate, efficiency, vehicle optimisation, and flexibility are integral to the success of a fleet – but businesses and fleet managers must be aware of all of the options available.

Consulting with experts and outsourcing services can help fleets return to the drawing board, re-evaluate core objectives, or simply reinvigorate existing fleet strategies.

From negotiating with suppliers and early terminations of unused vehicles, to flexible vehicle funding and cost management, turning to the experts for advice can help companies ensure their strategies are achievable, cost-effective, and suited to their unique fleet population.

Opportunities for early adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) can also be identified, and an EV plan developed to help companies make the frictionless transition to electric, without compromising their bottom line or operational efficiency.

The changing world of work

Changes to working practices are also having a ripple affect on fleet businesses.

With many drivers and vehicles off-road for an extended period, risk policies and procedures may need reassessing to ensure driver safety and legal compliance.

For example, trips to the office for employees now working from home may no longer be classified as commutes, but rather business journeys, calling for staff contracts to be reviewed to guarantee HMRC-compliant mileage claims and to ensure employees have the right insurance.

Driver training, wellbeing and risk assessments may also be required, as well as vehicle maintenance checks to ensure roadworthiness.

Furthermore, changes in working patterns may accelerate the move to mobility and increase the demand for pooled fleets and daily rentals.

With businesses and fleet managers having to adapt processes for legal compliance, cater for changing needs, while maintaining traditional benefits for reward and retention purposes, resources can become even more stretched.

Outsourcing services, however, can ensure all bases are covered, without the risk of costly oversights or employee disengagement.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been supporting clients during a period of significant uncertainty, helping them to review and realign their approach to fleet management to ensure optimal operation.

Our expert teams are here to help you. Visit www.fleetoperations.co.uk/healthcheck for post-Covid fleet advice tailored to your business. Or email advice@fleetoperations.co.uk or call 0844 567 8000.

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FORD MUSTANG MACH-E

Ford revives iconic badge to herald first venture into the all-electric market

By Stephen Briers

Ford has badged its first all-electric car a Mustang, generally regarded in the UK as an American muscle car, but now intended to be a flagship for its latest technology.

The new Mach-E SUV paves the way for a rapid roll-out of electric product over the next five years resulting in every Ford car becoming full-electric or plug-in hybrid by 2026, while every van model will have an electrified option by 2024.

Frustratingly for Ford, the new Mach-E's starting price of £40,295 falls outside the revised qualifying criteria for the plug-in grant (PiCG), which has dropped from £50,000 to £35,000.

However, Ford is confident that strong residuals and low maintenance costs will keep the total cost of ownership competitive for UK business, while drivers enjoy 1% BIK for the 2021/22 tax year, rising to 2% for the subsequent three years.

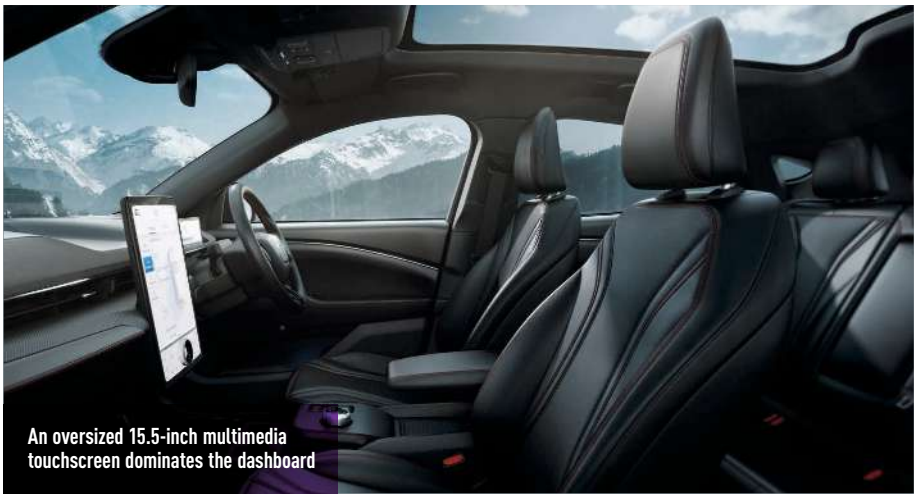
Built on a new platform, the Mach-E comes with two battery options: 76kWh, offering range of up to 273 miles, and 99kWh with up to 370 miles, giving it one of the most generous distances of any model on the market.

The entry-level car is the 254PS 76kWh; the step up is the 281PS 99kWh Extended Range costing just short of £50,000 (presumably priced with the previous PiCG threshold in mind). The all-wheel drive option, powered by dual motors, comes at a premium of around £6,000.

We tested the 260PS AWD 76kWh option offering 248 miles of range, priced at £46,650.

Rivals will include the Polestar 2, Jaguar I-Pace, Volkswagen ID.4, Audi e-tron and Tesla Model 3.

Inside, the car is spacious for five adults with a decent boot capacity, plus bonnet storage for the charging leads. An oversized 15.5-inch portrait multimedia touchscreen, seemingly beloved of the new gen of EVs – in particular, Tesla – dominates the dashboard, but does mean that key information is easily accessed.



An oversized 15.5-inch multimedia touchscreen dominates the dashboard

The Mach-E exudes its Mustang heritage with muscular face, slender headlights, bulbous bonnet and a swooping roofline giving an imposing presence on the road. It certainly turns heads, among teenagers and the middle-aged alike.

What it doesn't have is the V8 roar, but Ford does offer an option to select a propulsion sound drive mode which plays engine notes via the speaker system. It seemed a little pointless to us – one benefit of EVs is the relaxation offered by the silent electric engine.

Surprise-and-delight features include the door handles – well, lack of door handles. Instead, you press a button in the B-pillar to spring the door open by a few centimetres, allowing you to grab a small fin protruding from the frame to pull it fully open. It's a joy to use.

With a 0-62mph time of 6.3 seconds, this is clearly a potent car. Handling is decent, though not quite as sharp as Ford's finest examples, with plenty of grip and minimal body roll. Standard spec is generous and includes heated front seats and steering wheel, adaptive cruise control with stop & go and lane centring, lane-keeping aid and lane departure warning, pre-collision assist, front/rear parking sensors, blind spot information system (BLIS) with cross traffic alert, rear view camera and auto headlights.

Arguably of greater interest to companies and drivers are the efficiency levels. Fully charged, this test model has an official range of 248 miles; our car displayed 224 miles with 100% charge.

The discrepancy comes down to the use of electrical equipment and previous driving behaviour, which are factored into the indicated

	FLEET PICK Ford Mustang Mach-E Extended Range	FLEET PICK Ford Mustang Mach-E Standard Range	RANGE-TOPPER Ford Mustang Mach-E AWD First Edition
SPECIFICATIONS			
P11D Price	£49,925	£41,275	£58,025
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	0	0	0
Range (miles)	379	273	335
Monthly BIK tax (20%)	1%/£8	1%/£7	1%/£10
Annual VED	£0	£0	£0
Class 1A NIC	£69	£57	£80
Fuel cost	N/A	N/A	N/A
Running cost (4yrs/80k)	N/A	N/A	N/A
AFR	4ppm	4ppm	4ppm
Residual value (4yrs/80k)	£18,594/37%	£15,044/36%	£21,744/37%

Go to www.fleetnews.co.uk for tax figures from April 2020-2022

RIVALS

	POLESTAR 2 Dual Motor Long Range	TESLA MODEL 3 Long Range	VOLVO XC40 Recharge P8 R design
SPECIFICATIONS			
P11D Price	£45,845	£49,935	£53,245
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	0	0	0
Range (miles)	292	352	249
Monthly BIK tax (20%)	1%/£8	1%/£8	1%/£9
Annual VED	£0	£0	£0
Class 1A NIC	£63	£69	£73
Fuel cost	4.5ppm	3ppm	3ppm
Running cost (4yrs/80k)	43ppm	46ppm	50ppm
AFR	4ppm	4ppm	4ppm
Residual value (4yrs/80k)	£19,727/43%	£19,235/38%	£20,225/38%

range, as is the external temperature – it can reduce range by up to 15%. This can then be extended through regenerative braking which returns potentially wasted energy to the battery.

It can take some getting used to, especially for low-speed manoeuvres, although different levels of regenerative braking can be selected. However, used well, it can mean driving without ever braking, so-called one-pedal drive.

On a 115-mile round trip to Cambridge, I only touched the brakes once; everything else was performed using the regen braking which brings the car to a complete stop.

The journey used 148 miles worth of charge, leaving the car on 76 miles – reported as 42% charge remaining. That equates to 181 miles at 100% which suggests that, despite driving conservatively and keeping to the speed limit, more practice is needed to extend the range.

