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AWARDS

CommercialFleet

Blueprint for a safe fleet

Two-time safe fleet winner Altrad has a proven track record; Sarah Turner lifts the lid on its policies

Driver recruitment

NARDS ner Garden Party

> How better wages, benefits and HGV cabs are wooing people to the industry

> > **Micromobility solutions**

Fleets turn to e-cargo bikes to deliver inner city transport solutions

Driver training insight

Three steps to improve safety, save costs and enhance efficiency

THE BIG PICTURE

Three months after announcing they were in talks, Société Générale-owned ALD has confirmed its intention to buy leasing rival LeasePlan for \notin 4.9 billion (£4.1bn) from a consortium led by private equity firm TDR.

It would unite two of the three major non-captive European providers (Arval is the other) and marks the biggest ever global leasing deal. In the UK, it brings together FN50 number four and five to create a group with around 316,000 funded vehicles, making it the country's largest leasing provider (the Lloyds Autolease and Lex merger in 2009 created a UK super-group of 360,000 vehicles, but has since shrunk to 282,720).

The two businesses – provisionally named 'NewALD' – are complementary, with ALD particularly strong in manufacturer white label funding and LeasePlan in corporate and broker business. Consequently, LeasePlan has a 60:40 split of business-to-retail funding on cars, while ALD is weighted the other way, with 53% of its funding in the retail/private market.

The merger will limit choice for some fleets, primarily those seeking pan-European contracts or multi-bid agreements; in the UK, there remains an abundance of leasing providers with myriad ownership structures, including bank, manufacturer, dealer, private equity and independent.

There may be monopoly concerns in Ireland where LeasePlan and ALD already dominate the market, while in mainland Europe, commentators predict a possible rise in local hero contract hire companies, especially if the merger impacts customer service levels.

We'll be watching how this move influences ALD's sustainability targets. As a founding partner of EV100, LeasePlan has committed to transition its entire global funded fleet to zero emissions by 2030. In contrast, ALD's own electrification ambitions target 50% of new car deliveries to be electric by 2030.

Manufacturers might view the expanded group nervously because of the discounts it is likely to seek, although their own production capabilities are evolving as they seek to use the current supply shortages to better balance volume with demand.

Discounts may be harder to come by for everyone.

Nevertheless, NewALD, with its estimated 3.5 million vehicles globally, will create massive synergies and economies of scale, while extending its presence in the emerging smart mobility market, such as usership, subscriptions and car share.

This may ultimately lead to significant value for shareholders, but first it will have to go through the often painful, expensive and time-consuming process of merging back office functions, operational alignment and creating a single leadership and business culture, while maintaining customer service standards.

Not many have achieved this without at least some initial teething problems.



Stephen Briers, editor-in-chief, Fleet News click here to subscribe to the Fleet News daily newsletter and be first to see the latest news as it happens

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Rurning question:

Have you made any pledges for the new year such as Veganuary or Dry January or made any personal resolutions?

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-chief Stephen Briers 01733 468024 stephen.briers@bauermedia.co.uk To finally get around to constructing a new double-panel gate between the driveway and

side yard

Mike Roberts

mike.roberts@bauermedia.co.uk I haven't made any for many years. I'd only disappoint myself

Gareth Roberts 01733 468314 gareth.roberts@bauermedia.co.uk I've broken too many in the past to commit to any new ones

Features editor Andrew Ryan 01733 468308 andrew.ryan@bauermedia.co.uk Just the usual which are doomed to fail –

exercise more, eat better Head of digital Jeremy Bennett 01733 468655 jeremy.bennett@bauermedia.co.uk Home improvements, starting with a new

Fonce down the side of the house, which is in tatters in parts, down completely elsewhere Web producer Jess Maguire 01733 468655

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matt.deprez@bauermedia.co.uk Yes, to drive my old cars more. Sorry environment Photos istock, Chris Lowndes

PRODUCTION

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Luke weat 60 on as many holidays as possible Production editor David Buckley Every year I resolve to lose weight. But, having just returned home after eating a big breakfast fry-up, I guess it's not working – again! Senior designer Chris Stringer

Only to be fit enough to survive a marathon trail run down in Cornwall in July Head of project management Leanne Patterson Project manager Rosanna Readfern-Gray

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Zenith

WE'RE LEADING THE WAY TO ZERO

Car fleet choice lists are overhauled as van operators struggle to make plug-in vehicles' TCO figures work

Government grant cuts and other factors mean total cost of ownership benefits are eroded

By Gareth Roberts

leets wanting to make the switch to electric vehicles (EVs) face increased rentals after the Government cut the plug-in car and van grants.

Taken alongside rising energy costs and a lowering of the qualifying threshold, it means total cost of ownership (TCO) benefits for EVs have diminished in many cases versus internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

Company car choice lists also have been turned upside down and the financial case for electric vans may now be even harder to make.

The Government defended the cut, plus changes to the eligibility criteria, saying it wanted to "refocus" grants on more affordable vehicles and reduce rates to allow more people to benefit from the funding available.

PLUG-IN FUNDING

The changes, announced just days before Christmas, saw the PiCG, which had given consumers 35% off the purchase price of an EV up to a maximum of £2,500, cut by £1,000 to £1,500 (fleetnews.co.uk, December 15, 2021).

The eligibility threshold for the electric car grant was also reduced, falling by £3,000, from £35,000 to £32,000.

Furthermore, hybrid electric cars, which had CO₂ emissions of less than 50g/km and could travel at least

112km (70 miles) without any emissions, fell out of scope.

For small vans, 2.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight (gvw) or less, there was a cut of \pm 500. The grant, which had given consumers 35% off the purchase price up to a maximum of \pm 3,000, is now \pm 2,500.

For larger vans, 2-3.5 tonnes gvw, the grant has also been reduced, from a maximum of £6,000 to £5,000.

There were no changes to grant rates for vehicles weighing more than 3.5 tonnes.

The plug-in grant scheme has supported almost half a million EVs over the past decade, following its launch in 2011. But, with sales of zeroemission cars up by 89% and plug-in van orders more than 250% higher than in 2020, the reduction was inevitable at some stage.

Leasing companies have confirmed lease costs will rise. Arval says it is working closely with customers to understand the wholelife cost and the choice list implications of the changes.

"It is unavoidable that lease rates will rise, but the effects do vary significantly from vehicle-to-vehicle," explained Shaun Sadlier, head of consultancy at Arval UK.

"For a car costing less than £32,000 over 48 months, we're expecting the change to be an average of around £21 per month, but between £32,000-35,000, nearer £52 (per month)."

However, with some manufacturers adjusting prices to accommodate the recent changes, Sadlier says this could help "minimise the impact".

Almost two-thirds of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) previously eligible for the plug-in car grant (PiCG) now fall outside of its new scope. Of those 163 BEVs, just 62 still meet the terms, while the prices of another 30 were within £1,500 of the grant's new threshold.

PRICE REDUCTIONS

Stellantis brands – Vauxhall, Peugeot and Citroën – have since reduced the list price on some plug-in models to allow them to still qualify for the grant.

But, unlike March 2020, when the Government cut the electric car grant from £3,000 to £2,500, and excluded models that cost more than £35,000, most manufacturers are not rushing to reduce prices again.

Ashley Barnett, head of consultancy at Lex Autolease, said: "For a threeyear contract, for those manufacturers that don't react, the changes are going to push the price up by around £60-£70 per month."

Pricing experts at Cap HPI added to fleet woes by predicting changes to the plug-in grant also may have a negative effect on used BEV values, while increasing new car prices.

When the Government last cut the grant and changed the eligibility criteria, Cap HPI advised there would be no residual value impact, as used values for most affected models were generally not close to list price, or effective cost new, after the grant was applied.

Decreases in new car prices were unlikely to put pressure on used car values, it said.

This time, however, the changes come on the back of record-breaking rises in used car values through the past year and, although BEVs were slower to increase than ICE equivalents, three-year-old values are now up by 17.7% year-on-year.

When the increases in used car values are combined with the effects of the supply issues impacting the delivery of new cars, used retail values for many BEVs are already close to, or even above, the new car purchase price.

Dylan Setterfield, head of forecast strategy at Cap HPI, said: "In the short term, this is likely to accelerate a reduction in used EV values, which were already expected, particularly once the new car supply situation eases and especially for those cars reduced below £32,000."

However, he adds that the grant changes could not only increase the

WITH DISCOUNTS AND GRANTS DISAPPEARING, THIS WILL HAVE A DRAMATIC EFFECT ON THE MONTHLY LEASE COST //

STEVE WINTER, BRITISH GAS

£3,000 reduction in plug-in car grant threshold



3.6% market share of fully electric vans



price of new cars available today, but also of future BEV models launched in the UK, because the grant threshold will no longer be restraining new car price levels for most electric cars.

CHOICE LIST IMPACT

The immediate impact on pricing, however, is already proving disruptive for fleet choice lists, according to Nick Jones, manager of the strategic relationships team at Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions, which looks after the leasing company's major corporate accounts.

He explained how one fleet, which runs a ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV)-only scheme with a £40,000 P11D limit, had 154 vehicles available for quoting where 60 were below its £400 monthly threshold. Now just 12 cars – a reduction of 48 – meet all of its criteria following the changes to the grant.

Jones said: "The ID3 and ID4 were their two most popular vehicles. They can't get either now, which means drivers are going to have to make more of a contribution to bridge that gap than they previously had to do.

"It's putting a lot of strain on choice lists. We're seeing anything from a £30-70 a month increase in rentals."

To counter the issue, particularly with the semiconductor shortage still impacting vehicle supply, fleets are being persuaded to order electric vehicles early.

5



C Jones explained: "Where we know there is a volume commitment, we can get the order in for a batch of vehicles, secure them at a discount the OEM is happy with, and then attach drivers to those orders when they become available."

He also recommends fleets give drivers the option to trade-up by topping up allowances to access a wider range of plug-in cars.

Barnett, however, is concerned that, while fleets that have already started to make the switch to electric will continue with their journey, many that have not, will now hold back.

He said: "Those who were contemplating the move to electric, when it comes to a traditional company car fleet, may now put the brakes on, especially with the Budget due in March.

"My fear, from a sustainability perspective, is that companies will decide to give everybody cash and let them do their own thing.

"We can't carry on throwing money at EVs, but we've got to make sure that whatever signposts we're getting from the Government gives the market confidence."

ELECTRIC VAN CONCERNS

The deployment of electric vans is "still very much on a knife edge", according to Paul Hollick, chair of Association of Fleet Professionals.

The Government says it intends to end the sale of new ICE vans from 2030, at the same time as petrol and diesel cars.

However, that is just one or two replacement cycles away for many van fleet operators and the electric van market is still in its infancy.

Figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) show that the uptake of fully electric vans soared by 142.3% in 2021, although, given the low starting base, this equated to a relatively modest 12,759 zero emission vans and a total market share of 3.6%.

Fully electric cars, however, grabbed an 11.6% share of the new car market, with 190,727 BEVs registered in 2021.

Hollick explained: "With electric vans, cutting the grant just increases the wholelife costs, which leaves fleets asking the question whether it's worth

sticking with diesel for a bit longer."

Instead, he believes the Government should have continued to fund the plug-in van grant at the same level or even "ramped it up".

"These are specialist bits of kit and they are expensive and, particularly with the larger vans, a lot of fleets are struggling with the wholelife costs versus a diesel equivalent," he said.

"This just doesn't help. Something needs to fundamentally change for the vans to be adopted, because each day the challenge becomes even greater."

One of the country's biggest adopters of plug-in vans, British Gas, is planning to fully transition its fleet of almost 11,000 cars and vans to electric by 2025.

MAKING THE FIGURES WORK

However, head of fleet, Steve Winter, admits that he expects his costs to rise. Fleet calculations were already being impacted by rising energy prices, but the reduction in the Government grant is making it is even more difficult to make the sums add up.

Winter said: "Our TCO model is quite fragile at the moment because of the changes to the plug-in van grant."

Manufacturer discounts have disappeared for many fleets, with the semiconductor shortage hitting supply, and the cost of some vehicles has increased. "These are all hitting the TCO model,"

added Winter. "At the moment the TCO model is

ok, but with discounts and grants disappearing this will have a dramatic effect on the monthly lease cost."

Winter says he will also be impacted by a new limit on the number of times a fleet can apply for the plug-in grant.

Each business, organisation or individual may receive up to 1,000 grants each financial year (April 1 to March 31), with limits only applying to end users and not to lease companies.

British Gas expects to be ordering about 1,500 EVs each year for the next three years.

The utilities company has 2,000 electric vans on order, with 1,000 having joined the fleet already.

"We've got some price protection on those vehicles from Vauxhall, but they will now only qualify for the reduced grant," Winter said.

Grant reductions an attempt to make limited Government funds last longer



CHRISTOPHER CADDICK, HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT JCT600 VEHICLE LEASING SOLUTIONS We all knew it (the further reduction in grants) was coming, it was a case of when and how severe the change would be.

The previous change caused a stir at the time, but with hindsight, it didn't slow the uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) and it's still debatable whether this stimulated availability of more affordable EVs that weren't already coming to market.

For our customers adopting EVs, this change is being driven by the wholelife cost of the provision of the vehicle,

aided by a reduction in running costs and the benefit-inkind (BIK) tax savings to be realised.

In the most recent changes, cars below £32,000 are seeing a 40% reduction of £1,000 in the grant, increasing the monthly rental by £27.78 (less manufacturer discount) plus interest over a 36-month term.

For cars between £32,000 and £35,000, £2,500 is no longer available, increasing the rental by £69.44 (less manufacturer discount plus interest) over a 36-month term.

I don't see the change in the car grant making a significant impact to the uptake of EVs within the fleet sector in the short-term. It's the retail buyer that's missing out, as they're not seeing the significant wholelife cost savings available to fleet users.

More effort could be made to support retail buyers through a scrappage scheme, or supporting the purchase of used EVs to further stimulate the market.

For vans, it feels like more of a misstep. While a smaller percentage of the grant has been removed, 17% reduction or £500 for smaller vans and £1,000 for larger vans (£10.42 pv/pm and £20.83 respectively over a typical 48-month term, before discount and interest) this market is not as mature as the car market both in uptake and availability of suitable vehicles. And, then there's the cost of a 3.5-tonne BEV van.

List prices are typically between £60-£80k, and the discounts are a fraction of those offered on ICE vans. The cost differential is huge; was the van grant enough in the first place?

Interestingly, they've introduced a 1,000-vehicle cap for the number of vehicles a company can order to qualify for the grant.

Does it go far enough to ensure the longevity of the grant to support those sole traders, small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and mid-corporate fleets yet to adopt as they wait for more suitable vehicles to come to market?

The objective of the grant is to make EVs more affordable and encourage uptake to aid the road to zero; this change looks to be making a limited fund last longer.

Irrespective of changes in legislation, EVs will continue to dominate the discourse, and the industry will continue to innovate and support our customers to realise the vast benefits of EVs.

6

GO GREEN WITH THE ULTIMATE STAFF REWARD

<image>

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Fleet costs up after London increases its congestion and penalty charges

Logistics UK says the new measures 'will not provide the deterrent (to traffic) TfL intends'

By Gareth Roberts

ransport for London (TfL) has been accused of 'taxing' fleets for doing business in the capital after fines were increased and the congestion charge hiked.

The maximum fine handed out for red route contraventions was increased by 23%, from £130 to £160, last week, while a 30% rise in the congestion charge, introduced at the start of the pandemic, will be retained, says TfL.

Natalie Chapman, head of policy for the south at Logistics UK, criticised the congestion charge price increase, from £11.50 to £15, and the removal of the fleet autopay discount.

"This simply amounts to an additional tax for logistics businesses who currently have little alternative but to use lorries and vans to keep London stocked with all the goods the population needs," she said.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, defended the congestion charge changes, saying they "strike a balance" between reducing traffic and congestion and supporting London's economy and residents.

TfL says there will be no congestion charge after 6pm from February 21, and operating hours on weekends and bank holidays will be reduced from 12pm to 6pm.