That said, the journey was in the default Active mode, rather than the efficiency Whisper (yes, really) mode. A third option is available for out-and-out performance – Untamed.

A key figure to monitor for efficiency on electric vehicles is miles per kWh. The Mach-E's computer showed 2.7 for the previous 250 miles, which included the delivery driver's journey to drop off the car. Target range for winter driving

is 3.5-4hWh; in summer, drivers should be aiming for 4-5kWh.

When range is nearly depleted, the Mach-E is capable of recharging from 20-80% in just 30 minutes at a 150kW rapid charge point. Empty-full charging on a 7kW home charger is 11 hours (or 23 miles range per hour), reducing to seven hours on a 22kW charger (35 miles per hour).

Ford's decision to opt for the Mustang badge for its first EV raised some eyebrows, but it could be a masterstroke as the Mach-E faces off against premium rivals. It is refined, stylish, well finished and has bags of appeal, deserving consideration on the company choice list.

WARDY'S WORLD

By Martin Ward

Just a few weeks ago, nobody had heard the word Stellantis; nobody knew what it was; and we certainly didn't think we would be using it in everyday conversation.

But Stellantis has arrived and now we use it like it's been around forever.

Understanding what it is exactly, is not as certain. We know that Groupe PSA and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), including Alfa and Jeep, now come under one umbrella – and a big umbrella it is too.

The use of shared parts and technology can only be a benefit with huge cost savings. And, as we have seen recently, Vauxhall (as part of the then PSA) has benefited from some excellent systems and drivetrains, although the traditional Vauxhall driver might not agree.

For those working for Stellantis it must be confusing and worrying. Who are they employed by? Should they be concerned about their future? I guess not all the jobs can be saved, that is an inevitable part of the cost savings which are desperately needed and it's not just Stellantis that needs to save a few quid.

Sorry about heritage sell-offs

Such a shame to see two heritage fleets going off to auction to be sold. Both Vauxhall and Mitsubishi have decided to sell their collections of models, some going back nearly a century.

So sad to see these well known and well loved cars going to new owners. It would be great to see them all going to one home, so the collection is kept intact, but I doubt that will happen.

I can sort of understand Mitsubishi selling theirs, as the company in the UK is closing. But I can't understand why Vauxhall, which is continuing, and getting stronger with new, better models, is disposing of theirs.

One thing I do know, they will regret doing it in years to come. Someone will say, whose stupid idea was that back in 2021 to sell off our heritage.

Talking of Vauxhall, I went down to Vauxhall HQ, or is it Groupe PSA HQ, or maybe it is Stellantis HQ in Coventry to drive the all-new Mokka in both 1.2 petrol (PSA engine) and the Mokka E, the full electric. It's a great looking SUV, which, despite its small dimensions, has loads of interior space.

When I got in the Mokka E it had 98% charge in it, and a range of 198 miles, which I thought was very acceptable. It was a treat to drive, quick and, as expected, very quiet.

VOLVO XC40 RECHARGE P8

Quick start and excellent road grip help to make the XC40 P8 great fun to drive

By Matt de Prez

The Volvo XC40 still oozes desirability, but it has a few flaws

It's not surprising that Volvo chose the XC40 as the flag bearer for its switch to fully electric powertrains. Despite launching four years ago, the compact SUV still oozes desirability and its underpinnings were designed from day one to suit electrification – so there's little compromise.

Only the range-topping P8 variant, which delivers 408PS, is available right now. But no matter how hard it tries, the XC40 just doesn't feel like a car with a £60,000 price tag. The Polestar 2, which offers a more exclusive badge and uses the same powertrain, is better value at £10,000 less.

In due course there will be lower-powered versions, with less kit, that will be more realistically priced for company car drivers.

The car delivers a mighty shove when you step on the accelerator, enough to crack 60mph from rest in less than five seconds. The weight of the battery gives excellent grip, making the XC40 P8 one of the most fun-to-drive Volvos available.

When it comes to range, there is a major flaw. And it's not how far the XC40 P8 can travel between charges – we'd say 200 miles should be expected with normal driving. It's the lack of a remaining range indicator in the car's instruments that is the problem. It only appears when the battery level reaches 25%.

The XC40 is proficient in many areas, but we feel a more affordable, lighter variant would make more sense for drivers, as cars like the Audi e-Tron and Mercedes-Benz EQC already satisfy this corner of the market.

ŠKODA OCTAVIA IV

Two new PHEV powertrains serve to add to Octavia's appeal as a company car

By Matt de Prez

With a light foot, we expect 60mpg could be achieved

The previous Škoda Octavia wasn't offered with a plug-in hybrid (PHEV) powertrain, so this time around there's a choice of two.

Both use the same 1.4-litre petrol engine and electric motor set-up as the Škoda Superb, alongside a whole crop of other VW Group PHEVs.

The Octavia iV develops 204PS and 350Nm, while the vRS iV serves up 245PS and 400Nm. That's right, there's a sporty version!

CO_2 emissions range from 22-36g/km and the zero-emission capability is up to 43 miles (39 miles for the vRS iV). That means the 'regular' Octavia iV sits in the 7% benefit-in-kind bracket.

Both are strong performers when compared with the rest of the Octavia's powertrain line-up, giving punchy acceleration and equally impressive efficiency.

We saw no less than 45mpg during our tests and expect upwards of 60mpg would be easily achievable with a light foot.

The vRS feels much more involving to drive, with firmer suspension, sports seats and heavier steering. Its power boost is also noticeable, although the effect on economy is minimal.

Don't expect a driving experience equal to the petrol vRS, however. The car's battery pack adds noticeable bulk and its six-speed automatic doesn't dispatch power as readily as a performance version requires.

Nonetheless, as a company car, the iV makes sense. The Octavia was already a brilliant fleet car and the new versions give it even wider appeal.

TOYOTA HIGHLANDER

Welcome debut of a seven-seater, but it's sitting in 'limbo'

By Matt de Prez

It seems like there is a never-ending slew of new cars coming from Toyota at the moment and the Highlander is perhaps the most surprising addition.

The large seven-seat SUV is offered in the UK for the first time, having been available in the USA and other markets for a number of years. It sits alongside premium models including the Land Rover Discovery and BMW X5, as well as the Kia Sorento and Hyundai Santa Fe.

At £50,000, it's one of the brand's most expensive cars, but, when compared with its premium-badged rivals, it is considerably more affordable.

It shares a platform with the Camry and utilises the same 2.5-litre petrol hybrid engine, serving up 241PS.

The sheer size of the Highlander gives it road presence, with its large wheels and grille enhancing the visual package. However, on the road the car feels less intimidating to drive and is easy to manoeuvre. With a roof height more closely aligned to SUVs in the category below, the Highlander lacks the full 'Lord of the Manor' driving position you get in a Discovery.

Interior space is plentiful and well suited to families

Interior space is plentiful and well suited to family life. There's multiple large storage compartments around the driver and the boot offers space from 298 litres to 1,900 litres dependent on how you configure the seats.

The third row, like all SUVs, is limited in space when compared with the front and middle seats, but should be adequate for a couple of kids.

Only two versions are offered, the Excel and the Excel Premium. A high level of standard equipment helps to justify the car's list price. All models are equipped with the Toyota Safety Sense package, which includes adaptive cruise control and lane-keeping. Excel models also have leather upholstery, heated front seats, three-zone climate control, a panoramic sunroof and a JBL sound system.

Stepping up to the Excel Premium (+£2,000) adds a 360-degree camera system, ventilated front seats and heated rear seats.

Toyota's hybrid powertrain is smooth and responsive, making light work of town and motorway driving. We were impressed by its fuel economy too, which averaged almost 40mpg.

From a tax perspective, CO_2 emissions of 160g/km mean that it sits in the 36% benefit-in-kind tax bracket, making it a less attractive proposition for drivers than some of the new plug-in hybrid models on offer.

More efficient hybrids are offered on both the Kia Sorento and Hyundai Santa Fe for considerably less than the Toyota and therein lies the problem. The Highlander sits in a sort of limbo between more dynamically capable and luxurious models such as the X5 and cheaper, no less capable vehicles from mainstream brands.

The Highlander is beautifully built, packed with technology and has an impressive engine, but it's a niche product that offers fleets little more than other, cheaper cars do.

FLEET PICK
TOYOTA HIGHLANDER EXCEL

SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D Price	£50,010
Monthly BIK (20%)	36%/£300
Class 1A NIC	£2,484
Annual VED	£530 then £465
RV (4yr/80k)	£17,351/34.7%
Fuel cost (ppm)	13.5
AFR (ppm)	18
Running cost (4yr/80k)	58.9
CO_2 (g/km)	60
Mpg	39.8

MERCEDES-BENZ GLA

GLA receives a welcome refresh and has a range of powertrains to suit all needs

By Matt de Prez

Since the all-new Mercedes-Benz A-Class launched a couple of years ago, there has been a flurry of new models that share its platform, including the CLA coupé and B Class MPV.