NATALIE CHAPMAN, LOGISTICS UK



The hours of operation were extended in June 2020, when the Government had to bail out TfL after a financial crisis caused by the onset of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, it says that the higher fines for red route contraventions will be a more effective deterrent and will, over time, lead to a "reduced level of contraventions and help to keep the road network safe for everyone".

The increase brings the charges in line with the penalties for non-payment of the congestion charge and the ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ), which are also currently set at \pm 160.

TfL data shows a 26% increase in the number of penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued for parking, loading, bus lane and moving traffic offences between 2016 and 2019.

Red routes make up 5% of roads but carry 30% of the traffic. Stopping is generally prohibited on these roads, outside of designated locations and times marked by signs.

Chapman said: "TfL has failed to identify in its research whether some businesses are receiving repeat fines due to the lack of safe and legal spots to load and unload deliveries that their livelihoods depend on.

"Without road design in place that

supports logistics, this charge level increase will not provide the deterrent TfL intends, it will simply penalise some essential delivery and servicing activities.

"The costs of doing business in the capital are already increasing across the board; now is not the time to add yet another cost without a clear strategy, particularly while London and the rest of the UK recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic."

TfL has also announced that it intends to make its trial of 24-hour bus lanes permanent, after it found that extending bus lane hours on London's busiest roads cut journey times and helped reliability.

Siwan Hayward, TfL director of compliance, policing, operations and security, says the organisation is committed to keeping London moving safely and efficiently.

"Compliance on the Transport for London road network is essential in achieving those aims," she explained. "Non-compliance impacts London's air quality, creates safety risks, disrupts traffic and creates congestion for everyone."

Meanwhile, Alex Williams, TfL director of city planning, says that changes to the congestion charge are targeted at reducing traffic at the busiest times where there has been a long-term trend in high levels of car travel.

"We expect to see growth in the number of people walking, cycling and using public transport in central London as a result," he said.

"The removal of the charge in the evening will help shift workers who perform essential roles at the heart of the city and support London's vibrant cultural and hospitality sectors who are still recovering from the pandemic."

The Mayor of London's target is for 80% of journeys made in the capital in 2041 to be by walking, cycling or public transport, and the target for central London is 95% of trips to be made by these sustainable types of travel.

However, TfL data shows public transport use has plummeted by 95% and is currently still significantly behind pre-pandemic levels, with buses at 70% of normal demand and tubes at 55%.

Car use has been the fastest mode of transport to recover to nearnormal levels of use after each lockdown, with data showing it has been close to – although not above – prepandemic levels for much of the latter half of 2021.

Industry experts reflect on impact of ALD's acquisition of LeasePlan

Combined risk fleet of 300,000-plus vehicles would create the UK's largest leasing company

By Gareth Roberts

he proposed new global leasing powerhouse, created by the merger of ALD Automotive and LeasePlan, will have a "big impact" on fleets, with the quality of service a key concern, says the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP).

LeasePlan

What's next?

ALD has agreed to buy LeasePlan for \notin 4.9 billion (£4.1bn), with the new leasing powerhouse to be called NewALD (fleetnews.co.uk, January 6).

The leasing company, which is owned by French bank Société Générale, has signed a memorandum of understanding to acquire 100% of LeasePlan from a consortium led by TDR Capital.

LeasePlan is one of the world's



largest leasing companies, with approximately 1.9 million vehicles in more than 30 countries.

In the UK, LeasePlan was ranked as the fourth largest leasing company, according to FN50 2021, with a risk fleet of more than 177,000 cars and vans. ALD Automotive operates in 43 countries, with a similar sized global vehicle parc to LeasePlan. It was ranked fifth in FN50 2021, with a risk fleet of more than 145,000 cars and vans.

NEW NAME AT TOP OF FN50

The combined risk fleet of NewALD in the UK will make it the largest leasing company, with more than 300,000 vehicles, replacing Lex Autolease at the top of the FN50.

Globally, the NewALD company will operate 3.5 million vehicles, putting it ahead of Toyota Financial Services (3.2m), Arval (1.4m), Element (1m) and Alphabet (0.7m).

Only Volkswagen Financial Services (11.3m vehicles) and RCI Bank & Services (3.8m) would operate more.

Paul Hollick, chair of the AFP fleet training and trade body says the deal will have a "big impact" on international fleets.

However, with merging the businesses expected to take quite a while, Hollick expects little impact in the short term.

"I'd imagine that they will be initially looking at procurement synergies for vehicle prices, tyres, glass etc. first, which could/would be good news for fleets if some of these savings are passed on," he added. ALD says that given the extent of both companies' digital solutions, NewALD will be well-placed to gain new growth opportunities in the mobility sector.

This, it says, will be further boosted by cross-selling their respective products and developing ALD's partnerships through LeasePlan's footprint.

Powered by its enlarged offering, geographic presence, and what it describes as its extensive digital capabilities, NewALD expects to drive strong growth across all client categories and lift annual fleet growth to at least 6%.

Hollick said: "Those fleets that are dual supply with both ALD and LeasePlan will need to look at what they wish to do.

"The reason for multi-supply is to create competitive tension within each vehicle quotation, so this will need some action in the short term around what the fleet manager's strategy needs to be.

"Beyond this, the main concern will be quality of service for UK fleets. Some of the mergers have not been performed well and service has significantly eroded. Hopefully, this won't happen with this merger but there will be concerns from our members for sure.

"Communication is key here, so, hopefully, NewALD will avoid this potential pitfall."

In terms of integrating the two companies, the management says its main objectives would be to "leverage best practices from both sides, maintain a high quality of service to all clients with a strong focus on commercial dynamics and the creation of a common culture driving staff motivation".

An Integration Management Office (IMO) will be set up this year to leverage the "best talents" of the two companies, which would finalise a joint migration plan.

GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

Automotive

ALD

Ben Schmidt, director, EMEA nonbank financial institutions at Fitch Ratings, says that, at first glance, the merger makes sense from a business model perspective, with largely complementary capabilities, relatively limited client overlap, and at least a partly differing regional focus. He continued: "The combination should also generate material economies of scale, largely when it comes to procurement, as it will create a clear market leader among multi-brand fleet lessors in Europe with a combined fleet of around 3.5m vehicles."

However, he says the transaction is still subject to a large number of approvals. "Given the considerable size of the combined entity, we are particularly watching any anti-trust measures the transactions might be subject to," he added.

The deal has the support of Société Générale's, ALD's and LeasePlan's boards of directors, as well as Lease-Plan's supervisory board, and is subject to regulatory approval.

It is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

Editor's view of the new deal - P3.



Carmakers and tech firms showcase further collaborations at CES 2022

Electrified, autonomous vehicles with world-class infotainment unveiled at Las Vegas event

By Matt de Prez

olour-changing cars, virtual reality robots and longrange electric cars were some of the key automotive highlights at this year's Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas.

Collaboration between carmakers and technology firms was a key theme at the event, as the two industries collide in the drive to deliver electrified, autonomous vehicles with worldclass in-car entertainment.

At the show, Stellantis announced a new tie-up with Amazon, to develop its next generation of infotainment systems, while Volvo's partnership with Google has been expanded.

Geely's latest premium electric brand Zeekr is also teaming up with tech firms Mobileye and Waymo to develop self-driving cars.

Tech giant Sony, meanwhile, is closer to launching its own car, following its shock revelation at CES 2020.

BMW'S COLOUR-CHANGING IX

In-car technology has opened the door for all sorts of enhanced

customisation, from remembering your seating position to streaming your favourite music tracks.

BMW has taken customisation to the next level this year, with the debut of its iX Flow featuring E Ink.

Making use of technology that is most commonly utilised in eReaders, such as the Amazon Kindle, BMW has created a new type of vehicle coating that can change colour at the touch of a button.

It's applied to the car like a vinyl wrap and contains millions of microcapsules that contain negatively charged white pigments and positively charged black ones. Applying or removing power causes either the white or the black pigments to collect at the surface of the microcapsule, giving the car body the desired shade.

The finish unlocks a new level of personalisation for BMW drivers – building on existing technologies that enables drivers to customise the interior of their car – but also serves to improve efficiency by allowing for a lighter shade in direct sunlight and a darker one when its colder.

BMW says selective colour changes

can help to cut the amount of cooling and heating required from the vehicle's air conditioning.

TECHNOLOGY FIRMS CO-DEVELOP WITH MAJOR CARMAKERS

Stellantis has partnered with Amazon to jointly develop a new generation of revenue-generating in-car infotainment systems, to be used across its 14 brands.

It's part of the carmaker's strategy to generate more than £17 million from new digital services by 2030.

Amazon technology will power a new suite of software-based products and services that integrate with Stellantis vehicles and their drivers, including an all-new infotainment set-up known as the STLA Smart Cockpit. Over-the-air software updates will be a central part of the new offering.

It will provide personalised applications for entertainment, voice assistance, navigation, vehicle maintenance, e-commerce marketplaces and payment services.

A similar arrangement exists between Google and Geely brands



BMW's iX Flow and the E ink feature enables the driver to change the colour of the coating of the car at the touch of a button

Polestar and Volvo. At this year's CES, Volvo confirmed a number of updates to its Google-based system, including integration with Google Assistantenabled devices and the addition of YouTube video playback via the car's multimedia display.

Geely has also expanded its development of autonomous driving systems in collaboration with Mobileye and Waymo.

Mobileye will support premium Chinese car brand Zeekr in its efforts to produce the first production electric car with level four autonomous driving capability, while Zeekr will build an electric people carrier for Waymo's autonomous ride-sharing service.

HYUNDAI INTEGRATES VIRTUAL Reality, robotics and mobility

Hyundai showcased Metamobility at the show, a new concept which combines mobility with robotics and virtual reality.

The carmaker believes robotics is an essential part of its transformation into a smart mobility provider.

It has the goal of pioneering a smart device-metaverse connection that will "expand the role of mobility to virtual reality".

The company envisions that the



Sony's Vision-S and Vision-S 02 SUV



distinctions between future mobilities will be blurred through the further development of robotics technology, such as AI (artificial intelligence) and autonomous driving.

Hyundai expects that cars will serve as smart devices to access virtual spaces, like meeting rooms, while robotics will act as a medium to connect the virtual and real worlds. This metaverse-robot connection will allow the user to guide a robot in the real world, remotely.

To support its vision, Hyundai showcased its Plug & Drive (PnD) and Drive & Lift (DnL) modular platforms. These concepts are designed to enable traditionally inanimate things, from small objects to community spaces, to move autonomously.

MERCEDES UNVEILS FUTURE ELECTRIC C-CLASS WITH 620-MILE RANGE

Mercedes-Benz has revealed the Vision EQXX concept, an electric C-Class-sized saloon car with the capability to cover 620 miles on a single charge, in real world driving.

The car achieves its impressive efficiency through a combination of advanced aerodynamics and the use of lightweight materials.

It also uses an ultra-compact 100 kWh battery, with a footprint that is 50% smaller and 30% lighter than the 107.8kWh one in the Mercedes EQS.

Joerg Bartels, vice-president for Vehicle Engineering and Overall Vehicle Functions at Mercedes-Benz, said: "Electric range sounds easy, but is a complex technical challenge. The easiest way is to put a bigger battery in the car.

"However, this leads to diminishing returns due to size and weight. This is definitely not the smartest route and it's also not the best use of scarce resources. "With the Vision EQXX, we're presenting the results of an extraordinary challenge: we pushed efficiency to a totally new level."

While the EQXX might not enter production looking exactly like the concept, its battery technology is expected to be used in road-going Mercedes EQ models by 2024.

SONY CONFIRMS IT WILL ENTER CAR MARKET

Sony stole headlines in 2020 when it unveiled its production-ready Vision-S concept car at CES. Initially, the electronics giant claimed it only built the car to showcase its autonomous driving and in-car entertainment systems, but now it plans to launch a mobility company and has showcased a second potential car.

The Vision-S 02 is seven-seat SUV that shares the same design language and tech-heavy interior as its saloon counterpart.

It's powered by two electric motors, delivering more than 500PS, but there's no word on battery capacity or range.

A bank of five displays makes up the wraparound dashboard, incorporating digital side view mirrors, while an additional display is mounted in the centre console, in place of conventional switchgear.

Sony says it will establish an operating company 'Sony Mobility Inc.' in the spring of 2022, through which it intends to explore entry into the EV market.





UK specification will vary. Fuel economy and CO₂ results for the BMW iX3. Mpg (I/100km): Not applicable. CO₂ emissions: 0 g/km. Electric range*: 280 to 285 miles. These figures were obtained after the battery had been fully charged. The iX3 is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare electric range figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. *These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.



TOMORROW'S FLEET: UNMANNED VEHICLES

R m e 0 t 8 0 t r С n 0

The remote driving - or teleoperation - of vehicles could bring utilisation and cost benefits to fleets. Andrew Ryan reports

connected vehicle technology which could eventually help fleets increase vehicle utilisation and cut costs is set to be put into public use in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, later this year.

Imperium Drive's Fetch project, which is being run as part of the £4.1 million MK:5G initiative, aims to run a remote-operated car-hailing service which will enable users to summon an unmanned vehicle via an app.

This would see the vehicle driven by a remote driver to the customer's location, where the hirer





AA

then drives the car normally to their destination.

From there, a remote vehicle operator takes over and pilots the car back to base or to the next user. It's a system which Imperium Drive CEO Koosha Kaveh says offers the convenience of ride-hailing with the flexibility and low cost of car-sharing.

"Just to give some ballpark figures, today a ridehailing service like Uber costs around \pounds 1.50 per mile and when autonomous Uber comes, it will be around \pounds 1 per mile," he adds. "We are priced at 50p per mile.

"Today, more than 90% of ride-hailing trips cover

less than 10 miles partly because of cost. Users just see journeys which are longer than 10-to-15 minutes as very expensive, but their need to make this sort of trip still exists.

"This means people make them with other means which are less convenient than Uber, like public transport or their own car.

"We are bridging and filling that gap to bring a convenient service that is as almost as costeffective as a car for longer trips."

Imperium Drive will be able to operate the service because under current laws, organisations can use

Outside Stadium MK (from left) Imperium Drive CTO Sandip Gangakhedkar, CEO Koosha Kaveh and Filipe Pinto, lead robotics engineer driverless vehicles on the roads in the UK if they can ensure they have a roadworthy vehicle, appropriate insurance and a driver or operator, in or out of the vehicle, who is ready, able and willing to take control of the vehicle.

The Fetch technology is being trialled on private land around Stadium MK, the home ground of the MK Dons football team, and, in March, the trial will be extended to public roads.

FULLY OPERATIONAL SERVICE

In the second half of this year, Imperium Drive aims to launch a fully operational service in Milton Keynes to coincide with the stadium hosting three group stages and a semi-final of the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 Championships.

"One of the first routes that we're going to enable is between the train station and Stadium MK," says Kaveh. "We are also looking at other routes within the town centre.

"Initially, the service will not be open to all members of the public: it will be a limited user group to begin with, but the size of this group will keep growing."

Another use case Imperium Drive has identified is for the commuters who get the train from Milton Keynes to London.

"Close to 2,000 cars are parked at Milton Keynes's train station every day. People could use our service so they wouldn't need to use their own car at all.

"This would also allow us to test more routes, gain more experience and, essentially, show other UK councils the benefits of having this technology operating in their areas."

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TOMORROW'S FLEET: UNMANNED VEHICLES



C The technology also has the potential for organisations to improve vehicle utilisation, as it would mean that, once a driver had used a vehicle fitted with the technology to get to their destination, it could then be remotely driven to another location for someone else to use.

For example, Stadium MK currently operates 20 vehicles to carry out a variety of tasks, such as transporting MK Dons staff from the stadium to the club's nearby training ground.

"They will keep a vehicle there for two hours while they're practising or doing something else. In this period, when the car would otherwise be parked, we can bring it back and allow someone else to use it," says Navid Nourani, CPO of Imperium Drive.

This may mean the stadium could reduce the number of vehicles it operates, reducing costs.

However, providing the technology to fleet operators is not an immediate goal for Imperium Drive, says Kaveh.

"The longer-term vision is that people will be able to buy their own vehicles fitted with our technology, but for the next two years we'll be owning the whole operations ourselves from ordering to fleet management to everything," he adds.

A further expansion strategy for Imperium Drive is with car rental and car-sharing. "Today, companies are in the business of two-way car rentals, which means the user has to return the vehicle to the location they picked it up from," says Kaveh.

"That serves a whole different market than one-way rentals or trips, which are the Ubers. Our technology allows them to get into the one-way car trip market."

ACCELERATING FULL AUTONOMY

Remote operation – also called teleoperation – is also seen as a key step in accelerating the development of self-driving vehicles in a costeffective way. "At the moment, a safety driver and a test assistant are usually located in a vehicle during autonomous vehicle trials," says Isi Obazele, vehicle and infrastructure technologies researcher at TRL.

"The safety driver essentially monitors the vehicle behaviour and ensures it is actually behaving in a way that's expected in their environment, such as obeying traffic laws, so they are in charge of the safety of the trial.

"The safety assistant performs the same responsibilities by using a display.

"In the future, it is expected the roles of these two individuals will be performed remotely, reducing cost and increasing efficiency."

Imperium Drive is aiming to transition to full autonomy for car deliveries within the next two-to-five years.



"Remote driving is going to be a starting point for us," says Kaveh.

"A service where the user does 90% of the driving will always be there and will co-exist with the future autonomous ride-hailing.

"The technology we are developing allows us to get on the road faster and the reason for that is because we still have a human in the loop.

"Under the current legislation we can start using the car as soon as the technology is ready and the cost of remotely operating a car – meaning the sensors, the stack and the technology – is a fraction of the cost of an autonomous vehicle.

"All of our technology costs less than £5,000: one laser sensor on an autonomous vehicle is more than that, so we have the advantages of cost and being able to get to market.

"Over the next two-to-five years, we're planning to transition from 100% remote driving, but the journey will still be mostly driven and that's because of the cost advantage for the users.

"For the first mile and last mile, we're looking to go from 100% remote driving to more automation meaning the ratio of teleoperators per car will change.

"Currently we need one teleoperator for every two-to-three cars. Our plan is to get to one for every 10-to-15 cars."

Teleoperation is also being trialled at Nissan's Sunderland plant as part of the 5G Connected and Autonomous Logistics project.

This is using self-driving 40-tonne trucks to deliver assembly parts and aims to demonstrate the key features for successful CAL (client application loader) deployment – the safe and secure operation and handover of the CAV from autonomous mode to remote manual operation and vice versa when a situation outside the autonomous logic of the vehicle arises.

This is considered critical for their operation in potential emergency situations.



C BREAKING NEW BOUNDARIES

Fetch is taking place in Milton Keynes as part of the MK:5G project, which in June saw it become the first town in the UK to have a 5G network.

It extends mainly through the town's centre, stretching to some of its outer districts for highdensity areas, including the railway station, local hospitals and the university.

MK:5G is being managed by Milton Keynes Council. Other partners include Fortech which is running a smart traffic management project to address congestion and improve road safety and air quality; Academy of Robotics, which is operating its Kar-go self-driving delivery robot; and autonomous vehicle company Aurrigo.

The fully-electric Kar-go is capable of driving at 60mph and with a range of 60 miles fully-loaded. It will focus on small, shoe box-sized parcels and will be able to hand over the parcel autonomously using its onboard robotics.

MK:5G, will mean we can control remotely and monitor every aspect of what we are seeing," says William Sachiti, CEO and founder of the Academy of Robotics.

"Kar-go is designed to travel on unmarked as well as marked roads and, thanks to our vision system, it is capable of delivering packages and parcels to addresses not just in city centres, but also to suburban and rural locations.

"Kar-go shows how driverless delivery vehicles could eventually become a common sight on our streets, delivering parcels directly to homes."

Aurrigo will manufacture and operate a 10-seater shuttle running a short autonomous route from Bletchley train station to Stadium MK, as well as two pods operating around the retail park perimeter.

There will also be a driverless security pod equipped with a tethered drone streaming CCTV footage over 5G directly to the stadium's security centre.

"There is a lot of anticipation for the unmanned security pod that will provide protection and a

constant eye in the sky," says Simon Brewerton, chief technical officer at Aurrigo.

"This is an ideal vehicle for going around the outer perimeters of any area that needs surveillance which would otherwise need security people to patrol it.

"The cool thing is that you could put your security person inside it rather than them walking about, so they can cover a much larger area. You could, of course, run these without anyone in them at all.

"It also has a whole load of technology on it like laser scanners, cameras and infra-red cameras, so when it's driving around it can accumulate a lot of evidence about the world around it and beam it back to a central control room."

Brewerton says the pods can also be used for safety. "You can use them for minding pavements and other campus areas, and they allow you to give people reassurance that there's a control centre watching them. It saves the need for expensive CCTV that would otherwise be the alternative."

"Having an incredible Wi-Fi connection, thanks to

REPORT OUTLINES THE EARNING POTENTIAL OF AUTONOMOUS ROBOTAXI FLEETS

Research from Cenex has predicted a fleet of autonomous robotaxis could generate an annual profit of around £27,000 per vehicle by 2030.

The organisation says deploying driverless two-seater robotaxi pods with ultra-durable powertrains capable of 300 miles per day for 10 years and utilisation rates of 90%, could make the total cost of ownership (TCO) and operations attractive, both economically and environmentally.

Cenex compared a human-driven battery electric taxi with a regular battery electric autonomous vehicle used as a taxi and a robotaxi with an ultra-durable drivetrain. Its use case had each vehicle completing 107,000 miles a year, with the human-driven taxi requiring a multiple shift operation to achieve this, adding significant costs.

The cost of replacing drivetrains in the regular autonomous BEV was also found to exceed the additional outlay needed for an ultra-durable one.

Cenex determined that for the initial investment in a robotaxi fleet business to pay back in three-to-five years (including overheads such as marketing and non-driving staff), the trip fares charged to customers could be similar to the average UK TCO for private battery electric cars (£0.68/mile).

"We expect the progression of connected and autonomous technology this decade to cause a

shift in vehicle ownership, and this could open up new opportunities for the mobility sector," says Victor Lejona, technical specialist at Cenex.

"It is important to get the most use out of vehicles to maximise the financial investments and reduce the environmental impacts. Creating ultra-durable drivetrains means zero emission vehicles can cover more miles."

Future Mobility Insights – Ultra-durable Powertrains for Autonomous Vehicles says that, with increasing urbanisation and traffic density, it may be possible that urban personal transport will be provided by autonomous taxis that are no longer owned by private individuals, but operated as part of a commercial fleet.

THE DATA-DRIVEN ROUTE TO A SAFER FLEET

Beverley Wise, Regional Director UK & Ireland for Webfleet Solutions, explains how telematics data can unlock the door to sustainable road risk management.



Improving driving standards has long been recognised as one of the most effective ways of managing road risk, cutting fuel spend, maintenance costs and motor insurance premiums.

Long-term behavioural change, however, calls for establishing road safety as an integral part of an organisations' DNA,

rather than simply serving as a tick-box exercise.

One-off, or ad hoc, driver training sessions may result in short-term improvements behind the wheel, but for a sustained uplift in standards, coaching should be prolonged and tailored to meet individual driver requirements. Fleet intelligence holds the key to achieving this.

Risk profiling underpinned

Data can be regarded as the foundation stone for sustained road risk management programmes, enabling the creation of accurate risk profiles – both for entire fleets and individual drivers. This can allow managers to identify the root causes of unsafe practice and track improvements over time.

Data can range from the number of penalty points accrued by drivers, obtained via electronic licence checks, to detailed information on driver behaviour provided by telematics technology.

Advanced fleet management solutions such as WEBFLEET for example will score drivers based on key performance factors including speeding, harsh steering and braking. Integrated camera systems, meanwhile, can provide further opportunities to enhance safety and expand fleet visibility.

Access to such information will enable businesses to take the pulse of current driving standards and pinpoint where problems exist, set performance benchmarks and establish targets for improvement.

Moreover, such insights will allow performance improvements to be monitored on an ongoing basis - by both the driver and the business.

A spirit of collaboration

Meaningful employee engagement that keeps employees motivated, however, is needed to achieve lasting change.

By adopting a collaborative approach, consulting staff from the get-go and

encouraging two-way dialogue on driver behaviour initiatives and the use of telematics technology, employee buy-in and engagement can be facilitated and a sense of professional pride fostered.

Fleet management technology can come into its own here, putting drivers at the heart of behaviour improvement by feeding live performance information back to their sat nav devices and enabling them to make changes in real time.

To support this technology, consideration should be given to the introduction of gamification and incentive schemes to encourage drivers to meet higher standards. These may take the form of financial bonuses, gifts or personal development rewards for drivers that finish top of performance league tables.

What's more, if employees truly understand that everyone prospers from adopting safer, more fuel-efficient driving styles, and this message is communicated consistently, they are much more likely to keep safety and efficiency front of mind.

Intelligence for effective maintenance

Telematics can also underpin processes that ensure vehicle safety checks are regular conducted and effectively recorded and that ensure maintenance and service schedules are suitably regulated.

WEBFLEET's vehicle maintenance planning tools, for example, enable fleets to make use of real measured mileage to plan maintenance intervals. At-a-glance reports can be generated offering maintenance overviews, which allow managers to keep tabs on everything from service intervals to MOTs.

While the ne plus ultra approach for fleets must always be safety first, only by deploying technology that generates such actionable data can fleets lay the foundations for best practice road safety strategies.









PEDAL POWER

An increasingly diverse range of fleets is considering how they can incorporate the benefits of e-cargo bikes into their operations. Andrew Ryan reports

he most obvious - and often best route to decarbonise a fleet is to replace internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles with electric alternatives on a like-for-like basis.

But increasingly less vehicle-friendly urban areas and Government and local authority policies mean this may not always be the most efficient or costeffective way.

This has led to e-cargo bikes coming on to the radar of organisations and many are looking at how micromobility solutions, which also include e-bikes and e-scooters, may be incorporated into their fleet operations in built-up areas.

British Gas owner Centrica is currently one of the biggest operators of battery electric vehicles (BEVs) in the UK, with around 1,000 Vauxhall e-Vivaros on the road and a further 2,000 on order.

"I'm looking at cargo bikes," says Centrica head of fleet Steve Winter. "Engineers don't want a cargo bike, but that might be the way we go because of the number of clean air zones (CAZs) and ultra-low emissions zones (ULEZs) coming. Some places may say you're not actually allowed to bring a vehicle in there.

"How are we going to service a boiler in that area? How are we going to upgrade that heating system?

"We need to look at our supply chain and say 'instead of carrying all those parts on a van, is there a different way to service those customers?"

Another fleet actively considering these issues is Clarion Response, the repairs and maintenance arm of housing association Clarion Housing Group. It is also looking at using e-cargo or e-bikes in the

future. "Like most companies, we're moving to a zero-emission fleet and we hope by 2030 we will achieve that," says Clarion Response fleet and environmental manager Colin Hutt.

"But we're also thinking 'hang on a minute, probably the most efficient or the cleanest vehicle is one that doesn't actually exist'.

"Do the guys need a van every single day? We've been looking at the potential of pop-up stores on our London estates where we would store tools and stock. So, instead of carrying those items around with them, our operatives could go to one of those locations and grab the stuff they need.

"There might be guys who would happily use a mountain bike, an e-bike or an e-cargo bike,

'Even if we provided them with a bike or an e-bike they wouldn't have to use it every day, but perhaps





FedEx Express is using e-cargo bikes in emissionrestricted areas of London

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

GEOTAB.

By Nicola Austin, fleet consultant at Zenith



in 2022? With the shifts in market dynamics, from changes to

Is electric still accelerating

grants to UK fuel and energy supply, do electric vehicles (EVs) still make sense? In short, yes. And it's why the

transition continues to accelerate. Fuel and electricity costs are both rising, however our analysis shows that EVs are impacted to a smaller degree than diesel.

A popular fleet diesel car, such as the Audi A3 completing 10,000 annual business miles faces an increase of £218 per annum in fuel cost, despite the freeze on fuel duty, when comparing average diesel costs at the start and end of 2021.

The Volkswagen ID.3, a comparable EV, completing the same number of business miles faces an increase of only £34 in energy costs.

It's a similar story for vans, with average fuel costs for a typical small diesel van over the past 12 months increasing by almost £300 per year (based on 10,000 annual business miles).

A further 20% increase in energy costs would still deliver fleets a fuel saving of more than 50% by switching to EV. An increasing number of suppliers are introducing overnight off-peak tariffs to provide electricity at a significantly reduced rate.

Further positive news for EV drivers is the recent HMRC announcement that they are reviewing VAT reclaim where an employee is reimbursed by the employer for the actual cost of electricity used in charging an EV for business purposes. This will bring VAT rules for reimbursing business travel in EVs in line with those for petrol/diesel vehicles.

Zenith recently announced that battery electric vehicles (BEVs) account for 17% of the car fleet and 79% of salary sacrifice orders were for a BEV. It's clear to see that fleets will continue to reap the rewards of switching to electric in 2022 and beyond.

For the latest electric insights visit zenith.co.uk/insights, call 0344 848 9311 or email oneteam@zenith.co.uk



there might be a few weeks of the year or a couple of months of the year when the weather's nice and they might fancy doing their work like that."

010101

CLEAR BENEFITS

The potential benefits of using e-cargo bikes, as well as other micromobility solutions, in the right circumstances instead of cars or vans are clear.

They are much cheaper to buy and run than the larger vehicles – premium e-cargo bikes cost somewhere in the region of £7,000 to £10,000 – they are not subject to vehicle excise duty (VED), ultra-low emission zone or congestion charges, or parking penalties.

They can also use infrastructure such as cycle and bus lanes which means they can often follow quicker, more direct routes as well as avoiding congestion. London courier Absolutely compared the same routes undertaken by a van to an e-cargo bike and found the bikes were 60% faster.

E-cargo bikes have also been demonstrated to have health and well-being benefits for their riders, which can contribute to healthier and happier workforces.

They are also surprisingly capable: they are

available in two-, three- or four-wheel configurations and generally carry up to 150kg, although some models can transport 300kg. Assisted by electric motors that typically offer around 250W of extra power to the rider, they are usually speed limited to 14-15mph at which point the power assistance cuts out.

A single battery charge can usually provide enough power for assistance for up to 25 miles.

This means they are well suited to the firstand last-mile journeys which are the bread and butter of delivery firms in urban areas. These look likely to be the most common users of the transport mode in the future.

FedEx Express UK has already introduced e-cargo bikes to its permanent operations in London, where it has replaced diesel vehicles for serving emission-restricted zones.

At the end of last year, it introduced a fleet of 13 e-cargo bikes to work alongside its vehicle pick-up and delivery fleets in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Cambridge.

It now has a fleet of around 30 e-cargo bikes and has plans to exceed 200 within the next two years as they are rolled out to other towns and cities.

One bike typically replaces one van, offering range of up to 40 miles per charge.

ELECTRIC FLEET: MICROMOBILITY SOLUTIONS

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C "Earlier FedEx pilots in the cities made the case for transitioning to two wheels, proving an alternative to vans, thanks to their ability to take shorter, faster routes," says FedEx operations managing director in Europe Alun Cornish.

He adds: "We see real potential for e-cargo bikes to complement and work alongside our motorised vehicle fleet as we strive to make zero emissions deliveries our standard." Edinburgh is also the location for an e-cargo bike trial undertaken by rival delivery firm DHL.

This will involve the use of bikes to deliver small items that do not require two-person services, but still require special handling.

DHL is using an e-cargo bike manufactured by EAV, which has a load capacity of two cubic metres and a range of around 40 miles on a single charge.



BUILDING SUCCESS

Other types of fleets are also using e-cargo bikes, including construction companies Morgan Sindall and FM Conway (see panel, page 26).

Specialist highway services company Ringway has adopted e-cargo bikes as it works its way towards its target of a 40% reduction in Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2030.