That left just the GLA standing on the old A-Class platform and, given the popularity of small SUVs, this new model brings a welcome refresh.

Mercedes hasn't just replaced the GLA with a new model though. It has introduced two small SUVs, with the GLB offering a more boxy conventional off-roader look while the GLA takes on a curvier and more city-friendly demeanour.

The new GLA is slightly shorter than before, but wider and taller. It looks more closely related to the B-Class in the flesh and feels similar to drive.

Like the rest of the cars in its immediate bloodline, the GLA is offered with three petrol and two diesel engines, plus a plug-in hybrid. There is even a pair of AMG versions, demonstrating the dynamic capability of the car's chassis.

	FLEET PICK GLA 250E EXCLUSIVE
SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D Price	£39,940
Monthly BIK (20%)	11%/£73
Class 1A NIC	£606
Annual VED	£0 then £140
RV (4yr/80k)	£15,532/39%
Fuel cost (ppm)	9
AFR (ppm)	10
Running cost (4yr/80k)	44.9
CO_2 (g/km)	32
Mpg/EV range	201.8mpg/37 miles

Two floating screens take care of the infotainment and instruments

Company car drivers are likely to look at the entry-level GLA 180 or the 200 d, which both attract similar benefit-in-kind (BIK) of £175 per month.

However, the 250 e plug-in hybrid provides a significant power boost, with 218PS on tap, and also cuts monthly tax bills to less than £75.

With a sizeable 15.6kWh battery, the GLA's electric range is slated at 37 miles. Unlike bigger, heavier models that struggle when running on electric, the GLA's maximum range is much easier to achieve.

We didn't manage the claimed 201mpg, however. But a combined average of more than 60mpg gives us confidence that it's an efficient choice if charged regularly.

The diesel models should also be able to crack 50mpg and may suit the highest mileage users best. The GLA 220 d is especially potent with 190PS and comes with all-wheel drive.

Equally, the 180 and 200 petrol variants, which both use the same 1.3-litre turbo engine, deserve credit for their combination of lively response and economy. They'll achieve closer to 40mpg.

The GLA's steering is light but direct, which, at times, makes the car feel a little unsettled. There's not much body roll, however, and the car handles well although falls short of the BMW X1 for outright driver engagement.

The interior is lifted wholesale from the A-Class and is impressive. Two floating screens take care of infotainment and instruments, while neatly detailed air vents and climate controls give an uncluttered and modern appearance.

It's spacious too, with adequate room for four adults. At the rear, the boot isn't the biggest in class but still provides 495 litres of space. Plug-in models lose 50 litres, however.

So the GLA is more refined, better to drive and feels more luxurious than ever. It also has a great range of powertrains, with something to suit all needs. When it comes to pricing, though, the car is a tad on the costly side.

Prices start at £31,000 and quickly get into C-Class territory once you opt for higher-specified trim levels. The 250 e, while cheap from a tax perspective, costs almost £40,000 without options.

JAGUAR F-PACE

New mild-hybrid engine line-up addresses tax burden of previous models

By Matt de Prez

Jaguar may be on the brink of becoming an electric-only car brand, but that hasn't stopped it from ensuring its current models bow out in style.

Among a heavy swathe of updates across the range, the F-Pace – its most popular car – receives a whole new engine line-up and redesigned interior. These changes, combined with a couple of visual tweaks to the body, bring it up-to-date and ready to attract user-choosers.

Fleet News has been a fan of the F-Pace since it arrived in 2016. We even named it our Large SUV of the Year at the 2017 Fleet News Awards. It offers a sportier, more driver-focused experience than its rivals, while its sleek body drips with desirability.

The only fly in the F-Pace's 'ointment' was a not-very-fleet-friendly range of petrol and diesel engines, making it tax heavy for drivers and with less competitive wholelife costs.

Thankfully, Jaguar looks to have solved that problem with this latest generation F-Pace. It now uses mild-hybrid technology across its engine line-up, which has been extensively revised.

The infotainment system has an 11.4-inch touchscreen

The four-cylinder Ingenium diesel is available with 163PS and 204PS power outputs, emitting 165-171g/km of CO_2. A new in-line six-cylinder diesel can also be specified, with 300PS.

Petrol power comes from a similar array of four- and six-cylinder units with power outputs ranging from 250PS to 400PS. From a tax perspective, these are a no-go for company car drivers, however.

The P400e plug-in hybrid is likely to be the pick of the bunch for user-choosers, with its 404PS power output and CO_2 emissions of 49g/km if you opt for the entry-level S trim. It's the first time Jaguar has offered an electrified powertrain on the F-Pace and it gives the car proper fleet credibility.

It can cover 33 miles on a charge, placing it in the 11% benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax band, thanks to a 17kWh battery pack. The electric motor is built into the gearbox, so the car can provide all-wheel drive when running on electric, petrol or both.

Another benefit of the F-Pace's plug-in hybrid system is it supports 32kW DC fast charging, meaning drivers can refill the battery in half an hour.

When the car was driven in hybrid mode, utilising both power sources where appropriate, it was returning 50mpg and promising a 29-mile range from a full charge. The performance is strong too, with 0-62mph coming up in 5.3 seconds.

We're yet to drive the diesel versions, but, on BIK alone, we'd be surprised if many drivers were tempted away from the P400e.

Jaguar engineers have worked their magic once again on the car's chassis. With a tweaked adaptive damper system it rides smoothly, yet retains the dynamic edge the previous model was famous for.

Inside, the new Pivi Pro infotainment system is a huge step forward when compared with the outgoing setup. It uses an 11.4-inch touchscreen with new software and enhanced connectivity, giving a vastly improved user experience.

The F-Pace goes head-to-head with the Volvo XC60 T6, Mercedes-Benz GLC 300 e and BMW X3 xDrive30e. Prices for the F-pace start at just more than £40,000, but the P400e costs upwards of £56,000, making it the most expensive.

	FLEET PICK JAGUAR F-PACE P400E S
SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D Price	£56,005
Monthly BIK (20%)	11%/£103
Class 1A NIC	£850
Annual VED	£0 then £480
RV (4yr/80k)	£21,093/38%
Fuel cost (ppm)	7
AFR (ppm)	12
Running cost (4yr/80k)	5ppm
CO_2 (g/km)	49
Mpg/EV range	129mpg/33 miles

VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER

T28 SWB STARTLINE 2.0 TDI 110

By Trevor Gehlcken

Half my life seems to be spent lugging stuff around Britain for my extended family. Anyone who drives a van will invariably find he or she suddenly has a whole new set of friends – all of whom need big things moving that won't go in their cars!

So, when a call from number two son just before the last lockdown started with the words: "Dad how much can you get in the back of your van?" I knew where it was leading.

I soon discovered the answer to that question is: "A hell of a lot more than you'd think."

As can be seen below, our Transporter was pretty well stacked when the dear boy needed help moving from one flat to another, but with a bit of shoving and cussing, we finally managed to get everything in, in one go.

Nowadays, people don't seem to have great big wardrobes (luckily for us) and the kitchen already had a full set of appliances, but still there was an awful lot on board, including a full-sized bed.

The van's full ply-lining meant we didn't have to worry about items bashing against the sides causing those dreaded reverse 'dings' and the fact that there was so much aboard meant we only had to use one ratchet tie, which screwed down the various bits of the bed to one side of the van.

The loading step height of the Transporter is a mere 50cm too, which meant we didn't have to lift heavy items up very high.

Another point to mention is that there are some dazzlingly bright lights in the load area – a nice change from the usual dim little half-candle-power items you find in most vans.

So once again, our doughty Transporter has proved itself a real star – and will soon go back to its owner with swathes of mighty praise ringing in its 'ears'.

CITROËN C5 AIRCROSS

FLAIR PLUG-IN HYBRID E-EAT8 PURETECH 180

By Gareth Roberts

Citroën's experience gained from its involvement in the World Rally Championship (WRC) delivers a high degree of ride comfort in the new C5 Aircross.

The suspension system, consisting of a series of hydraulic cushions, takes potholes and other uneven road surfaces in its stride.

This is further enhanced by seating which gives the right amount of lumber support on longer journeys.

As well as well as being a comfortable car, the C5 Aircross is also quiet. In 100% electric mode, it offers a refined driving experience. However, even when the petrol engine kicks-in, a degree of tranquillity remains thanks to acoustic laminated front windows on the hybrid, available as standard on all trim levels.

The C5 Aircross hybrid offers three drive modes: Electric, Hybrid or Sport, with the switch located between the driver and the gear selector.