Since September 2020, Ringway has invested £2.5 million into electric fleet and plant. In addition to creating cleaner options, managing director Mike Notman says the company is challenging the need for commercial vehicles and has been encouraging the use of e-cargo bikes where appropriate.

"Our business has made a significant investment into creating sustainable carbon reductions across our operations," says Notman.

"For us, this isn't about purchasing offsets or pushing the need for change further down the supply chain – it's about making real, tangible changes to the way we work today."

Demand for e-cargo bikes has grown significantly in recent years.

The Bicycle Association says around 2,000 cargo bikes. It expected this figure to jump 60% in 2021.

When Raleigh launched its first e-cargo bikes last summer, managing director Lee Kidger predicted the UK market would soar to 15 times 2021's level within five years – roughly 48,000 units.

The growing demand has also been shown by the response to the Department for Transport (DfT) E-cargo Bike Grant Fund, which was launched last year and saw £400,000 made available in 2021/22 for the purchase of e-cargo bikes.

The response was so strong that applications for funding were closed in October, more than two months before the deadline.

The Government is also influencing the take-up of e-cargo bikes in other ways. It has made it clear \supset

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C that micromobility forms an important part of its ambitions to decarbonise transport, and has also announced a £2 billion package of funding to boost cycling and walking.

This will include the creation of cycleways which e-bikes and e-scooters will be able to use instead of venturing onto roads, increasing safety and decreasing journey time as they can avoid congestion and, potentially, take more direct routes.

E-SCOOTER INTEREST

There are fewer examples of organisations incorporating e-scooters into their business travel, but there is evidence that commuters are increasingly using the technology. Since July 2020, e-scooter trials have launched in 32 regions across England. Evaluation is under way and a key area of focus will be on the nature of mode shift e-scooters achieve.

Shared e-scooters and e-bikes company Dott, which is operating a trial in London, saw a 105% increase in the usage of its e-scooters in the first few weeks of last September as commuters returned to work after the summer holidays.

Its mapping technology showed the most popular time for travel is between 5pm and 7pm, with another clear peak between 7am and 9pm. Dott says this shows micromobility is now becoming a preferred travel choice for commuters, not just leisure users. Shared transport company Ginger is running eight trials in areas as diverse as Tees Valley, Great Yarmouth and Whitehaven.

"We're getting past the initial phase of the e-scooter trials where it's a novelty and everybody wants to go out and try them," says CEO of Ginger Paul Hodgins.

"What happens then is it settles down and we're absolutely finding that we are getting very sustained usage. We can accurately measure and track usage of where the e-scooters are starting from and going to and how that usage is changing over time."

Ginger's data shows a range of users.

"Students are a minority," says Hodgins. "In Stafford, for example, the average age of a \supset

DATA TO EXAMINE BEFORE YOU INVEST IN E-BIKES

As with electric vehicles (EVs), organisations often trial a handful of e-cargo bikes to see how they perform before adopting them in greater numbers.

These trials can be valuable in gathering information to inform future decisions and Energy Saving Trust advises that data a fleet decision-maker could collect includes:

■ Replaced vehicle details. Recording the make, model and emission class of the vehicle being replaced can help identify the impact on fleet and traffic composition.

Use purpose/cargo transported. This can help a fleet understand the use cases of the bikes and understand where their utilisation could be increased in the future. ■ Number of journeys. By recording the number of journeys made on an e-cargo bike, a fleet decision-maker can identify their popularity, as well as how e-cargo bikes may impact the operation of their organisation.

Journey time. Data on journey time can be used to demonstrate improvements to travel and delivery time.

■ Location data. This can be recorded using GPS trackers or by asking riders. A fleet may also wish to record instances where e-cargo bikes have accessed areas that are not available to cars and vans, such as bike lanes.

Energy Saving Trust says it is also important to survey riders for their user experiences so an organisation can record any health and well-being benefits, as well as other aspects of the operation.

It suggests that riders could be asked about the following:

■ Well-being. Fleets can record well-being impacts by asking riders to provide selfassessments on how their health and mental health have been impacted by e-cargo bikes.

■ Ease of use. Surveying riders about aspects of e-cargo bike use, such as cycling in difficult terrain, can help a fleet decisionmaker understand the overall user experience.

Mechanical issues. By collecting data on common mechanical problems, a fleet can identify issues which riders should be made aware of.



VOLVO

C regular user is 32, so more than half of our users there are aged 30-plus."

Last year Ginger ran its Ride for Heroes initiative which saw employees of the NHS, emergency services and the armed forces given two free rides a day.

Hodgins says this saw more than 1,000 people use its e-scooters to get to work.

Some organisations are using e-scooters away from public roads. RAF Marham in King's Lynn, for example, has bought 90 e-scooters as an environmentally-friendly way for personnel to get around the base.

Their use has removed the requirement for a 52-seater shuttle bus previously used to transport students to the Norfolk base's integrated training centre, saving 29 tonnes of CO₂ over two years.

It has also alleviated the strain on the site's existing car park and has removed the requirement to provide additional parking capacity, which would have cost in the region of £500,000.

OBSTACLES TO ADOPTION

However, despite their advantages, there are a number of obstacles to the widespread uptake

CASE STUDY: FM CONWAY

FM Conway is currently using e-cargo bikes as part of its work on the Illuminated River Project in London, a major public art commission for the capital's bridges that will light up 14 central London bridges, from Albert Bridge in the west to Tower Bridge in the east.

The construction company is working on phase two of the project, illuminating Blackfriars, Waterloo, Golden Jubilee, Westminster and Lambeth bridges, moving the 4,000 light fittings, 15km of power and data cabling and 250,000 bolts and fixings being used on the project.

Originally, the materials and equipment were to be delivered by van. However, its Transport for London (TfL) client drew FM Conway's of the micromobility solutions by organisations.

They are obviously not as versatile or, ultimately, as practical as cars and vans, and are not suited to being used over long distances or in bad weather.

Cycling charity Sustrans says investment for improving infrastructure for e-cargo bike logistics



attention to the benefits of e-cargo bikes because TfL is working to reduce the number of lorries and vans entering central London in the morning peak by 10% by 2026.

"With five bridges in the centre of London, and in heavily pedestrianised areas, our challenge was being able to deliver our goods direct to the points of work day-in, day-out, while not wasting valuable time spent between sites," says senior contract manager at FM Conway Adam Barnes.

"The e-cargo bikes we use have not only increased our efficiency, but have given us the ability to utilise our workforce across multiple projects and be reactive to certain situations <u>across various locations</u> during the day." is also critical. "We need to ensure existing and new cycle infrastructure, including protected cycle tracks and low traffic neighbourhoods, are fully accessible for e-cargo bikes which tend to be wider, heavier and need adequate space for turning," it savs.

GEOTAB

"Existing infrastructure will also have to be redesigned in many places."

There are also ongoing safety concerns, particularly over e-scooters, while organisations also have to consider other risk factors.

"We have an increased promotion of active travel solutions, particularly walking and cycling," says Ryan Coles, group global travel and fleet manager at Aviva.

"We prefer everybody to walk and wheel where they can and cycle from a commuting point of view.

"However, from a risk perspective and being in a city centre location, we do not encourage the use of cycling for business.

"If you've got your laptop bag in the cage at the front of a bike, there's a risk element and as a financial services industry we need to make sure that we protect all of our assets, both people and property, as much as we can."

Each bike can carry up to 250kg and is fitted with an electric pedal-assist motor and GPS tracking, enabling an overview of their locations to be able to transport the materials required at any given time.

"There are far lower servicing and maintenance costs required compared with using vans given there is no congestion, ULEZ or parking charges, as well as the obvious environmental impact on the business, creating a larger step towards us being a carbon-neutral business in London by 2030," adds Barnes.

"The toughest challenge was getting our workforce to adapt to the bikes. But now they're on them, they can't stop getting on them."



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No soft-pedalling when it comes to driver safety

That's why Altrad Services has gained awards for its policies two years running, reports *Mike Roberts*

Itrad Services may have a proven track record for driver safety, but fleet manager Sarah Turner refuses to rest on her laurels.

"Driver safety has to remain a focus," she says. "I don't want to be in this role and have somebody get hurt while driving on company business, especially if there is something I could have done to prevent it."

Turners' commitment and passion for driver safety is likely inherited from her former boss Matt Hammond, who left the company last year to take up a head of fleet role at M Services Group.

It was Hammond's submission that won the company the Excellence in Fleet Safety title at last year's Fleet News Awards, but Turner was a member of his team, having joined Altrad as a fleet administrator in 2015.

"I had no idea what fleet was about when I joined," she admits. "What I love about the industry is the learning aspect – I'm someone who has to continue to learn as they go along."

Turner is responsible for cars and vans while HGVs are under the remit of colleague and transport manager Mark Walker. The team is bolstered by two administrators, but is likely to expand to seven by the end of this year.

A provider of industrial services to the oil and gas, energy and petrochemical sectors, the company operates around 800 vans, 90 cars, 100 HGVs and has a grey fleet of 250 vehicles. The fleet is spread across the UK, from Shetland to the Solent. Cars are leased and vans and trucks are a mixture of flexible rent, lease and owned.

Generally, cars are on 42 months/80,000mile contracts and vans 48 months/60,000 miles, although supply difficulties faced by the automotive industry because of the global semiconductor shortage have forced some individual leases to be extended.

"We'll be looking closely at our fleet policies this year, particularly with the commercial fleet," Turner says. "Because of supply issues, I think we need to stabilise it a bit more, get rid of flexi-rent and move these vehicles over to lease or owned, but we need to do a wholelife cost exercise first."

The company car scheme has been under scrutiny over the past couple of years because of benefit-in-kind costs and only high-mileage drivers (25,000+ miles a year) now receive a company car.

Other drivers have been moved to a cash scheme but it is expected they will migrate back into the car scheme once Altrad has an electric vehicle (EV) policy in place – a priority for Turner and her team this year.

On the company's longer-term EV plan, Turner says: "In the next 24 months, we've got around 200 vehicles whose lease will end, that's a mixture of cars and vans. Hopefully, those drivers can be moved on to an EV scheme by then."

On the van side, half of the fleet is larger vehicles which can't be replaced with like-forlike electric alternatives, so these will remain as they are for now.

For the remainder, tests and data analysis will be carried out on the six other electric vehicles the company runs to work out which vans can be replaced by electric and still perform their functions.

An added complication is that many of the vans are stationed at client sites around the country, meaning digging up concrete and \supset



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JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Excellent use of data and a progressive attitude has helped last year's safe fleet of the year retain its title. Altrad showed clear evidence of continuous improvement with innovative use of virtual reality and strong root cause analysis to get to the heart of the issue. Safety is at the heart of the business.







FleetNews



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BARCLAY



 $\ensuremath{\mathbb{C}}$ installing charge points at those sites is not likely to be an option.

Instead, the HSEQ (health, safety, environment and quality) department on behalf of the fleet team will find out what charging infrastructure exists at or is planned for client sites and whether Altrad vehicles can utilise it.

The fleet team will focus its attention on whether charging infrastructure can be installed on sites it owns or leases throughout the UK.

It's fair to say that the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent vehicle supply issues have delayed Altrad's plans to go electric. An order for 60 EVs was cancelled by the manufacturer at the tail end of 2021.

It's a 'problem' that Turner and the fleet team are turning into a positive, saying the cancellation offers them more time to continue their feasibility studies into which vehicles can be replaced by electric and to get a better understanding of charging requirements.

"I think it's done us a favour," Turner says. "Over the next 12 months it will allow us the COMPANY: ALTRAD SERVICES FLEET MANAGER: SARAH TURNER TRANSPORT MANAGER: MARK WALKER FLEET TEAM: FOUR FLEET: 90 CARS, 800 VANS, 100 HGVs, 250 GREY FLEET FUNDING: CARS – LEASE; VANS AND TRUCKS FLEXIBLE HIRE, LEASE AND OUTRIGHT PURCHASE OPERATING CYCLE: CARS 42 MONTHS/80,000 MILES; VANS 48 MONTHS/60,000 MILES

opportunity to sit back and look at how we get the infrastructure in place and other things like charge cards and policies."

Fortunately, this is the main impact of the vehicle supply shortage on the fleet.

Turner says: "We're lucky in that we ordered 250 vehicles on lease just before the shortage hit and they're filtering through now; we completed 100 just before Christmas."

It's Altrad Services' commitment to driver training and reducing incident rates that won it

2020's Safe Fleet of the Year and last year's Excellence in Fleet Safety award in the Fleet News Awards.

Its driver training programme consists of three key elements: an e-learning course, oneto-one driver training and a classroom course. This is for all grey fleet and company car drivers as Altrad says it has a duty of care for anyone who drives on company business. MOT expiry dates are logged and monitored too.

Drivers of large vans undergo a half-day driver training course before they are allowed on the road. This involves training in vehicle familiarisation, load security and safe loading, both faceto-face and via e-learning modules. The driver is then shadowed for the rest of the day.

All drivers are assessed through telematics and those deemed to be high risk are given priority, with areas of concern discussed initially between driver and fleet or line manager. Those drivers will sit a targeted e-learning course, focusing on where their driving style can improve. Those who are found to have not improved will



sit an in-house classroom course, which is followed by further monitoring.

Company HGV drivers undertake sixmonthly driver assessments. These involve being accompanied for a shift to assess driving style and overall vehicle management.

All other drivers are assessed annually, either one-to-one or online.

Every car and van driver undergoes a licence check at least every 12 months and for HGV drivers it is every six. Any driver identified as high risk through telematics has their licence checked every three months.

Courses are guided by telematics findings and regular licence checks. The telematics device records and communicates all instances of higher risk driving then collates these into percentage scores, with 100% representing zero infringements.

Altrad also uses a traffic light system of green for good driving, amber indicating room for improvement, and red for driving which increases road risk.



Turner believes the company's approach to driver safety has paid dividends and is proud to say that on a fleet of 2,000 drivers 'very few' have been classed as high risk.

Most at-work driving accidents are classed as 'prangs', perhaps where a driver has reversed into a bollard for example. In these cases, it could be that a hazard perception e-learning course is offered if felt necessary, although Turner says most drivers are not repeat offenders.

An in-house virtual reality driver training system, a latest addition to the company's training portfolio, is currently being rolled out across all sites.

This aims to immerse drivers into the cab of a vehicle and allow real-life scenarios to play out as though they were there. Part of it also shows the impact a fatality can have on families and the driver responsible.

Turner explains: "It's to make drivers understand the ripple effect their driving can have on a wider circle of people."

It's not just the fleet team that uses this information to shape how drivers are trained and educated. A newly launched in-house fleet committee meets regularly with regional managers to discuss such facts and figures and to share best practice and information about driver behaviour.

Turner says: "The managers come back to us and, for example, ask us to get quotes for in-cab cameras. We've given some of that ownership back to the regions, so they feel valued in our suggestions.

"We also work alongside other central departments like HSEQ, HR etc. to have an open discussion about where we think we can improve as a business going forward. It's always important for us to hear opinions from elsewhere within the business."

TURNER ON...

...driver engagement

Sarah Turner firmly believes drivers should not be beaten with a stick every time they commit a driving misdemeanour and wants her team members to be seen as friends rather than foes. She prefers a lighter touch rather than heavy-handed approach.

Many staff members who get behind the wheel of an Altrad van are not professional drivers – they might a scaffolder, a painter or a lagger, working on a customer's site.

Turner says: "When we first installed telematics about five years ago, I think we took the wrong approach with our drivers by penalising them for every speeding offence. I don't think it should work like that.

"It should be persistent speeders that you work with, rather than penalising every single driver for every negative event. Overall, I think drivers now realise that we're not patronising them, it's all about safety."

Turner says it's also important to inform drivers how telematics can work in their favour, potentially absolving them from blame in the event of an accident.

Although perhaps a little reluctant to embrace the use of telematics systems in work vans at first, drivers now accept that it serves as a valuable tool for both themselves and their employer.

She believes her initial role as fleet administrator has stood her in good stead with drivers and says: "It helps that, as fleet administrator, I would speak to drivers and they got to know me. They know I'm not doing this just for the sake of it. Communication with our drivers is key."

Regarding the virtual reality (VR) offered, Turner says: "If you get a group of 20 scaffolders in a room during VR training then you open it up for discussion, people make points you may not have considered."

But make no mistake, although the team wants to work with drivers rather than against them, persistent offenders will be dealt with – the worst-case scenario is their keys are taken off them.

"We've got a performance policy in place where we make drivers more accountable for their vehicles," Turner says.





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AWARDS



WINNER: ENTERPRISE

Enterprise head of sales – fleet, leasing and accident management, UK and Ireland, Joanne Vickers (with trophy), along with members of the team

Putting business mobility at the heart of its strategy has allowed Enterprise to offer a range of services to help fleets in a post-lockdown world. *Mike Roberts* reports

he impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced many fleets to adapt to different ways of working and placed greater pressure on suppliers to offer products and solutions to help their customers overcome these new challenges.

Daily rental provision is a prime example of how suppliers have developed their services to offer much more than just a vehicle for a set period of time. It's now about helping corporate customers manage areas such as their grey fleet and allow them to explore many other mobility options, for example car clubs.

Enterprise has been recognised for continually adapting its services to respond to fleets' differing needs and it's this approach that helped it to be named Best Rental Company of the Year in the Fleet News Awards for the fifth year running.

Fleet News: How has the pandemic changed the way companies think about business travel?

Joanne Vickers, head of sales – fleet, leasing and accident management: Journey planning is key, using data analysis to inform consultancy to reduce wholelife costs, identify new areas for efficiency and enable flexibility so businesses remain agile.

Many businesses still struggle to address grey fleet, especially as this became the preferred mode of travel during the height of the pandemic. Many still don't even realise it's a business problem.

How businesses use vehicles is central to their decarbonisation strategy. Fleets know they could

reduce emissions more quickly – but how? Which vehicles and which journeys? This is where new solutions such as integrated transport programmes are helping organisations to model how they can reduce miles travelled and transition to more sustainable vehicles.

FN: What are the biggest challenges your fleet customers face?

JV: Optimising employee mobility in a changing landscape of virtual and hybrid working and with growing pressure to decarbonise is a central challenge which requires new solutions, especially given current economic pressures.

Other challenges are more subtle. Fleets need to change employee travel behaviours and practices such as grey fleet that may be culturally ingrained. They're examining the potential of EVs at a time when the UK's current charging infrastructure is evolving.

Some challenges are hidden or latent. Many customers don't know the full impact of employee travel, especially among those working from home. This can make it hard to predict demand and lead to businesses enabling default travel choices such as grey fleet that lead to bigger long-term issues.

FN: What is your focus for 2022?

JV: We can see businesses are grappling with how to harness a workplace that's changed out of all recognition and with business travel needs that are radically transformed. At the same time, the decarbonisation agenda is top of mind for all. Our primary focus is how rental can strengthen business performance and enable leaders to drive change. That simple tool – picking up the exact vehicle you need, exactly when and where you need it – is a powerful one that can help reduce emissions and costs and streamline operations. We are talking to businesses about that potential.

FN: How do you see Mobility as a Service (MaaS) working in the UK?

JV: We're involved in the UK's only large-scale MaaS programme, the GO-HI app in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. This provides great insight on how MaaS will help to decarbonise travel through greater use of shared mobility, even in a large-scale rural location.

The potential for decarbonising travel by providing a genuine alternative to just travelling by privatelyowned vehicle is enormous. This was very much a pioneering project and it's far too early to see how MaaS will evolve in the UK.

The main catalyst for change will continue to be the decarbonisation agenda.

FN: How has lack of vehicle supply caused by the semiconductor shortage affected your business? JV: We have experienced a tightening in new vehicle supply, but we buy almost all our fleet on risk, so we can delay remarketing and hang onto vehicles for longer where we anticipate demand.

FN: What are the biggest challenges you face?

JV: Macro factors such as WLTP, Brexit, the decarbonisation agenda and, of course, the pandemic have caused considerable uncertainty for everyone and are continuing to cause disruption into 2022 and, potentially, beyond.

Getting the right programme in place can improve driver safety, reports reduce costs and enhance efficiency.



hichever way you look at it, the benefits of implementing a robust driver training strategy

are clear. Whether it's to improve the safety and welfare of staff as well as cutting costs through reducing collisions, achieving savings through greater fuel efficiency, or improving usage of electric vehicles, the right driver training can have wide-reaching impacts.

1 IDENTIFY TRAINING NEEDSThe first step is to identify what the organisation wants to achieve, whether it is reduced collisions, lower fuel costs, or something else altogether.
For safety, for example, Tony Greenidge, chief executive of IAM Roadsmart, says any training needs should be identified through a detailed risk assessment, assigned to every employee who drives as part of their job.
"This should be made an integral part of every new employee's induction and be routinely revisited at regular intervals to take into account changes in each driver's circumstances, such as any additional points on their licence since the last check," he adds.
"Aggregating the various factors into a risk score can help fleet managers

last check," he adds. "Aggregating the various factors into a risk score can help fleet managers identify drivers with a high overall risk level. "Each individual driver's performance in each area of the risk assessment can then be examined to identify specific training needs." The use of telematics to monitor driver behaviour is one of the most common methods to record useful data. A similar process can be used for other areas: for example, fuel usage

Methods to record useful data. A similar process can be used for other areas: for example, fuel usage and mileage can be used to identify which drivers would benefit from

Greg Ford, general manager at RED Driver Risk Management, reiterates eco-driving training. the importance of online training, while also stressing the potential for in-vehicle assessments.

In-vehicle assessments. "Unfortunately, we find that many businesses don't identify training needs until it's too late – this could be after an event or series of events have occurred such as a run on speeding fines or an increase in repair bills," says Ford. "The best approach is to be proactive. This can take a number of forms, the obvious one being in-vehicle driver assessments which can take place in various formats, but are generally conducted on-site on a one-to-ene basis with a

formats, but are generally conducted on-site on a one-to-one basis with a specialist trainer."



2 IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TRAINING METHODS

The best training method will invariably depend on a combination of each driver's individual performance in the risk assessment and the relevance of the training to their working life. "It's important to establish the baseline of

"It's important to establish the baseline of success along with your training provider so specific and achievable risk targets can be established and met in the short, medium and long terms," says Jennifer Morris, head of commercial development at DriveTech. "Businesses should also consider how their

"Businesses should also consider now dear drivers best consume information and, using data and information from the previous analysis stage, make an informed decision on what training will be most effective."

IAM Roadsmart's Greenidge says low-risk drivers might require only nudge-based online training whereas seriously at-risk drivers may require extended on-road training.

"For a high-mileage driver with a high-risk rating, an in-vehicle training session is generally our recommendation as it provides the driver with a truly hands-on experience, with direct and insightful feedback from a professional fleet

trainer," he says. "For drivers falling into lower risk categories, or those with very specific requirements, bite-size training interventions such as e-learning modules or webinars may be more appropriate.

"For example, a group of occasional drivers identified as having a moderate risk rating, but also a shared history of speeding endorsements, might benefit most from a group session on speed management. "This kind of training course can be delivered

"This kind of training course can be delivered as a webinar, which is handy for remote workers, and is also far less time-consuming and costly compared with an on-road course."

Group webinars also represent more of a lighttouch approach that may be more appropriate for those who only drive for work occasionally.



TONY GREENIDGE, IAM ROADSMART

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

By Nick Butler, commercial director, DriveTech



Who would have predicted we would still be gripped by the pandemic almost two years on?

Unprecedented, concerning, disruptive, exceptional,

disconcerting, upsetting and costly – all words regularly used in association with the pandemic. While most of us have not experienced anything of this magnitude before, we've been learning to manage one enormous risk as we try to navigate the challenge and get on with our lives, staying as safe, productive and as healthy as possible.

Facing risk and, particularly, driver risk is, of course, not on the same catastrophic global scale, but it can still be massively disruptive, detrimental, costly and affect lives.

You can do something practical about it.

It is very much about anticipating your vulnerabilities – driving for work is one of the highest risk activities workers will normally take part in day-to-day and you have a duty of care. Assessments geared to identify which of your drivers are exposed to the greatest on-road risk are a smart way to help and can be delivered online, simply, easily and effectively.

This leads to the opportunity to address different drivers with different levels of driver coaching and training interventions from online e-learning opportunities to on-road personal interaction and more.

One trend from the pandemic, if not emerging before, is the focus on wellbeing and, in this context, driving while distracted, stressed or worse can be very dangerous.

New vehicle tech, particularly an increasing focus on screen interactions can be pretty distracting too. So assessments that not only look to understand driving competency, but also behavioural or attitudinal traits, are increasingly important.

DriveTech is delighted to have been voted *Fleet News* Reader Recommended for Driver Training and we will continue to serve this industry to improve safety and reduce costs throughout 2022 and beyond. **w: www.drivetech.co.uk**

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3. IMPLEMENTING THE DRIVER TRAINING PLAN

Implementations should be straightforward once objectives and training methods have been identified.

"A driver training plan should be focused on attitude, behaviour and competency while being tailored to meet your organisation's objectives and mitigate specific risks," says DriveTech's Morris.

Driver buy-in can sometimes be an issue for any training plan, as some employees are reluctant to take part or do not believe they need to improve.

To overcome this, Ford at Red Driver Risk Management, says there is a need for fleets to quantify their objectives and then ensure that any reporting that takes place is carried out against that process.

out against that process. "We've always maintained that any training should be enjoyable and a

benefit to the trainee, seen as a reward rather than a punishment, he adds.

"Training completed where a trainee is engaged and positive is always more effective – it again comes back to creating a proactive environment and culture in the business and completing training before it's required." It should also be made clear that

It should also be made clear that providing driver training is not only an important part of fulfilling the requirements of workplace safety legislation, it is also intrinsic to the duty of care obligations every

duty of care obligations business has for its employees. IAM Roadsmart's Greenidge says the first step in implementing a successful driver training plan is to establish ownership.

"What we see in many businesses is that driver risk management

sometimes falls to the fleet manager, sometimes to a health and safety manager, sometimes to human resources," he adds.

"In reality, all have a part to play, but the administration of driver training must be part of a clearly defined remit so that it is not neglected and is

implemented consistently." Once the strategy has been implemented, fleets must reflect regularly and realistically on the challenges their drivers face – and subsequently evolve their strategy if this becomes necessary.

this becomes necessary. Morris concludes: "Robust driver safety is an ongoing and evolving process that requires constant care and attention.

"Ultimately, though, a continuous improvement strategy will save lives."

CASE STUDY: CLARKE ENERGY

Clarke Energy has implemented a robust driver training programme following thorough analysis of its driving employees.

The company, which has a fleet of around 200 vans and cars, is a specialist in the engineering, installation and maintenance of engine-based power plants.

It wanted a programme which would allow it to oversee its duty of care compliance, keep drivers safe and minimise collision rates to keep insurance costs down.

"Our parent company, Kohler, has health and safety at its core

too, so we implemented the programme not only for the business benefits, but, frankly, because it's the right thing to do," says Maria Bate, Clarke Energy deputy purchasing manager.

After appointing training provider TTC, Clarke Energy carried out a root and branch risk audit and subsequently devised a driver training strategy with four key elements: The strategy first ensured leadership buy-in and subsequently announced the safety initiative to all relevant drivers.

All drivers were offered the opportunity to undertake online training on hazard awareness, speed recognition and distractions.
 All drivers had their risk exposure assessed and a risk rating was awarded to all at-work drivers. All 200 drivers were invited to undertake a detailed online assessment covering driver information, history, knowledge and environmental exposure.
 Training interventions were implemented based on assessment scores as well as

ensuring senior and middle managers had a full understanding of their responsibilities.

Following the review, driver training has been introduced for high-risk drivers and workshops arranged for line managers and senior managers to ensure they fully understand their health and safety responsibilities.

Post-collision interview training is also being offered to drivers involved in a crash, while Clarke Energy is also planning to arrange forums on specific driving topics with different groups of drivers.

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Technology is at forefront in bid to increase driver safety

Roundtable delegates share experiences in formulating their risk management policies



By Stephen Briers

n the week following Brake Road Safety week, fleet decisionmakers came together to discuss their own safety initiatives at a *Fleet News* roundtable, sponsored by Trakm8.

Technology is playing a starring role, with a blend of telematics, video and software giving fleets access to huge amounts of data which is underpinning their risk management policies. Most are using the insight to measure driver behaviour and inform the training and support programmes.

Fleet News (FN): What initiatives have you introduced to improve drivers' skills?

Shaun Atton (SA): We use telematics as a coach-and-reward scheme, not as a stick. We look at all events and have camera footage which shows the reason for the incident – it could be someone breaking hard because a child has run out into the road, for example. The data drives our driver training but, even before someone goes out onto the road for the first time, they receive training.

Matt Hammond (MH): We don't believe in rewarding drivers – it's the standard they should achieve. We use telematics to understand driver behaviour and patterns. If they fall short, we will invest in them with training and support. If they continue to fall short, they don't meet the standard to drive my fleet. First offence is a talk and training; second they can't drive for the business for two months; third they can't drive for 12 months. We also look at trends in driving patterns over the past three years to understand what it means and assign the right type of training. We look at the types of incidents we are facing, the biggest cost and where we can make the biggest impact. We also do town halls to explain to drivers why we have telematics and the potential savings from insurance and accident reduction.

Andrew Jack (AJ): We show drivers the footage where it's worked in their favour so they can see how the cameras benefit them.

FN: Do you have league tables comparing driver performance?

AJ: We have a report each month on the 10 worst drivers looking at accident stats, telematics data and training records (they get bonus points for training).

SA: We do it as league tables monthly in each area and quarterly for the business. This gamification creates friendly banter and competition.

MH: No one wants to be at the bottom; we see an instant improvement in their behaviour because they don't want to have a conversation about their driving style. But they also don't want to be at the top and seen as the teacher's pet! They want to be in the safe ground, near the top. **Tony Murphy (TM):** We don't have in-cab alerts because we think it's a distraction, but often the first time a driver knows about it is when they are pulled up for poor driving. We want to enable them to address it straight away.



Chris Woods (CW): It's like Marmite – some love the in-cab alerts, others don't. But the results can wane unless you stay on top of it with other processes.

MH: You have to have the end-to-end processes.

Neil Thomas (NT): When we introduced telematics to our van fleet, we saw an 11% reduction in RTCs (road traffic accidents).

FN: Does anyone do risk assessments for new employees before they drive for the first time?

Leigh Aston (LA): We brought it in at Murphys for all new starters. It generates a risk score so we can address any issues before they go out onto the road. We also have a road risk group with profile on the board and we have a 'consequence' table with punishments and actions that we recommend are taken dependent on each risk type.

AJ: We also risk profile drivers as part of the onboarding process

looking at their licence, health checks, eyesight and vehicle familiarisation, and build in the accident investigation and postaccident procedures. At a previous business, we had 60 vehicles; we did a health check and found that 10 drivers couldn't see properly.

FN: With so much data coming from connected devices, how do you stay on top of everything?

Beckie Edwards (BE): It's an impossible task to manage all the data. We get a lot of reversing incidents. For any cost that is more than £1,000, we put them on slow manoeuvring training which goes on their line manager's budget. That makes them pay attention and get involved in managing driver behaviour.

TM: Our telematics provider puts everything into a BI (business intelligence) report that is shared with the MD in each sector. It says how much it costs; money talks.

MH: You ignore 90% of it! You have

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ATTENDEES

- 1. Beckie Edwards, fleet safety advisor, Severn Trent
- 2. Matthew Newman, enterprise sales manager, Trakm8
- 3. Matt Hammond, head of fleet, M Group Services Plant
- & Fleet Solutions.
- 4. Tony Murphy, fleet manager, Murphy Plant
- 5. Chris Woods, enterprise sales director, Trackm8
- 6. Shaun Atton, head of fleet and facilities, Auto Windscreens

to decide what you want to focus on and stick with it. You can't take it all on to start with, but you widen out as you get control.

CW: We have 'perspectives' where you can identify the key parameters and focus on the red.