Starting a journey in town in hybrid mode and battery power is likely to be drained before the engine starts, while at higher speeds on an A-road, both electric motor and petrol engine combine well.

ŠKODA OCTAVIA

SE TECHNOLOGY ESTATE 1.5TSI

By Tim Rose

Now we're emerging out of lockdown I'm spending a bit more time in the Octavia.

Even crossing the Cambridgeshire border felt slightly novel after three months of pandemic-enforced confinement, during which a visit to a regional vaccination centre seemed as valid an excuse for a drive out as any.

Those longer jaunts revealed that the 150PS 1.5-litre petrol engine is a reasonably gutsy, capable unit and efficient too, thanks to its active cylinder technology which switches seamlessly between four- and two-cylinders when under minimal strain. The last 300 miles have been covered at an average of 39mpg, which is pretty acceptable for family trips. I hope that would rise considerably once a few long distance motorway cruises are notched up.

This Octavia's ride is rather refined too, taking much of the anguish out of East Anglia's potholes. And, during the depths of winter, its optional winter pack, which bundles heated front seats and steering wheel for optimum comfort and heated windscreen and washer nozzles for drive-away convenience, has been much appreciated.

MERCEDES-BENZ A250E

AMG LINE PREMIUM PLUS

By Luke Neal

Three of the A250e's closest hot hatch hybrid rivals are the Volkswagen Golf GTE, Cupra Leon eHybrid and the Audi A3 40 TFSie. All are within £1,500 of each other with the Golf being the most expensive at £37,555, followed by the A-Class at £37,425. All have relatively small petrol engines but all offer more than 200PS. The A-Class is the quickest with a 0-62 time of 6.6 seconds despite having the largest battery here (15.6kW) weighing in at 150kg.

Price per mile comparisons run close, SMR costs for the Mercedes, for example, are 5.16 pence per mile (ppm), beaten only by the Golf in this group which comes in at 4.58ppm. However, due to its high residual value, the A250e is the most cost-efficient to run over four years/80,000 miles with a total cost per mile of 40.06p followed by the A3 (42.49p), then the Cupra (43.39p) and finally the Golf (45.27p).

Model	EV range	Empty to full charge time (3.5kW)
A3 40 TFSie	41 miles	four hours
A250e	44 miles	three hours
Golf GTE	31 miles	three hours
Cupra Leon Hybrid	32 miles	four hours

VOLVO S60

T8 R DESIGN

By Matt de Prez

It's our penultimate test of the S60 T8 and I've been thinking about how it compares with rivals.

The BMW 330e is becoming the most ubiquitous PHEV on UK roads, offering great driver engagement and a balance of efficiency and performance. Mercedes-Benz, meanwhile, is unique in the sector, offering the C 300 de with its high-mileage-friendly diesel engine.

Volvo's decision to place the S60's T8 powertrain as the flagship model in the range means it has greater performance than its German counterparts, but its £5,000 price difference means it's slightly out of reach for some. Running costs are 5-7ppm higher.

We'd love to see a cheaper S60 PHEV with around 200-250PS and a price to worry the leaders in the segment, of less than £40,000. That would make it a more attractive company car proposition.

Other brands are starting to use PHEV technology for their flagships, however. Mercedes has confirmed the new C Class AMG will be plug-in powered, while the Peugeot Sport Engineered 508 also uses electric power to boost performance and reduce emissions.

BMW 530E

XDRIVE M SPORT SALOON

By Stephen Briers

A growing number of companies and drivers are leapfrogging the plug-in hybrid (PHEV) stepping-stone and going straight from diesel to pure battery electric (BEV).

Having driven a couple of BEVs recently, I can see why. Both offered range in excess of 200 miles and both could be charged to full overnight (roughly 11 hours) or to 80% in around seven hours, giving 160 real-world miles. In contrast, PHEVs can take up to four hours to fully charge, with a range of around 34 miles; our BMW 530e, for example, takes 3.75 hours on my home Pod Point.

It's not linear either: plugging the 530e into the the local Tesco's free Pod Point during a 50-minute shop returned just four miles EV range (I'd hoped for closer to 10).

The 530e offers maximum return when pushing the electric range to its limits. Commutes exceeding 10 miles return high levels of efficiency – my own (albeit infrequent) journey of 17 miles uses just 14 miles of charge. Pottering around town saps the charge, though, with three miles of range commonly disappearing within just one mile of driving.

So how does the 530e match up against the traditional fleet 5 Series favourite, the diesel 520d, on costs?

KeeResources data on the *Fleet News* running cost calculator reveals a near-£12,000 price premium for the PHEV which is trimmed when looking at the fuel/depreciation/SMR costs over a four-year/80,000-mile cycle. The 530e costs £55,040 (68.8ppm) to the 520d's £46,576 (58.22ppm) – a difference of £8,464.

SMR is identical; the PHEV loses out on the depreciation (although fleets are reporting stronger than forecast residuals). It wins on fuel cost – but only just. KeeResources shows 11.92ppm versus 13.31.

Right now, my journeys are electric making my ppm roughly 6ppm, half the official figure. Maintain that performance over the operating cycle and the cost would fall by £4,700.

Then there is the annual NIC saving of £1,312 – totalling £5,248 over four years – plus the first-year VED saving of £545.

And that's before the employee's BIK savings are taking into consideration (£1,900 per year for a 20% taxpayer), some of which could be used to sway the financial calculations in the company's favour.

Bundled together for the right profile driver, the 530e PHEV makes financial sense from both an employee and employer perspective.

PEUGEOT 3008 FINAL TEST

GT HYBRID4

By Jeremy Bennett

"I didn't believe a Peugeot could be so good." I did say those words when gathering first impressions of the Peugeot 3008 when it arrived with *Fleet News* in October. In my defence, my experience was limited and opinion based on only driving the likes of the 206, 406 and 307 in the past 20 years.

More aggressive looking on the outside than the Citroën C5 Aircross and the Vauxhall Grandland X, with which it shares underpinnings, and sportier on the inside, our 3008 came with a generous spec sheet, befitting its £46,750 price. Top of which for this driver's enjoyment was the Focal 10-speaker stereo system, panoramic opening glass roof and Visio Park 360-degree colour camera – useful for manoeuvring the car to enable plugging in via a three-pin plug and Type 2 connector down the side of my house.

The build quality is excellent, too.

The flattened steering wheel suggested an F1 car, but is really to allow clear view of the digital instrument panel and was actually very easy to get comfortable with.

At 300PS, the 3008 GT Hybrid4's engine, the petrol 1.6L PureTech, is the most powerful ever fitted in a Peugeot. It provides the sort of smooth response through the eight-speed transmission that helps with the disappointment of running out of battery charge on any journey of more than around 28 miles (I got nowhere near the 36-mile WLTP figure), with the change from between power sources unnoticeable.

I've done about 2,200 miles in the 3008 in six months. Stats on the MyPeugeot app show an average combined fuel consumption of 171.2mpg, exceeding Peugeot's figure of 166.2mpg.

Running on petrol, the figure was 78.3mpg, up from 75.3 when I'd done just 500 miles.

April tax adjustments mean the 3008 with CO_2 emissions of 31g/km, moves from the 10% tax band to 11% in 2021/2022 (rising to 12% the following year).

There was much to change my dated mindset. Its new facelift (www.fleetnews.co.uk/3008-facelift) should only increase its appeal for those already in the know about the 3008's strengths.

AUDI A6 FINAL TEST

50 TFSI E S LINE

By Andrew Ryan

Our long-term A6 50 TFSI e S Line plug-in hybrid has now been returned to Audi and has left a big hole to fill. Not only because of the saloon's driveway-filling size, but also because of its unerring ability to offer impressive levels of comfort and refinement.

This is enhanced by its plug-in hybrid powertrain. When on electric power, external noise coming from sources such as the engine, wind and road was near non-existent and this changed little when the petrol engine came into action.

The PHEV powertrain produces a combined 299PS, which provides plenty of acceleration when needed, and the two power sources interact almost seamlessly.

With the battery fully charged – which would take around an hour-and-a-half from my home 7kW charger – it would do 30 miles on electric only.

On longer trips and in auto hybrid mode, which combines both the electric motor and petrol engine dependent on the circumstances, I achieved around 40mpg which, for a car of the A6's weight and power, was pretty impressive.

Although I've already referred to its size, the A6's dimensions are typical of the executive sector and it offers plenty of room and comfort for all.

It's 360-litre boot is 170 litres less than its petrol or diesel counterpart as its 14.1kWh battery sits under the boot floor, but it still offers plenty of space.

On the road, the A6 never feels big or unwieldy, instead feeling pretty agile, but its ability to cover miles effortlessly is perhaps its biggest attribute.

This feeling of luxury is enhanced further by the top-notch cabin design and build quality, which is at least on par with rivals and makes it a special place to travel in.

The A6 also makes a strong case for itself from a financial point of view. According to the *Fleet News* company car tax calculator, it will cost a fleet 68.11 pence per mile (ppm) to run over a four-year/80,000-mile cycle. This is almost identical to the 68.17ppm for a BMW 530 2.0e PHEV Sport Tech Pro.

The A6 sits in the 11% benefit-in-kind tax band, which – with its P11D price of £57,245 – means a 40% taxpayer would face a monthly bill of £210, which is not a lot for a car of this ability.

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Platooning trucks are edging closer

Trials are finally coming to UK roads this year

PLUS: IVECO S-WAY INCREASES DRIVER COMFORT • ADVICE FROM LOGISTICS UK • FUSO ECANTER 7.5 TONNES

Stellantis to launch three hydrogen vans, with UK models expected in 2022

Battery electric power is not the answer for all applications, it says

By Gareth Roberts

Van-makers are looking at whether hydrogen could provide commercial fleet operators with the range and payload to successfully make the switch to electric.

Currently, electric operators have the choice of 18 vans, which qualify for the plug-in van grant. Small electric vans, less than 2.5 tonnes, include the Nissan e-NV200 and Renault Kangoo ZE, while in the mid- to heavy van sector, the Vauxhall Vivaro-e, Mercedes-Benz eVito and Renault Master ZE are among a growing list of plug-in alternatives.

However, range, refill times and the impact of batteries on payload are restricting their deployment and use by some fleets.

Hydrogen could provide the answer, according to Stellantis (the new parent name for the merged PSA and FCA groups), which has announced it will launch three hydrogen plug-in hybrid, zero-emission vans based on the existing Citroën Dispatch, Peugeot Expert Partner and Vauxhall Vivaro (commercialfleet.org, April 7).

Carla Gohin, senior vice-president of research and innovation at Stellantis, believes that for vans, battery electric propulsion is not the answer for all applications.

Fleets, she said, wanted "zero-emission, long-range solutions", which still allowed for the transportation of large and heavy items by protecting their payload.

Furthermore, she acknowledged that charging times needed to be much shorter, because the operational model of many fleets does not allow for the subsequent downtime.

HYDROGEN HYBRID POWER

Gohin explained: "Given these boundary conditions, it was a logical consequence to direct our research and development efforts towards a hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle for first applications on light commercial vehicles as a complimentary solution for battery electric propulsion."

It is designed to mix power sources, like a petrol or diesel hybrid, so the battery provides power from a standstill, at low speeds and under acceleration, while the hydrogen fuel cell takes over as the speed increases when less energy is needed.

As with an electric vehicle (EV), the system recoups energy back into the battery when coasting or decelerating.

"We've designed a mid-power architecture fuel cell system, combining the advantages of both hydrogen and battery technology," said Gohin.

"The hydrogen provides the energy needed for long driving range. Whereas, the additional small battery provides the power for dynamic performances."

The vehicles can store 4.4kg of liquid hydrogen in chassis-mounted tanks, while a rechargeable 10.5kWh battery is housed under the seats.

As a result, the hydrogen van offers the same payload and cargo volume as the equivalent internal combustion engine (ICE) model (up to 1,100kg and 6,100 litres respectively).

Stellantis says the hydrogen tank can be refilled in just three minutes – similar to a diesel van – and the battery can provide a range of 30 miles on its own when fully charged, which takes about an hour. Together, the van has a total range of 250 miles.

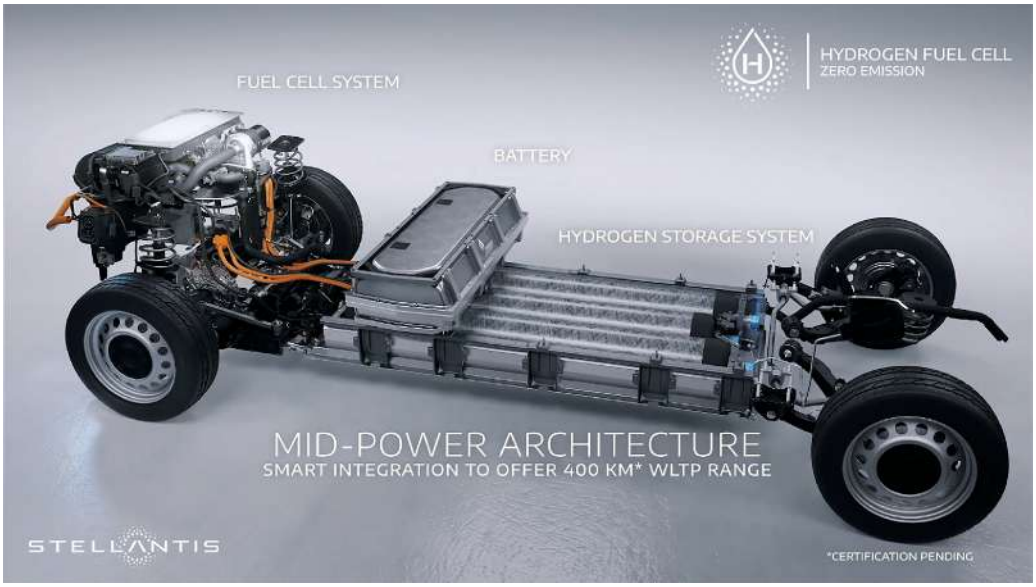
With a kilogramme of hydrogen costing around £10, the 4.4kg tank would cost £44 to fill, with the 230-mile hydrogen range resulting in a cost of 19p per mile – slightly higher than a comparable diesel van.

Maximum power is 136PS and maximum torque is 192lb ft, giving the van a 0-62mph time of 15 seconds and a top speed of 81mph. It is capable of towing up to a tonne.

Sales in left-hand drive markets will begin before the end of the year, while the new powertrain will be offered in the UK in 2022.

In terms of cost, Gohin said pricing has still to be confirmed, but Stellantis is trying to keep costs as low as possible by using its existing van architecture and bringing in hydrogen experts to accelerate its development.

Stellantis has entered into strategic partnerships with Faurecia and Symbio for the development of the fuel cell stacks and the storage system.



"HYDROGEN PROVIDES THE ENERGY NEEDED FOR LONG DRIVING RANGE"

CARLA GOHIN, STELLANTIS

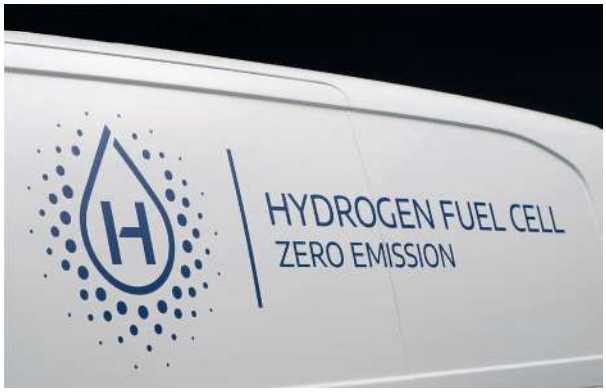
It is also focusing on total cost of ownership (TCO) and trying to attract as many businesses on board from the start to help reduce costs.

The Stellantis announcement comes after Renault revealed it was also developing a range of hydrogen vans, with hydrogen fuel cell specialist Plug Power.

The partnership aims to provide turnkey fuel cell vehicle solutions, fuel and refuelling infrastructure, targeting a 30% share of the fuel cell-powered van market in Europe.

Luca de Meo, CEO of Renault, says that it is the manufacturer's ambition to position France as a "bridgehead of industrial, technical and commercial development in this key technology", and to become the "European leader" in fuel cell vans.

The initial focus will be on the heavy van segment, utilising the Trafic and Master vehicle platforms, and the first hydrogen-powered vans are expected to be deployed on pilot fleets later this year.



HYDROGEN FLEET TRIALS

Siemens Mobility introduced a dual-fuel hydrogen field-services van to its fleet on a trial basis, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, earlier this year (commercialfleet.org, January 7).

The converted Renault Master has been fitted with a green hydrogen fuel tank for use in combination with conventional diesel fuel.

This allows it to achieve up to 180mpg in dual-fuel mode, with diesel-only operation available as a back-up.

It takes less than 10 minutes to refuel with hydrogen, which is produced from renewable energy sources and reduces carbon emissions.

Meanwhile, hydrogen fuel conversion specialist ULEMCo is leading a Government-backed project to deliver a zero-emission Ambulance for the London Ambulance Service (LAS).

ZERRO – the Zero Emission Rapid Response Ambulance – is expected to be delivered by the autumn in prototype form.