SA: We don't use dashboards; we have APIs (application programming interfaces) that feed into our own fleet management system where we have top line sight of data.

TM: There are may variables, with telematics data, accident data, etc. which may, or may not, be related. You have to focus on the things that stand out.

FN: Do you look at the root cause of any incident?

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TM: We look at the hours they have worked, lifestyles, personal issues, whether they are working at night – you have to consider all the variables, not just the data.

SA: Managers do an incident investigation for every accident looking at the telematics and camera footage. This includes driver welfare as well. Drivers' hours were playing a major role, so we have fixed that by reporting on it. We ensure they are doing the right number of hours per day rather than assume they are, especially with travelling to and from jobs. We increased the resource to reduce mileage and working hours. **Graham Short (GS):** Before they carry out a vehicle check, our drivers have to do a self-declaration to say they have not been affected by drink or drugs. It also includes eyesight. We are doing a lot of work on wellbeing as well.

SA: We have a confidential line that people can call and we put a sticker on the dashboard to remind them.



7. Graham Short, fleet manager, Culligan Water Treatment

8. Andrew Jack, road risk manager, M Group Services Plant

11. Neil Thomas, head of fleet/driver behaviour, Royal Mail

9. Stephen Briers, editor-in-chief Fleet News

10. Leigh Aston, fleet supervisor, Murphy Plant

ighlighting the cost to the business from driver incidents or poor driver behaviour can act as a catalyst to prompt managers to take action.

"We report and recommend, but, ultimately, it's the operations team that has to implement it," says Hammond.

"Often, they see the vehicle as a tool and don't see or acknowledge the value. You have to put money against it; then they listen."

Royal Mail has introduced a weekly high-cost vehicle report which identifies any driver-induced faults and costs. It has unearthed a £10 million opportunity on tyres, lost or broken keys and misfuelling events, according to Thomas.

And, Edwards adds: "We have a monthly business report which shows how much money the business could save if the fleet was fully utilised; we had no accidents and no harsh braking. We charge out fleet to each business unit so it's in their interest to take action. The report is red/amber/green so they can clearly see where they can save money."

TODAY'S FLEET: ELECTRIFICATION

ROAD TO ELECTRIFICATION IS GROWING LESS ROCKY

A large number of fleets will investigate going electric for the first time in 2022, and the journey may be easier than they think. *Mike Roberts* reports

ESLA

his year will see electric vehicles (EVs) gain a bigger foothold in the UK fleet sector as companies aim to meet their own environmental targets or simply respond to the 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol

and diesel cars which draws ever closer. Driver concerns around EVs continue to exist –

mostly 'will I reach my destination and where can I charge?' – but these can be outweighed by the generous tax rates enjoyed on low emission cars.

Paul Hollick, chair of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP), says the biggest barrier to going electric is driver misconception around what an EV can, or can't, do.

"There will be misunderstanding and fear," he says. "For example, there are those who are used to a manual shift car and don't understand what it's like to be in an auto.

"There's a lot of questions asked, such as 'will it

suit me?' or 'is it something I want to use?'. For cars, range anxiety is less of a problem as benefit-in-kind (BIK) tax means you save so much money – now everyone wants out of their petrol and diesel vehicles and into an EV."

PS 56885

Nowadays, Hollick says, many drivers have the benefit of hearing how EVs work from colleagues, but that hasn't always been the case. And the good news for fleets, he adds, is they don't need to introduce a standalone EV policy.

"There should be some added clauses just for EVs, but there doesn't need to be a completely fresh policy because a lot of things like safe driving and repair and maintenance are the same," he says. "There are more similarities than dissimilarities."

RANGES ACHIEVED

Hollick has been driving EVs for around eight years. His first had a range of just 60 miles. Now,

IF YOU DON'T HAVE THEM (EVs), THEN EMPLOYEES WILL BE RIGHTLY ASKING, WHY NOT?

TESLA

CHRIS CONNORS, COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTIES

mainstream electric company cars can travel up to 250 real-world miles in some cases on a single charge, with most achieving 200 miles.

A growing rapid charging network also means



The ever-increasing number of charge point installations is helping to ease range anxiety

some cars can be 'refuelled' in minutes. And those who have access to a home charger can reap the benefits of low electricity costs by charging their vehicle overnight.

However, it is estimated that 40% of households are without a driveway. So, is this likely to cause fleets and drivers huge problems?

Hollick thinks not, adding: "Not being able to charge at home is not so bad for a car driver because they could spend half an hour at their local Gridserve or BP Chargemaster station to charge – an inconvenience of only once or twice a week. In many cases, you can combine charging with your weekly shop."

Chris Connors, head of facilities and fleet at Countryside Properties, believes offering EVs is an 'essential part of any company car scheme'.

"If you don't have them, then employees will be rightly asking, why not?" he says.

He advises fleet managers to try out EVs for themselves, adding: "There are a lot of myths and opinions, but the only way to truly know how they compare with an internal combustion engine (ICE) is through driving one."

In terms of introducing EVs to a fleet, Connors says: "There are two non-negotiables before I would take an EV for myself or one of the drivers. First, you need a way of charging the vehicle overnight. If you don't, and the first thing you need to do is find somewhere to charge and lose an hour waiting for an 80% charge, then it is not going to be sustainable.

"The second thing is to understand general journeys and then ensure the range is sufficient to be able to drive most of them on either a full charge or with a guarantee of being able to top up at the destination.

"We found that with ranges now 200-plus (miles) in a lot of vehicles that the range wasn't a barrier for our drivers. However, the charging infrastructure is still a concern, although this is improving week by week."

Connors's final piece of advice for fleet managers looking to go electric is: "Reach out to other fleet managers about their experiences."

RESEARCH ON RANGE

A study carried out by fleet management software company Vimcar suggests that up to 90% of fleet vehicles could be switched to an EV.

The company bases its findings on the average distance fleet vehicles are travelling, compared with the mileage range on electric vehicles.

It says that 87% of companies cite mileage range as a main concern when considering the switch to electric. However, the study, which evaluated the driving habits of more than 67,000 fleet vehicles, suggests that mileage range is an 'imagined obstacle' in fleet electrification and that, despite popular beliefs, most companies are able to use EVs without impacting the level of fleet usage.

Sami Eric, Vimcar's UK country manager, says: "Unfortunately, there is often negativity associated with EV usage and the efficiency they have for longer journeys.

"However, this data proves these fears wrong and that, in fact, the majority of businesses could make the switch and continue to use their fleets in the same way as now."

Some companies could benefit from asking for volunteers to run a trial to assess how best to bring EVs into the fleet. The use of the EV should mirror that of an ICE vehicle as closely as possible to allow accurate comparison.

Many organisations arrange roadshows where local dealers or leasing companies take EVs to workplaces, so employees can drive the vehicles ask question about them.

Find out how other companies are making the switch to electric in our special report here

Test drive the latest electric models at this year's Company Car in Action, taking place at Millbrook proving ground, Bedfordshire, on June 15 and 16. Register here

All you need to know about transitioning to electric will be covered at this year's Fleet & Mobility Live at Birmingham's NEC on Oct 11 and 12. Register here

SPONSOR'S COMMENT

Jon Lawes, managing director, Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions



Businesses face unprecedented uncertainty entering 2022, heightened by both the Covid variant and industry challenges such as vehicle supply or

HITACHI

Inspire the Next

However, our pioneering spirit and independence means we do what's right for UK fleets; focusing on supporting our customers to manage their vehicle lifecycles and drive down costs to build a fleet for the future.

Despite supply chain pressures and the latest plug-in car grant cut, we expect the demand for zero-emission vehicles will gather pace over the next 12 months, driven by the compelling cost and environmental benefits for our customers.

While the shortfall in public charging continues to be a significant barrier to mass adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), we still anticipate that the majority of our orders will be for battery electric vehicles next year.

However, ordering vehicles is only the first step; it's up to us, as providers, to solve the challenges of workplace, depot or home-based charging solutions for our customers, working together to implement the charging infrastructure they need.

The time to act is now and to act decisively with carbon-reduction initiatives, ensuring a future-proof fleet for 2030 and beyond.

Our customers need creative EV-switch tools, robust cost analysis, driver support/education and practical EV acceleration initiatives in 2022.

To find out more about how to transition your fleet visit:

www.hitachicapitalvehiclesolutions.co.uk/ electric-vehicle-leasing/fleet-electrification

IGNITION: FIRST DRIVE



BMW i4

'Characterful' first electric compact executive car offers impressive 367 miles range

By Matt de Prez

MW has beaten its keenest rivals to the punch with the launch of the new i4. It's the first electric car from a premium German brand to sit in the compact executive segment and promises all the practicality and driveability of a conventionallypowered BMW wrapped in a tax-friendly zero emissions package.

Sharing a body with the recently launched 4 Series Gran Coupe, the i4 is not a clean-sheet EV like the iX. It does, however, make use of BMW's latest electric propulsion technology, which means a WLTP range of up to 367 miles and the ability to add up to 102 miles of charge in 10 minutes.

Compared with the 4 Series, the only noticeable difference is found inside, where the infotainment screen has grown to 14.9 inches and has swallowed the climate controls into its touchscreen. The i4

uses BMW's eighth-generation operating system, which is a marked step up from its already well revered predecessor.

The new set-up is crisper, with more connectivity and greater levels of customisation. It retains the familiar rotary iDrive controller in the centre console, along with touch-and-voice control. Activating the heated seat now requires more than one button press, however.

Two versions of the i4 will initially be available in the UK. The eDrive40 is the core model, offering up 340PS to the rear wheels via a single electric motor. Drivers can pick from Sport and M Sport trims, with this powertrain.

The i4 M50 uses two electric motors, giving all-wheel drive and 544PS. It's the first electric car to receive treatment from BMW's M Division, making it harder, faster and more engaging.

Both the eDrive40 and the M50 use the same



83.9kWh battery, meaning the more powerful car's official range drops to 316 miles.

Based on our initial tests, we're confident the i4 eDrive40 will easily return 250 miles per charge in the worst conditions. Bearing in mind we drove the car in the middle of winter, on hilly country lanes and along the motorway, it was still achieving 3.3mi/kWh. We'd expect at least 300 miles from the eDrive40 and around 280 miles from the M50 in normal use.

The i4 exhibits little compromise from sharing its shell with an internal combustion engine (ICE) car. It's beautifully composed, with well-balanced handling, sharp brakes and direct steering. Battery weight is well contained, although not entirely unnoticeable. All told, the i4 is a masterpiece of engineering. It feels more dynamic than some of the firm's recent ICE models, which have gotten a little soft, while delivering a much greater shove of acceleration.

The rear-driven eDrive40 is more than adequate, offering the equivalent power of a non-fleety lastgeneration M440i. It can reach 60mph from rest in less than six seconds, with equally potent mid-range capability. It feels as well-honed and characterful as a BMW from 20 years ago, just without the soundtrack of a neatly-tuned six-cylinder petrol.

Stepping into the M50 showcases what BMW can really do when it tries. When driving around town or on the motorway there's little to distinguish it from its lesser-powered sibling, but the might of the twin motor set-up is every bit of what you'd expect from a BMW M car. Now 60mph is reached in less than four seconds and the i4 can slingshot itself out of any situation with immediate response.

The experience is capped with more secure roadholding, a firmer ride and sportier garnish on the exterior.

Charging the battery can be completed with similar rapid pace. DC charging at up to 210kW is

	ENTRY LEVEL BMW i4 eDrive40 Sport	RANGE-TOPPER BMW i4 M50 xDrive	FLEET PICK BMW i4 eDrive40 M Sport
SPECIFICATIONS			
P11D Price	£51,850	£63,850	£53,350
CO2 emissions (g/km)	0	Og	0
Range (miles)	367	316	367
Monthly BIK tax (20%)	1%/£9	1%/£11	1%/£9
Annual VED	£0	£0	£0
Class 1A NIC	£72	£88	£74
Fuel cost (ppm)	5.5	6.5	5.5
Running cost (4yrs/80k)	51ppm	63ppm	52.5ppm
AFR (ppm)	4	4	4
Residual value (4yrs/80k)	£18,926/36.5%	£22,926/36%	£19,326/36%

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

RIVALS	TESLA MODEL 3 Long range	POLESTAR 2 Dual motor	KIA EV6 AWD GT line
SPECIFICATIONS			
P11D Price	£49,935	£45,845	£47,390
CO2 emissions (g/km)	0	0	0
Range (miles)	360	298	314
Monthly BIK tax (20%)	1%/£8	1%/£8	1%/£8
Annual VED	£O	£O	£0
Class 1A NIC	£69	£63	£65
Fuel cost (ppm)	3.5	5.5	5
Running cost (4yrs/80k)	47.5ppm	46.5ppm	46.5ppm
AFR (ppm)	4	4	4
Residual value (4yrs/80k)	£18,330/36.5%	£17,465/38%	£16,418/34.5%



possible – provided you can find such a charger. A full charge using a home wallbox (7kW) will take around 13 hours, while a 50kW public charger can boost the battery from 10% to 80% in a little more than 40 minutes.

When it comes to pricing, the i4 starts at $\pounds51,850$ – around $\pounds2,000$ more than the equivalent Tesla Model 3. The M50 can be had for a not unreasonable $\pounds63,850$, given its capability.

Running costs for the entry-level eDrive40 Sport are around 3p per mile higher than the Model 3's,

but once you factor in the accessibility of the BMW retail network and its aftersales support – plus the much plusher interior and better build quality – the i4's running costs seem justified.

While many carmakers are having successes with all-new EV-only platforms, including BMW with its iX SUV, there's something about the i4's familiarity with BMW's old-school "ultimate driving machine" mantra that makes this package one that's hard to overlook, even if it is a little more expensive.

WARDY'S World

By Martin Ward



I'm confident many motorists and just about all road or pavement users rarely spend any time reading the Highway Code. If, like me, you ploughed

through it many times before your driving test, got your licence, them promptly forgot about it, and only look at it (usually online just to check something out), then I'm guessing, we are in the majority.

But new laws continue to be made – with very few realising what they are.

Looking at how many drive on our roads, I don't think they know the current laws, never mind recently introduced ones.

In the recent edition of the Highway Code, a 'hierarchy system' has been introduced. In it, the most vulnerable 'road-users' are more protected, and those who drive vehicles that can do the most damage are required to be more considerate.

The system places pedestrians, then cyclists, all the way up to HGVs and everything in between in the right 'pecking order'. Motor vehicles are now obliged, and expected to give cyclists a much wider berth when overtaking, around 1.5-metres. This means that on many streets, especially in towns, a truck simply will not have the space to overtake, probably causing even more tailbacks and jams.

All vehicles, including bicycles, must give way to pedestrians who want to cross a road, regardless of where it is.

Are you up to date with the new Highway Code? Are your drivers also up to date? Can you insist they read it, absorb it and know every law there is going? No, of course you can't. But maybe a gentle nudge is needed about changes, and fleet managers resolving to keep up to date might not be a bad idea for the new year.

Vehicle press days

I went to Richmond in North Yorkshire for a Genesis press day. It howled with rain, but that didn't dampen our spirits while driving the full range of these premium Korean cars and SUVs. The two I particularly liked were the GV80 SUV and the recently-introduced G70 Shooting Brake. All the cars are up to a very high standard with some really clever bits of functional technology.

Then it was over to Cheshire for the press launch of the all-new Suzuki S-Cross. And, when I say all-new, I mean all-new. It is a vast improvement on the old car in every department, especially the exterior design. The old S-Cross was never really a fleet choice, but the new one certainly hits the right spots for company car drivers. It is powered by a 1.4-litre petrol Boosterjet turbo engine coupled to a 48v mild-hybrid system. Prices from £24,999.



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KIA SPORTAGE

Kia adds hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains to its Sportage range

By Matt de Prez

hen it comes to crossovers, two models dominate – the Nissan Qashqai and the Kia Sportage. We've already welcomed an all-new Qashqai, so now it's Kia's turn to try to impress.

At first glance, it's looking positive. The new Sportage has taken a bold step away from the safe styling of its

predecessor. It's more angular, imposing and futuristic. The distinctive front-end trumps Nissan's own attempts at a contemporary design and the Sportage still has plenty more aces up its sleeve.

When you step inside, there's a high-class interior that borrows much from the new Kia EV6. Two digital displays curve towards the driver, while the centre console raises to create a wraparound cockpit. There's a mix of leather, metal and quality plastics that give a premium feel. It is a nice place to sit.

One feature carried over from the EV6 is the touchsensitive panel sitting beneath the main infotainment screen. It's a clever design that provides quick access to multiple features, with very few physical switches. Controls for the heated seats, drive modes and the rotary gear selector fall to hand in a control panel between the front seats.





D2I KB

At the rear, the upswept tailgate opens to reveal a large boot of 520-590 litres, dependent on powertrain, while passenger space remains adequate for five adults to travel comfortably.

Joining Kia's line-up at a pivotal time for electrification, the Sportage is offered with an array of powertrains to suit differing needs and budgets. At the entry level, there's a pair of regular petrol and diesel engines with a manual transmission. Mild hybrids are also offered, with a seven-speed automatic.

The big news for fleet customers, however, is the introduction of hybrid and plug-in hybrid variants. As the new Sportage shares its platform with the recently-launched Hyundai Tucson, it's unsurprising that the two electrified units are used in both.

The hybrid develops 230PS and is expected to have CO₂ emissions from 125g/km, while the plug-in hybrid has a slightly more potent 265PS power output. The latter is yet to be homologated, so final emissions figures are still to be confirmed. We'd expect at least a 30-mile range from the 13.8kWh battery, however, based on our experience with the Tucson.

So far, we've only tested the hybrid with all-wheel drive. Front-drive models are also available. The Sportage offers impressive refinement with minimal noise intrusion. It has direct steering, which is well weighted and feels competent in the bends. The ride errs on the firm side, giving a sportier feel in our GT Line S test car with 19-inch wheels. We'd expect lower grade models to feel a tad more comfortable.

Pricing starts at £26,745 – an increase of more than £2,000 on the outgoing car. It's in line with the new Qashqai and around £1,250 less than a Tucson. Hybrid models start at £33,245 and the plug-in hybrid can be had for £38,395.

The entry-level 2 grade comes reasonably wellequipped, but is only available in conjunction with the basic petrol and diesel engines. The GT Line provides the large 12.3-inch touchscreen plus sporty styling tweaks and the full range of engines.

Most Sportage customers are expected to opt for the 3 grade and above, which comes with the twin wraparound display setup, heated seats and steering wheel, keyless entry and adaptive cruise control.



JEEP COMPASS

Compass adds plug-in hybrid powertrain to become more fleet-friendly

By Matt de Prez

J

eep has waited for the facelift of its Compass SUV to introduce a plug-in hybrid, with the combination boosting its fleet credentials significantly.

The powertrain is the same as that used in the Renegade 4XE, which launched last year. It uses a 1.3-litre petrol engine and electric motor, serving up a combined power output of 240PS.

All-wheel drive is achieved via the installation of the electric motor on the rear axle, while the petrol engine powers the front wheels.

The 11.4kWh battery can provide a zero-emission range of around 30 miles – placing it in the 11% benefit-in-kind tax bracket – although the electric motor's output of 60PS means the performance in EV mode is a little lacking when compared with other plug-in hybrid SUVs.

Jeep also offers the Compass with a non-hybrid 1.3-litre petrol engine and front-wheel drive, with CO₂ emissions from a fleet-unfriendly 152g/km.

One aspect of the Compass that always worked in its favour was its rugged styling. Thankfully, the

	FLEET PICK JEEP COMPASS 4XE S
SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D price	£39,930
Monthly BIK (20%)	7%/£46
Class 1A NIC	£386
Annual VED	£0
RV (4yr/80k)	£11,537/29%
Fuel cost (ppm)	N/A
AFR (ppm)	13
Running cost (4yr/80k)	N/A
CO2 (g/km)	44
Range (miles)	156



exterior of the new one has hardly changed. In typical Jeep fashion there's plenty of nods to previous models, like the squared-off wheel arches and distinctive front grille.

The interior, however, has been totally redesigned and it's a welcome change. The new Compass has a much more up-to-date and premium-feeling cabin, packed with the latest technology.

A 10.1-inch central touchscreen juts from the dash, falling easily to hand for the driver. It's paired with a digital instrument cluster that provides a high degree of customisation.

An array of switches and buttons complement the touchscreen, providing fast access to key functions.

Jeep's latest infotainment system provides a slicker user experience than before, with an easyto-use menu structure and high-resolution graphics. It incorporates a new voice control system with Amazon Alexa, while the sat-nav is provided by TomTom. Our only disappointment with the new system is the heated steering wheel control appears on the passenger side of the display, a clear oversight from left-hand drive versions. The Compass 4XE is comfortable and refined when you get out on the road. There's not much wind or road noise, which makes for a relaxing cruise, and the suspension irons out bumps well. It's not a particularly sporty drive, however.

We found the steering to be a tad light and numb in feel, although the calibration of the brake pedal – a common issue on plug-in hybrids – is impressive, with the transition from regenerative braking barely noticeable.

Acceleration is a little sluggish, considering the car's power output. Officially, it can reach 62mph from rest in 7.5 seconds. But, in reality, it feels slower. This is mainly due to the six-speed automatic transmission not swapping ratios quickly enough.

The petrol engine isn't particularly sonorous when being worked hard, so it's best to drive the Compass with a little less vigour and enjoy the smooth ride and comfortable seat.

Pricing starts at £39,895 for the Compass 4XE in off-road-focused Trailhawk trim. The more luxurious S can be had for £40,895. Non-hybrid versions are £10,000 less.

IGNITION: FIRST DRIVE

MERCEDES-BENZ EQB

Need an electric model that seats seven? The EQB could be the one for you

By Matt de Prez

here are not many options for drivers who want a seven-seat electric car right now, but Mercedes-Benz might just have the answer with its new EQB. Due to arrive in the UK this month, it joins the brand's growing range of EQ electric models that are all based on existing Mercedes platforms. The EQB, then, is an electric version of the GLB SUV.

Like its stablemates, the EQB has minimal visual changes compared with its GLB counterpart. There's a gloss black panel in place of the front grille and full width light bars at the front and rear, to help set it apart from a regular petrol or diesel Mercedes.

The changes remove some of the ruggedness on the outside, but the GLB's premium interior remains intact. The dashboard is classy, with a mixture of gloss black and matte silver trims. It feels upmarket and offers plenty of space.

With seven seats, there's not a great deal of boot space. But folding the rearmost chairs into the floor opens up a reasonable 465 litres. Legroom in the third row is limited, so only kids will be comfortable

	FLEET PICK Mercedes EQB 300 AMG LINE
SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D price	£52,090
Monthly BIK (20%)	1%/£9
Class 1A NIC	£72
Annual VED	£0
RV (4yr/80k)	£17,738/34%
Fuel cost (ppm)	5
AFR (ppm)	4
Running cost (4yr/80k)	53
CO2 (g/km)	0
Range (miles)	257

 Win 10-inch displays for instruments

 and infotainment come as standard

there. It has Isofix points to secure baby seats. Prices start at £52,090, making the GLB cheaper

than a comparable Audi Q4 eTron or Tesla Model Y.

There are two powertrain options to choose from, both using a twin-motor all-wheel drive setup. The EQB 300 has 228PS, while the EQB 350 has 292PS for an extra £1,500.

An 80kWh battery provides a WLTP range of up to 257 miles and can be recharged from 10-80% in as little as 32 minutes, using a 100kW charger.

Drivers are presented with a best and worst case range figure in the instrument cluster display, which helps to demonstrate how driving style and use of features such as the heating can sap battery power.

During our test, which covered a mix of A-roads, motorways and some local roads, we managed to consume power at a rate of 3.0mi/kWh – suggesting a realistic range of 200 miles should be easily achieved by most.

The EQB's dual-motor powertrain provides suitable traction for ample acceleration, with our 350 test car achieving 0-62mph in just 6.0 seconds. It's a tad excessive for a family SUV and we expect the 300

will suit the majority of fleet customers just fine. It's no slouch either, reaching the same benchmark in 7.7 seconds.

Mercedes says the line-up will be expanded with front-wheel drive and long-range variants.

We've only driven a German-spec EQB, equipped with an adaptive suspension system that won't be offered in the UK, so we can't give a definitive view on the ride quality. We suspect the set-up will favour comfort over handling, however, in keeping with the other EQ models we've tested.

What we can say is that the EQB is well-mannered on the motorway, with a little wind noise audible due to its boxy stature. It also feels relatively nimble and compact around town for a car that can seat seven.

Only two trim levels can be specified at launch: the AMG Line or AMG Line Premium. Standard equipment includes two 10-inch displays for the instruments and infotainment system, heated seats, reversing camera and lane-keeping assist.

The EQB is an impressive package, offering decent performance and a premium feel, combined with the space and practicality of a mid-size SUV.



AUDI Q4 E-TRON

By Andrew Ryan

Sometimes with battery electric vehicles it's easy to get hung up on the novelty and performance of the powertrain and not look beyond that.

But, to do that with the Q4 e-tron would be an injustice.

As an SUV, it provides an impressively rounded experience. First, there's plenty of room for all passengers: legroom in the back is particularly generous and headroom is excellent too.

The 520-litre boot should be big enough for most families, and the load space is also wide -1 can fit a full bag of golf clubs in sideways, whereas in the vast

40 SPORT

majority of cars I need to take the longest clubs out.

The floor is level with the boot lip which makes it easy to slide loads in and out, while the rear seats are simple to fold down to give a near-flat cargo area with a potential length of just more than six feet.

The boot is easy to access through a powered tailgate operated either via the keyfob or by pressing a button just above the rear number plate.

Elsewhere, the Q4 e-tron feels every inch the Audi: for example, the virtual cockpit is crisp and suitably premium, while the infotainment system interface will be familiar to anyone who has driven a car from the manufacturer in the past few years.



HYUNDAI TUCSON FINALTEST

By Stephen Briers

As the curtain falls on our six months with the Hyundai Tucson PHEV, it's time to reflect with two key rhetorical questions: would I, as a fleet manager, add the Tucson to my company car choice list; and would I, as a company car driver, choose the Tucson?

The answer to both is yes. The running costs make a compelling business case compared to its largerengine premium rivals.

The Tucson combines all-wheel drive with a small, frugal 1.6-litre petrol engine, straddling the line between mainstream rivals such as the Ford Kuga and VW Tiguan, and the premium options from the likes of Audi (Q3) and Volvo (XC40).

PHEV UI TIMATE

But there's no point adding a car to a user-chooser list if no one picks it. The Tucson's high grade user experience, with quality materials, spacious, comfortable seating, and high levels of safety and infotainment technology, combined with the enjoyable driving experience, ensure it will get noticed.

The 11% benefit-in-kind rate means a 20% taxpayer would be forking out just £77 a month, while those who commute will be able to maximise their driving time on electric power thanks to the 38-mile range.

SUZUKI ACROSS

2.5 PHEV E-FOUR E-CVT



By Mike Roberts

The Suzuki Across offers enough storage space to keep most drivers and front seat passengers happy, with multiple areas for keys, phones, coins and other paraphernalia. There's even a dedicated compartment for your sunglasses.

Something I've appreciated on other plug-in hybrids is having a dedicated app that allows communication with the car via a phone.

It's a useful tool to check the level of charge if the car's plugged in, for example.

This is particularly handy if you share charge points with colleagues and want to move the car as soon as the battery's full, or if you've left the vehicle at a public charging point and need to know when it's ready for collection.

Suzuki doesn't offer this, so I'm also not able to remotely check things like fuel level and mileage or set the car to pre-warm/cool before embarking on a journey.

Not vital, but certainly one of life's little comforts for fleet drivers.

However, once inside, winter chills can quickly be banished with front and rear heated seats and a (most welcome at this time of year) heated steering wheel.

A heated windscreen would have been the icing on the cake, but it does have heated washer jets, which although they won't help defrost an icy windscreen (I've found it be the opposite, in fact) they will allow you to give the screen and headlights a quick clean with a blast of water as soon as you start off.

As well as the various compartments previously mentioned, there are two cup-holders front and rear and suitable door bin space in all the doors to hold a bottle.

Boot space is ample and the seats are a fixed 60:40 split; it swallowed our six-foot Christmas tree with ease. There's no loading lip so sliding things in and out is a breeze.

You also get a 12V power socket in the luggage area, as well as in the front console so you can charge all manner of gadgets on the go.





VOLVO XC40

By Matt de Prez

Our time with this Fusion Red XC40 T4 is coming to a close, but our testing of Volvo's best-selling model isn't quite finished as we've just taken delivery of an XC40 T5, finished in Thunder Grey (right), to help finalise our thoughts.

The switch comes just as Volvo has overhauled the XC40 model line-up, with a new streamlined trim. It reduces the number of options available at the point of order and is expected to speed-up lead times. The previous best-selling R Design trim, along with the other familiar grades have been

T4 R DESIGN

replaced with Core, Plus and Ultimate. Drivers can choose if they want chrome or gloss back trim and from a few different wheel designs, but specification levels are fixed.

Many of the optional features on the XC40 we've been testing to date have been welcome. This includes keyless entry with a powered tailgate, heated front and rear seats, a heated steering wheel and a rear-view camera.

Thankfully, all these features now come as standard on the £42,195 T4 'Plus'. It's only the Pilot Assist adaptive cruise control, which includes active

lane-keeping assist, that's not included in the new grade. For that you need the range topping 'Ultimate' and that only comes paired with the more potent T5 engine. More on that next time.

As the weather has become colder, we've seen a drop in efficiency from the XC40 T4's plug-in hybrid powertrain – although this could also be related to the UK's switch to E10 petrol, which is reported to affect consumption by up to 10%.

On longer motorway trips I was easily getting 44mpg from the Volvo's three-cylinder petrol engine, but now it's a struggle to beat 38. The electric range has also reduced, with the promised 24 miles from a full charge (according to the trip computer) dropping to around 16 miles within a few minutes of driving.

It doesn't dent my appreciation of the XC40, however. It's not let us down in the 8,000 miles we've spent behind the wheel and the car has proved impressive, with nimble handling, excellent motorway manners and family-friendly practicality.



The only downside I can see is that the front passenger seat is a kind of skinny affair and doesn't look as comfortable as the driver's seat. I'll report back on that after the first long journey with my wife.

My neighbour, a carpenter who owns a Nissan Primastar, came over to see what I was up to when I first discovered all this and he was stunned. His van is due for replacement soon and he told me: "I'm going to get one of these. It's got almost as much space as my van."

I wonder if Citroën would consider giving me an introduction fee on the purchase!



CITROËN BERLINGO

By Trevor Gehlcken

After 30 years testing commercial vehicles for *Fleet News* I thought I had seen just about everything there was to see – until our Berlingo turned up for a six-month appraisal.

I knew our van had a second row of seats and, while I was happy that I could transport more people about than in a normal van, I was slightly concerned as I also sometimes carry fairly large loads (normally for other people) about.

I should not have worried. The front passenger seat and the three seats in the second row fold right

CREWVAN ENTERPRISE BLUE HDI 100

down into the floor. Then the mesh bulkhead is mounted on to a set of rails and, with all the seats folded, it slides forward to be clipped behind the driver's seat.

But the cleverness doesn't end there.

There's also a flap in the bulkhead so lengthy items can be poked through, using up all the space from the back of the van to the front. That little gadget allows loads up to four metres long.

I've had vehicles with removable seats before but you end up with piles of them in the garage. No such problem with our perky little van.



S-EDITION E-TECH HYBRID 145 AUTO



By Gareth Roberts

The Captur E-Tech hybrid uses the same technology that debuted on the Clio E-Tech hybrid, which was engineered with input from the Alpine F1 team.

It combines a 1.6-litre petrol engine with a 1.2 kW lithium-ion battery and two electric motors, together with the automatic, multi-mode gearbox that features in all other E-Techs.