The vehicle incorporates a hydrogen fuel cell range extender with an electric drive, low frame chassis and bespoke lightweight ambulance body designed and manufactured by Woodall Nicholson Group's Mellor, Promech Technologies and VCS.

Working with ULEMCo and LAS are Lyra Electronics, which will provide DC-DC electronics capability, and Ocado, which has experience of light-weighting and the practical use of EVs.

HYDROGEN REFUELLING STATIONS

Hydrogen refuelling stations are still scarce across Europe, but the new models from Stellantis have received direct funding from the German government for their development, and are backed by a multi-billion Euros investment in EU hydrogen charging infrastructure being rolled out by French and German governments ahead of the EU's target for carbon neutrality in 2050.

Currently, there are 25 hydrogen refuelling stations in France and 90 in Germany, with more being added every month.

The UK has 14 hydrogen refuelling stations, according to UK H2 Mobility. The majority are in the south of England, with two in Wales, two in Scotland and one in the north of England.

Last month, the Government committed £3 million of funding to kickstart the launch of a hydrogen transport hub in Tees Valley.

The site, which is expected to be fully operational by 2025, will be used to research and trial hydrogen-powered transport solutions (commercialfleet.org, March 17),

By creating real-world hydrogen transport pilots, the Government hopes to better understand the role hydrogen has in meeting its 2050 net-zero ambitions.

Pop-up trials could see shops, supermarkets, online retailers, warehouse operators and delivery companies using hydrogen-powered transport to move goods and carry out last-mile deliveries.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

By Andy Picton, chief commercial vehicle editor, Glass's

Vauxhall Vivaro 20th anniversary

It only seems like yesterday, when the new British-built Vivaro van launched. From its original 1.9-litre diesel and 2.0-litre petrol offerings in 2001, the Vivaro has grown into one of the most popular LCVs on UK roads, loved by fleets and sole traders alike. Now including the all-electric Vivaro-e in its range, the Vivaro continues to go from strength to strength.

Average used LCV values rise dramatically since 2016

Looking through the myriad of data Glass's collects each month, it is amazing to see how far average used values have risen over the past five years. Although average mileages reduced by just more than 3,000 miles and average age reduced by five months, used values have outstripped these small reductions by nearly 30%.

Shortage of new LCVs increases demand for Euro 6 stock

The current shortage of new LCV stock in the UK is one factor that is expected to maintain used Euro 6 values at a staggeringly high level.

Coca Cola seeks Supreme Court appeal

Coca Cola is to appeal to the Supreme Court in an attempt to overturn the Court of Appeal's decision to treat two Volkswagen T5 Transporter Kombis and a Vauxhall Vivaro Double Cab-in-Van as cars for company car tax purposes. Should the appeal be granted, HMRC has promised a full review. Both 'crew vans' and double cab pick-ups have grown in popularity in recent years to the extent that they now make up around 90% of the 4x4 sector. If the tax position of 4x4 double cab pick-ups changes, this could signal the demise of volume sales in this sector.

Confused messaging

The decision by the Department for Transport to reduce the plug-in van grant is sending confusing messaging. Manufacturers continue to invest heavily in research and development, launching new products while seeing sales increase as operators buy into the benefits of battery electric vehicles. If the Government is serious about reducing carbon footprint and being a leader in zero-emission mobility, there is a continued need to support the automotive industry.

Glass's

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Vivaro-electrifying British business

Winner of International
Van of the Year 2021
New all-electric Vivaro-e

INTERNATIONAL 2021 VAUXHALL VIVARO-e VAN OF THE YEAR

Carries British business

VAUXHALL

Fuel economy and CO_2 results for the New Vivaro-e Elite L1 3100 100kW (136PS) – 75kWh battery. Mpg (l/100km): N/A. CO_2 emissions: 0g/km. Electric range up to 205 miles (WLTP).

The New Vivaro-e is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Range data given has been determined according to WLTP test procedure methodology. The figures shown are intended for comparability purposes only and should only be compared to other cars tested to the same technical standard. The range you achieve under real world driving conditions will depend upon a number of factors, including but not limited to: the accessories fitted (pre and post registration); charging frequency; personal driving style; vehicle payload and route characteristics; variations in weather; heating/air conditioning; pre-conditioning and battery condition. Please note, EV range assumes that vehicle has been pre-conditioned prior to journey. WLTP figure includes 50% payload. Please note, EV range is achieved in 'normal' mode. 'Power' mode will decrease range and 'Eco' mode will extend range although power, torque and climate control are limited. For more information, contact your local Vauxhall Retailer.

Iveco 'stands up' for increased driver comfort with its S-Way

Roomier cabs with improved connectivity are attracting the interest of transport fleets

Rogers Transport in Hampshire has been early adopters of the beefy Cursor 13 diesel

Controls in the S-Way are close at hand for the driver in redesigned interior

By John Lewis

Transport fleets eager to recruit and retain truck drivers in a climate of continued shortage need to offer them plenty of comfort and lots of power. That means providing them with a roomy cab; and vehicle specifications are being influenced accordingly.

Some 75% of the newly-introduced Iveco S-Way tractor units going to British customers have been ordered with the big AS cab rather than the narrower AT or AD cabs, says Iveco's UK business line director, Gareth Lumsdaine. The 2.5m-wide AS sleeper offers up to 2.15m of internal height, making it easy for drivers to stand up without bumping their heads.

The majority of customers are opting for the 11.1-litre Cursor 11 engine at 466PS or 487PS.

"It accounts for around 60% to 65% of our S-Way diesel volume," Lumsdaine observes.

However, he has been surprised by the level of interest in the beefier 12.9-litre Cursor 13 diesel at 517PS or a range-topping 578PS, with Iveco loyalist Rogers Transport of Tadley, Hampshire, among the early adopters of the latter.

Cursor 11 is additionally marketed at 426PS. Mention should also be made of the availability of the 8.7-litre Cursor 9 at 335PS, 365PS and 406PS.

Fitted with a new and more-aerodynamic cab with a redesigned interior, including a new dashboard and keyless ignition, S-Way is said to be potentially up to 4% more fuel-efficient than its predecessor.

The stress Iveco is placing on connectivity will hopefully ensure this improvement is achieved in practice.

"Our aim is to drive down TCO (total cost of ownership) and maximise uptime," says Lumsdaine.

An onboard connectivity box is installed as part of Smart Pack, which is fitted as standard and is linked to Microsoft's Azure cloud computing service. It allows operators to monitor their S-Ways remotely, keep tabs on fuel usage and CO_2 output, and download tachograph data.

Under the Iveco On banner, all S-Ways are connected to the dealer network and to Iveco's European control centre. Faults can be diagnosed from afar and software updated over the air, while predictive maintenance can assess how soon before key components – brake pads, for instance – will need swapping.

Iveco has resolutely touted the environmental benefits of compressed natural gas and liquefied natural gas in recent years and is continuing the theme with S-Way. So-called Natural Power versions of Cursor 9 are on offer at 274PS, 345PS and 406PS with a 466PS Natural Power Cursor 13 topping the CNG/LNG line-up.

While gas-powered trucks used largely to be the preserve of major fleets with in-house refuelling facilities and engineering departments confident of their ability to cope with them, their appeal is widening, according to Lumsdaine. An expanding refuelling infrastructure means that small-to-medium sized businesses (SMEs) are now more willing to consider them, he believes.

Nor need they worry about servicing glitches, he stresses. "All gas S-Ways come with a three-year repair and maintenance package compared with two years for diesel models," he says.

The X-Way multi-wheeler tipper chassis, which shares S-Way's cab, has now arrived on this side of the Channel. "We've got the first of them here and we're planning a mini road show, with a formal launch later this year, and demonstrators available in dealerships," he says.

Launching S-Way in the midst of a pandemic was never going to be easy – an online event replaced the more-usual face-to-face extravaganza – and Covid-19 pushed its British introduction back by around six months. "We got our first wheels on the ground just before Christmas," says Lumsdaine.

He is pleased with the way things have gone since.

"S-Way's appeal means that we are talking to people we wouldn't have been talking to 12 to 18 months ago," he says. "We're getting it in front of as many potential customers as possible so they can make an informed choice."

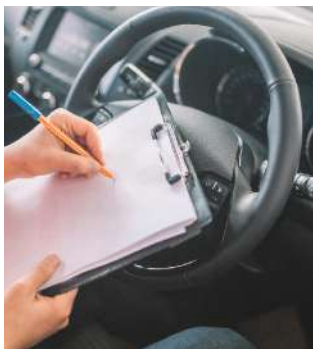
Gareth Lumsdaine says the appeal of gas-powered trucks is widening

ADVICE LINE

By Ray Marshall, senior transport advisor, Logistics UK

Q With regards to GB domestic drivers' hours and the use of logbooks, do drivers have to complete all the days shown on the sheet, e.g. rest for the weekends or for any time taken as holiday?

A There is no formal requirement to add information on days where there is no work activity. However, if the company wishes to ask drivers to complete every day, even if on holiday, as part of the company procedures, then that is fine.



ISTOCK/OLHATATCEKEN

Q Some of our vans are subject to operator licensing requirements and one of our directors has been fined for speeding in his own car. He has accepted a fixed penalty, but as he does not have a vocational driving licence, do we need to inform the Traffic Commissioner (TC) of this?

A It is expected that any notifiable offence committed by a "relevant person" must be notified to the TC. A relevant person is anyone who is named on the operator licence, such as a director or transport manager (TM), and any vocational driver driving a commercial vehicle. For directors and TMs, it does not matter what vehicle the offence is committed in. However, for a vocational driver, the notifiable offence is for commercial vehicles only. This includes non-O-licenced vehicles and smaller vans. A fixed penalty offence committed in their own car is not reportable by the employer, although the TC will be aware, and the driver may still be invited to a conduct hearing dependent on the circumstances. For more information on driver conduct, please refer to the Senior Traffic Commissioner's Statutory Document 6.

ISTOCK/MAXIPHOTO

Health and safety regulations – myth or real?

This information has been taken from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website. Through the Myth Busters Challenge Panel, you can challenge advice or decisions made in the name of health and safety that you believe are disproportionate or legally inaccurate.

Health and safety myth – can plasters be stocked in a first aid box?

An employee had cut her finger in the workplace and a colleague tried to get a plaster from the first aid kit but there were none available. The employee asked a manager if they could restock the kit but she replied that, due to health and safety reasons, such as allergies, plasters were no longer supplied for the first aid kit.

The employee has since heard of other cases in workplaces that will not stock plasters in their first aid kits for similar reasons. Could you please confirm if this is just another myth?

The HSE panel decision explained that there is no health and safety regulation which bans the provision of plasters; in fact, HSE's own guidance recommends a first aid box should stock plasters. If the concern is about the small risk of allergic reaction to some types of plaster, this can be easily managed by stocking the hypoallergenic variety or simply asking the person being treated if they are allergic to plasters before they are applied.

Employee told they were not allowed to eat fruit at their desk for health and safety reasons.

Throwing the cores/peels away in the rubbish bins by the desks is the main health and safety issue.

The employer may have a legitimate reason for prohibiting their employees from eating fruit at their desks, but they should be transparent about their reason and not pretend that health and safety legislation bans this practice.

Are plasters banned from first aid boxes?

ISTOCK/BERNIE_PHOTO

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PLATOONING TRUCKS EDGING EVER CLOSER

Platooning has the potential to improve road safety and operating efficiencies. It is coming to the UK's roads this year. *Andrew Ryan* reports

Like many new and emerging technologies, platooning seems to have dropped out of the spotlight after arriving in a blaze of publicity.

But, despite having a lower profile, the potential benefits of having two or more trucks connected with vehicle-to-vehicle communication and driving at close-quarters remain high.

In these situations, the lead vehicle takes control of the speed and direction of all the vehicles in the platoon and when the lead vehicle brakes, the following vehicles automatically brake with zero reaction time.

This is considered to significantly increase road safety, while other benefits include increased fuel efficiency, fewer emissions and reduced congestion (see panel, page 70).

"The media has found what I call solo driverless trucks more interesting and sexy, but the reality is the companies developing automated platooning are still very much out there," says Richard Bishop, second vice-chair of the American Trucking Association's automated and electric truck study group.

The concept of platooning originated in the United States and America is leading the world in its development.

Currently, 27 states allow the commercial deployment of driver-assisted truck platooning on multi-lane, divided limited access highways.

"More will come soon," says Bishop. "Peleton Technology (a company developing a commercially viable system) started this off with platooning where there are drivers doing the steering and are attentive in all trucks, and now they are working on a second generation where the following trucks are driverless."

Major fleets have already carried out trials in multiple US states and he expects first-generation vehicles with drivers doing the steering to be operating commercially on public roads in the US this year.

Other parts of the world, such as mainland Europe and the UK are not far behind, with manufacturers such as Daimler, Volvo, MAN and Scania deploying on-road prototypes.

The HelmUK project is up and running again after Covid-19 safeguards were put in place

The UK's £8.1 million HelmUK project was paused last year due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is now up-and-running again with all the necessary safeguards in place.

This is led by TRL with consortium partners including Highways England, Daf, Ricardo, DHL, Transport Systems Catapult, Millbrook, TNO, Costain and Apollo Vehicle Safety.

HelmUK began in September 2016 with technology development, extensive safety testing and driver training completed without the use of the road network.

Off-road trials were undertaken virtually using TRL's DigiCar and DigiTruck simulators as well as at Millbrook's Proving Ground.

On-road trials are scheduled to take place this year, with the project aiming to report its findings in 2022.

Initially, the on-road trial will focus on quieter, less complex stretches of dual carriageways and motorways.

The platoons will consist of up to three heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). During the early stages of the trials, they will run without a load, but, after thorough testing, will be used by DHL to carry goods as a normal part of their commercial operations.

A control group of journeys involving lorries carrying the same loads over the same routes without using the wireless platooning technology will be used as a comparison to test effectiveness.

Studies carried out in mainland Europe, America and Asia have identified potential fuel savings of between 4% and 30%, and HelmUK aims to determine if savings can be realised on the UK's roads when operating commercially.

These fuel savings and accompanying reduction in emissions are largely due to the lorries travelling closely together, decreasing wind resistance.

"The headway between the train of lorries is of real interest in terms of looking at fuel efficiency and how they are going to operate together on the road network," says Joanna White, head of intelligent transport systems group at Highways England.

"We've looked at what makes sense from a fuel efficiency point of view, but also from a safety point of view, what is practical and what gives us the level of safety that we are comfortable to support."

HelmUK's long-term vision for platooning proposes that HGV drivers on different routes, but with stretches of driving on the same section of road, are able to connect wirelessly for that selected period of time. During this time, they will form a platoon which will see the driver of the lead vehicle control braking and acceleration, meaning the following drivers need only to steer.

In mainland Europe, the Ertico Partnership of more than 120 stakeholders from eight mobility sectors is at the forefront of platooning developments with its involvement in the European Truck Platooning Challenge (ETPC) platform and its participation in the EU co-funded Ensemble project.

"Deployment of platooning on European roads is an important technological development that can assist global competitiveness in the freight sector, giving Europe the potential to address several challenges that the industry faces today," says Frank Daems, senior manager at ERTICO.

ETPC has a Vision 2022 ambition, a multi-stakeholder shared view of how this technology can hit the roads commercially in 2022.

The Ensemble project is led by TBO which is joined by 22 companies including truck manufacturers Daf, Daimler, Iveco, MAN, Scania and Volvo Group.

Founded in 2018, the project is now in its final year and aims to showcase its results through a multi-track platooning demonstration in the

UPS has been working with Gaussin to develop an electric autonomous trailer shifter

autumn to show interoperability across seven truck brands.

Platooning requires Level Two automated driving, while other predicted scenarios, such as that laid out in Dutch research organisation TNOP Voowaaden's 2015 white paper *Truck Platooning: Driving the Future of Transportation*, which see the drivers of following vehicles able to sleep or perform admin tasks as their HGV becomes fully self-driving, will require Level Three technology.

The advent of fully self-driving trucks (Level Five) on public roads which will not need a driver at all are generally considered to be many years away.

However, trials are already taking place in the UK to see how automated HGVs can be used on private sites to improve operations.

UPS, for example, has been working with Gaussin to develop an electric autonomous trailer shifter vehicle, which is currently being used at its London advanced technology depot.

This is used to move trailers and small body containers around the logistics yard which is a location where UPS can control a lot of the complexities of an autonomous operation, such as speed and traffic flow, as well as restricting third parties from entering those spaces.

"There's a lot of discussion around autonomous vehicles and their capabilities, but it's important that we retain context of not only what autonomous capabilities are, but also what the capabilities of autonomy are not," says Luke Wake, international director of automotive engineering and advanced technology group at UPS.

"It's important that we look at niche use cases initially where autonomy can work, and from there it can grow and it can develop."

The Gaussin EV also features battery-swap technology, which enables the shifter to be operated around the clock as a discharged battery pack is immediately replaced by a fully charged one.

Autonomous vehicle software company Oxbotica expects autonomous vehicles to be used in locations such as construction and mines much earlier than on public roads as it means they can be operated in controlled areas where they do not mix with vehicles driven by humans.

This view is supported by Mike Potts, chief executive of StreetDrone which is part of the £4.9 million CAL (Connected Automated Logistics) project unveiled in February.

"The reality is that autonomous vehicles are still many years from widespread adoption, however the technologies that we've already developed can be used in an industrial logistics setting and will quickly scale to many other similar contexts where reducing cost and increasing safety are critical factors in profitable operations," he says.

CAL will see 5G technology used in an operational automotive environment for the first time and will focus on the automation of a 40-tonne HGV.

Taking place close to Vantec at the Nissan test track in Sunderland, it will enable the removal of the driver and allow teleoperations to control the vehicles.

Artificial intelligence and advanced analytics will be used to review, stress test and hone the application of the technology during the 12-18-month test period.

The operation will be designed, built and supported by IoT service and solutions provider North, with funding secured by a consortium which comprises the North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA), Sunderland City Council, Newcastle University, Coventry University, Connected Places Catapult, StreetDrone and Perform Green.

"5G-enabled automated logistics is the next key innovation drive for last-mile logistics across the automotive sector," says Paul Butler, chief executive for the North East Automobile Alliance.

"This project has the potential to deliver significant efficiency gains and put the north-east at the forefront of connected and automated logistics technology."

THE BENEFITS OF PLATOONING

Platooning technology has the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits, not only to the logistics industry, but to all road users and the environment.

Here are four key examples:

1 Road safety: instantaneous automatic braking between the lorries could improve road safety in the event of an unexpected deceleration.

2 Congestion: The reduced distance between lorries means they take up less road space, potentially increasing traffic capacity and traffic flow.

3 Environmental: In previous trials significant savings in fuel efficiency have been identified, with corresponding reductions in emission. When high-sided HGVs travel closely together, the airflow around the leading vehicle envelops the vehicles in its slipstream so the following vehicles use less fuel to maintain the same speed. While the vehicles behind benefit the most, the leading HGV also experiences reduced aerodynamic force, saving fuel.

4 Business efficiency: This has the potential to deliver significant cost savings to the logistics industry, which will ultimately be reflected in the price of goods transported by road. The hauliers in the advisory group are helping to ensure that the benefits and constraints of using platoons for their businesses are correctly identified and assessed. *Source: HelmUK*

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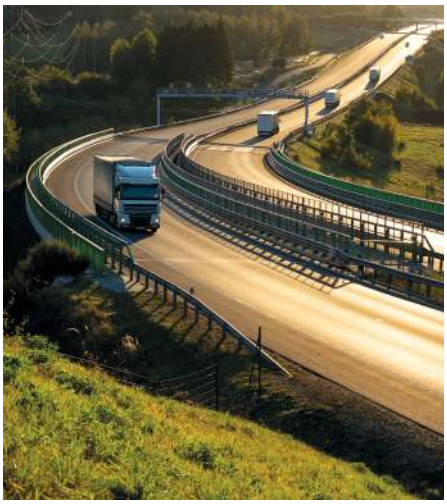

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FUSO ECANTER 7.5 TONNES

Battery electric truck does the work of three vans and is practical for final mile deliveries

By Tim Campbell

It seems every day we are hearing about a new electric van or truck, but in many cases, when you get past the headlines, it turns into an article about a one-off trial with a large fleet operator.

Since the eCanter launch in 2017, there are now more than 40 vehicles running in the United States, in excess of 60 trucks in Japan and 100 Fuso eCanters in Europe totalling 200-plus.

If you add all these together the total distance covered is now in excess of three million kilometres (a little less than two million miles).

So what makes the Fuso eCanter 7.5 tonne so popular, and what's it like to drive?

The Fuso 7C16e 4x2 rigid eCanter is available with a 135kW (185PS) electrical motor which incorporates a reduction gear and 390Nm of torque and this delivers 1,100Nm at the propeller shaft.

The approach by Fuso for its batteries is typical of a Daimler Trucks company, as they use a modular format and these are individually rated at 13.8kWh.

In the case of the 7.49-tonne gross vehicle weight eCanter, this uses six modular packs giving a total gross energy availability of 82.8kWh, although only 66kWh is usable due to the need for the batteries to retain a minimum amount of energy for critical operational systems.

One of the major drawbacks of battery electric trucks is the weight of the batteries and, therefore, the potential effect it has on the available payload.

In some cases, the payload has been compromised to the point of making virtually uncommercial but that's not the case with the eCanter.

The weights are almost on a par with the diesel equivalent. This means it has a body and payload capacity of 4,200kgs and, in the case of the road test truck which had an 18ft Fitzgerald tipping box body and Aerodyne roof deflector and side collars, it still had a payload of 3,190kgs.

These numbers start to dispel a few of the myths associated with battery electric trucks although, of course, there are other factors to be taken into account to make it ideal.

The 3.4m wheelbase truck sits on 205/75R 17.5C tyres all round and the plated weight of the steel suspended front axle was 3,100kgs. The rear also has rear steel suspension rated at 5,540kgs, allowing for a weight loading tolerance of more than a tonne.

The Fuso eCanter uses the virtually universal Type 2 connecter and can be charged either via AC or DC. It takes around 11 hours on a 7kW AC charger or 60 minutes on a 50kW DC charger to go from zero to 80%.

When fully charged, the eCanter has a range of around 62 miles which, according to the Fuso team, will satisfy many of the final mile and urban delivery companies.

The eCanter cab is in the mould of the Asian designed trucks, with a forward control cab that sits close to the ground once again adding to its urban delivery credentials. Inside, there's a Truckconnect infotainment system with radio, sat-nav, Bluetooth, complete with battery monitoring display and real-time telematics. Automatic air conditioning with e-Cabin heater adds to the comfort.

It takes one step to get into the eCanter cab and together with the large windows it offers a great view all round, essential for urban deliveries.

The eCanter is the world's first series production battery electric truck and it makes sense in so many ways. Urban zero emission delivery and with a chassis/body payload in excess of four tonnes it could replace three vans reducing congestion as well!

	MODEL TESTED
SPECIFICATIONS	
Model	eCanter 7C16e 4x2
Cab	Day
Motor	Electric
Power	185PS (135kW)
Torque	390Nm
Gearbox	Automatic
Front axle	3,100kgs
Rear axles	5,540kgs
GVW	7,490kgs
Chassis weight	3,290kgs (4,300kgs with body)
Wheelbase	3,400mm
Brakes	Discs all round
Batteries	6x13.8kWh 82.8kWh total

THE LAST WORD

REBECCA DUCKWORTH

CHIEF SALES OFFICER AT QV SYSTEMS

Animal-lover Duckworth is also very much a people person. She likes the people-first ethos of her company and says that "if you don't have a great team, you won't get results"

My hobbies and interests are tennis, dogs, cooking and horse racing. But the top has to be international travel. I love nothing more than exploring new countries.

My first memory associated with a car was travelling in a Chevrolet Caprice wood-panelled station wagon, facing out the back, eating ice lollies.

My favourite movie quote is "I feel the need, the need for speed" from *Top Gun.*

The song I would have on my driving playlist is *Bizarre Love Triangle* by New Order.

My pet hate is people that don't like animals.

The advice I would give to my 18-year-old self is fail fast and learn from your mistakes.

If money was no object I would open a farm to grow fresh produce, raise animals and breed cocker spaniels.

If transport minister for the day I would figure out a solution for parking within London – it's a nightmare.

A book that I would recommend others read is *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F**** – Mark Manson.**

Why fleet

Customer experience is going through a revolution in so many sectors, partly because technology allows companies to be more responsive, but primarily because customers are expecting better care. We're taking the lessons from industries like retail and applying them to fleet management.

How I got here

Originally from the US, I joined QV Systems in 2018 because I liked its people-first ethos. I live by the mantra "stop selling, start helping", so I focus on how I can help people.

Latest products, developments and achievements

QV Systems provides technology that makes lending and leasing simpler and more efficient for everyone in the chain. Our Accelerate Platform uses innovations, such as a modular approach and open APIs, to connect the UK Finance Ecosystem.

My company in three words

Innovative, explorative and future-ready

Career influence

CeCe Morken, who is now president and CEO of Headspace, has been a huge influence. I first worked with her at Digital Insight and then at Intuit. CeCe embodies everything I believe a good leader should be, with a real drive to succeed, both as an individual and within a team.

What makes a good CSO?

Although ultimately, you'll be measured by your results, a good leader is someone who can get the best out of the teams they manage. For me, that means thinking about the customer first, creating a diverse and inclusive team, and encouraging collaboration across the business. If you don't have a great team, you won't get the results.

Advice to fleet newcomers

Attack it with open arms, be open to new experiences and innovative solutions. If you find someone you admire, approach them to see if they'll be your mentor.

Next issue: Paul Graham, director of network operations at Yodel

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