The clutchless dog-type gearbox – so-called because of the dog 'ears' that protrude from the gears – would normally give harsh shifts. However, Renault uses a second smaller electric motor to control the flywheel speed and smooth out engagement. This also starts the engine in 100% electric mode.

With the system able to use the motor and engine independently, there are 15 different drive 'modes', or combinations of power source and ratio.

The F1 technology allows the engine to operate at its most efficient revs and throttle regime, whether primarily driving the car or charging the battery.

Renault says it combines to significantly reduce the gap in acceleration during gear changes, giving a smoother, more refined drive plus better performance.

The Captur E-Tech hybrid generates 145PS delivering a 0-to-62mph time of 10.6 seconds and a maximum speed of 106mph.

After the E-Tech Plug-in hybrid, it is the most powerful Captur available, with CO₂ emissions from 114g/km, delivering fuel economy of up to 56.6mpg. Our test car has so far been hovering around the mid-40s.

As with other E-Tech equipped models, the Captur E-Tech hybrid features Renault's Multi-Sense driving mode selection. This sees the powertrain automatically adapt to the driving conditions and the way in which it is being driven – managing its power supply accordingly, as well as the battery regeneration opportunities.





VAUXHALL MOKKA-E

SRI NAV PREMIUM AUTO

By Luke Neal

Our Mokka-E is equipped with Vauxhall's latest Intellilux lighting. It seems automatic headlights are no longer enough; these are next level tech.

Intellilux is Vauxhall's name for its adaptive LED technology and is available across the Astra and Insignia ranges, as well as on the Mokka.

The glare-free headlights automatically switch to main-beam outside urban areas, and continuously adapt the range and distribution of the light beam pattern to suit the road conditions and avoid dazzling oncoming traffic, making night-time driving safer and more comfortable for all road users. The main beams also automatically come on when the vehicle's speed exceeds 30mph.

The headlights are amazing, they constantly monitor traffic and switch to dipped when they sense oncoming traffic. They are also able to block sections of main beam protecting oncoming drivers, constantly adjusting and progressively reinstating that section of light once the traffic has passed.

Intellilux Matrix LED headlights are a £700 upgrade on our car but come as standard on the range-topping Ultimate.

LED technology also results in lower energy consumption which can improve the car's range.



▷ MAZDA MX-30

145PS SPORT LUX

By Jeremy Bennett

Recalls are a necessary, but disruptive, part of fleet operations to ensure the safe running of vehicles.

And, while electric vehicles (EVs) represent the cutting edge of technology in many regards, they are not devoid of problems, relating to both the powertrain as well as more run-of- the-mill features.

The Mazda MX-30 has, in the two months I've been driving it, been the subject of three recalls. Sadly, unlike some EVs, over-the-air (OTA) updates, as pioneered by Tesla, aren't available to fix the issues. These have been the following: On some MX-30 vehicles, the electronic control unit (ECU) may not go into sleep mode after turning the ignition off which meant that an electrical current may continue to flow causing the 12-volt battery to discharge. We're also had a control unit reprogramme and the front passenger airbag could split when deployed.

The latter recall was issued in late October and our car was returned to Mazda for the work. For the other two I took the car to the EMG Mazda dealership in Boston for an hour.

Detailed charging data and spec on the Mazda MX-30 can be found here.

A SPECIAL REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY FleetNews

AUDI UK'S ELECTRIC RANGE

How e-tron and plug-in hybrid models are helping fleets on the path to a smooth transition to electric company cars, with the Q4 e-tron leading the charge

In association with

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IN Q 401E

The model shown is non-UK specification with optional extras

Audi EVs: delivering the complete package

Fleets need a complete electrification solution that provides far more than a car with a plug

n these early days of fleet electrification, fleets require more than state-of-the-art battery-powered company cars to make their transition to zero-emission motoring a success. However smart the automotive engineering, the smooth switch to electric vehicles (EVs) demands a complete package of support for fleet decision-makers and their drivers, according to Audi UK.

The premium brand's new Q4 e-tron can comfortably stand on its own four tyres in a face-off with any other electric SUV. But it also arrives on the UK market with the backing of key partnerships to assist fleets and their drivers, said Claire English, Audi UK's head of fleet.

The manufacturer's close relationship with Pod Point, for example, means an Audi UK retailer can arrange for a complimentary charge point* to be installed at a driver's home when the car is ordered, thereby making accessible charging ready and waiting when the car is delivered.

An arrangement with Octopus Energy is introducing Audi UK customers to energy tariffs designed to offer ultra-low cost, off-peak charging for EVs, using renewable energy. The cost is much lower when compared with an internal combustion-engined (ICE) vehicle.

And Audi UK's partnership with charging solution payment expert Mina means fleets can pay company car drivers' domestic energy suppliers directly for EV charging, protecting drivers from the risk of 'bill shock' and ensuring fleets have a straightforward means to reimburse their staff accurately and fairly for their business mileage electricity costs.

For public charging, a simple tap of Audi UK's e-tron card gives drivers access to 75% of the UK's public charge points without the hassle of downloading apps and carrying multiple RFID (radio-frequency identification) cards in their cars.

"We rightly talk about the Q4 e-tron, which is an amazing car, but it's just as important to talk to our customers about these unique partnerships to support our fleet customers," said English.

Laying the foundations for the operational success of Audi UK's electric company cars has gone hand-in-hand with extensive work to minimise the wholelife cost of the vehicles. Prior to the launch of the Q4 e-tron, Audi UK spent months working with leasing companies, residual value forecasters and fleet customers to lay the groundworks for competitive lease rates and total cost of ownership.

The combination of generous specification levels allied to an impressive 300-plus mile range*, all wrapped up in Audi UK's premium package, should encourage strong demand for used Q4 e-tron models when they return to the market, while the battery technology will deliver significantly lower service and maintenance costs than equivalent ICE cars.

"The Q4 e-tron also has two-year, unlimited mileage service* intervals compared with two-year, 18,000-mile intervals for ICE cars, which could save fleets money and reduce downtime for company car drivers," said English.

Attractive lease rentals and 1% benefit-in-kind tax have seen Q4 e-tron sales enjoy a flying start.



"WE RIGHTLY TALK ABOUT THE Q4 E-TRON, WHICH IS AN AMAZING CAR, BUT IT'S JUST AS IMPORTANT TO TALK TO OUR CUSTOMERS ABOUT THESE UNIQUE PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT OUR FLEET CUSTOMERS"

CLAIRE ENGLISH, AUDI UK

Audi Q4 e-tron

While some new electric vehicles appear closer to spacecraft than cars, Audi has played to its traditional strengths with the new Q4 e-tron

he Q4 e-tron is the first Audi to be built on the Volkswagen Group's new MEB platform, designed specifically for battery electric vehicles, which means every tiny detail of the car has been engineered to take advantage of the design opportunities presented by concealing a battery pack and motor below the chassis. This radically increases interior space, giving the Q4 e-tron the feel of a big car in its rear legroom and boot capacity, while keeping its exterior dimensions compact for ease of driving and parking

Unmistakably an Audi, the compact SUV features the grille and readily recognisable head and tail lights from across the manufacturer's range, while inside the cabin is as luxuriously appointed as drivers have come to expect.

So far, so familiar, but under the skin the Q4 e-tron features cutting-edge technology to enrich the driving experience and enhance safety. Touch-sensitive controls on the steering wheel, for example, let drivers scroll and swipe through driving aids such as cruise control, as well as the hi-tech infotainment system.

Taking the stress out of driving, Pre Sense Front sees a series of sensors constantly scan the road ahead, alerting the driver to any potential hazards, while rear parking sensors and the reversing camera assist manoeuvring. All of these features are standard across all Q4 e-tron models, as is Lane Departure warning and the new 'Swerve Assist and Turn Assist', which helps drivers to brake and steer around an obstacle when avoiding a collision*.

The Q4 e-tron is available in two variants: the handsome, practical Q4 e-tron and the sporty Q4 Sportback e-tron. Both come in four trim levels, Sport, S line, Edition 1 and top of the range Vorsprung, and are available as rear-wheel drive or Quattro models. They are powered by two different batteries: the smaller 55kWh battery has a maximum WLTP range of 208 miles* and can recharge at up to 100kW from a rapid charger, while the higher performance 82kWh battery has an officially-tested maximum range of 316 miles*, and can recharge at speeds of up to 125kW – powering from 5% to 80% in just 38 minutes via a rapid charger.

Prices start at £40,750 and, of course, as a company car, the Q4 e-tron is only taxed at 1% of its P11D value (2% from April 2022), which means a monthly benefit-in-kind tax bill from as little as £13.58 per month for a 40% taxpayer.



* For WLTP details and all other terms and conditions referenced, please visit here.



Addressing tailpipe emissions is just one part of a holistic sustainability mix

Environmentally-conscious fleets are looking at the complete footprint of their suppliers in their quest to meet net zero goals

> leets with a genuine environmental agenda are looking well beyond the zero tailpipe emissions of battery-powered vehicles to achieve their sustainability objectives. Electric vehicles can play a role in reducing carbon emissions if batteries are recharged with

renewable energy, but businesses committed to being carbon-neutral are looking for more ambitious eco initiatives from their supply chains as they strive to reach net zero commitments.

"Sustainability is the biggest topic on our agenda," said Claire English, Audi UK's head of fleet. "This has to be about more than just the vehicles. It has to be a holistic view."

This applies to the manufacturer itself, as well as its customers. Audi is

engaged in a long-term programme to minimise all the $\rm CO_2$ emissions and consumption of natural resources associated with producing cars, in order to meet its own ambitious environmental targets.

The Q4 e-tron is at the vanguard of these efforts – only green electricity is used in the energy-intensive production of the vehicle's battery cells, and the car itself is manufactured at Audi's net-carbon-neutral Zwickau production plant using renewable electricity. Any CO₂ emissions that cannot be eliminated from the car maker's supply chain and factory are subsequently offset via climate protection projects.

"Audi is taking an uncompromising approach to meeting its environmental obligations," said English. "We have set ourselves ambitious sustainability targets that include a 30% reduction in vehicle-specific CO₂ emissions throughout the product lifecycle by 2025, operation of all Audi production sites with net zero carbon emissions by the same deadline, and full company-wide carbon neutrality on balance by no later than 2050.

"Our progress is helping fleets and businesses that are committed to making their own entire supply chains net zero."

The manufacturer is also increasingly using recycled materials to make components – up to 27 of these feature in the Q4 e-tron – while at the end of the car's working life its batteries will be repurposed for a second life as stationary storage solutions for wind and solar power, before eventually the batteries' precious elements and minerals, such as cobalt, lithium, nickel, aluminium, manganese and graphite, will be recovered and recycled.

IN Q 406 F

Switching on to electric

Audi's comprehensive EV and PHEV ranges offer tax-saving options

he direction of travel towards zero emission (while driving) cars may be clear, but the rate of adoption differs from fleet to fleet dependent on individual operational needs, recharging infrastructure and budget constraints. Recognising that each fleet has to satisfy its own set of requirements, Audi is developing an ever-expanding range of battery electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

By 2025, the manufacturer will have 30 electrified models, including 20 pure electric cars, and from 2026 every new launch will be powered solely by electricity. Many key models are already available, capable of the zero emission (while driving) which deliver huge benefit-in-kind tax savings to company car drivers, and valuable National Insurance savings for their employers.

"Companies are at different stages of electrification," said Claire English, Audi UK's head of fleet. "Some have accelerated their transition into full EVs, but there are others still looking to transition parts of their fleet in a segmented way. We are equally focused on meeting all fleet requirements – our PHEV range is bigger than ever, from the A3 to the Q8 – and we'll continue to offer a wide range of vehicle sizes, models and specifications to meet individual customer needs."



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DOWNLOAD THE APP

EV&me app This clever app is helping company car drivers to assess the feasibility of switching to a battery-powered car or plug-in hybrid by analysing the journeys they make in their current vehicle.

Audi UK's free-to-download EV&me app** provides insight and information to help drivers check and validate whether an EV is right for them.

"The app analyses the real journeys that drivers are doing, assessing distance, time and modelling the percentage of battery charge," said Claire English, Audi UK's head of fleet. "It then shows drivers the number of charging stops they would have had to make."

The connectivity of new cars, especially battery electric models, is transforming the ownership experience for drivers. The myAudi app**, for example, lets drivers pre-set their ideal heating or air conditioning from their phone, so their car is the perfect temperature when they get in.

Among a host of functions, the app facilitates journey-planning specifically for electric vehicles, plotting not only the fastest route, but also the directions that will use the least charge and identifying charge stops along the way should they be required.

myAudi also enables drivers to monitor remotely the state of charge in their car's batteries and see the remaining range.

** Compatible phone or tablet, app download, registration and activation required. Subject to sufficient network coverage to enable an active data connection.

"SUSTAINABILITY IS THE BIGGEST TOPIC ON OUR AGENDA. THIS HAS TO BE ABOUT MORE THAN JUST THE VEHICLES. IT HAS TO **BE A HOLISTIC VIEW**

CLAIRE ENGLISH. AUDI UK

THE AUDI UK Electrified Range*

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Q3 TFSI e* Zero emission range: 31 miles Benefit-in-kind tax: from 11%

e-tron SUV Zero emission range: 252 miles Benefit-in-kind tax: 1%

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Whether you are beginning your research or you have a good idea of what you're interested in, the electric car and van data tool can help you with all the essential information, from range, tax and charging data* for electric cars and vans to stats on acceleration, cargo volume and the number of seats.

*Data supplied by EV-Database (EVDB)

CommercialFleet



The battle to recruit new drivers — and keep them

MSIDYRS

Better wages, improved benefits and enhanced cab conditions are wooing people to the industry

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POST-BREXIT DEAL MAY LEAD TO TOUGHER UK LCV REGULATIONS

Rule changes are currently confined to licensing for international operations

By Gareth Roberts

ew rules for vans travelling abroad could provide the "stepping-stone" to tougher regulations for all operators of light commercial vehicle (LCV) fleets.

The UK must introduce changes to its operators' licensing regime as part of the post-Brexit EU trade deal.

The most significant measure is an expansion in the goods operator licensing rules to include vehicles used for hire and reward, weighing more than 2.5 tonnes and up to 3.5 tonnes, including when used in combination with a trailer.

The new regulations, which come into force from May 21, will mean vans travelling internationally, including to the Republic of Ireland, will be in scope of operator licensing rules for the first time.

Details about how they will be implemented were subject to a consultation that closed in August, last year. The Government has yet to publish its response. However, van fleet operators believe the changes, which the Department for Transport (DfT) estimates could impact 4,200 operators and 21,000 vehicles, will pave the way for tougher rules for domestic operators as well.

Matt Hammond, M Group Services head of fleet, told a *Fleet News at 10* webinar he believes the new rules are the "first step" towards greater regulations for all LCV operators.

"Regulation is coming," he said. "It may not be in the next couple of years, but probably in the next five, when these changes are bedded in."

Duncan Webb, head of fleet in the UK and Ireland for ISS, agreed. He said: "While this relates to travelling into international territories, it opens the door for a discussion around domestic rules with the whole structure being put in place for vans."

The DfT says it could implement tougher regulations for fleets operating solely within the UK. However, for technical reasons, including those related to "legislative powers", it has decided against pursuing this, "at least, in the short term".

The DfT continued: "Any expansion in the scope of these rule changes is being confined to licensing for international operations, at least initially.

"Any changes to the domestic operations would need further consideration and discussion with industry stakeholders and there are currently no plans to commence this work."

O-LICENCE REGIME

The current UK operator licensing regime (O-licence) covers goods vehicles weighing more than 3.5 tonnes and larger public service vehicles (PSVs), such as buses.

Its aim is to support the transport of goods in a safe and fair way through a set of rules that anyone wishing to obtain an O-licence must adhere to, including areas such as financial standing, professional competence and good repute.

Licence holders are also required to have an 'effective and stable

establishment', as well as an operating centre.

In Great Britain, the O-licence regime is managed by eight Traffic Commissioners. Fleets failing to comply with the requirements to hold a licence can have an application refused or an existing licence revoked, while individuals involved in the business can be disqualified.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) polices the rules by carrying out operator visits and roadside checks.

NEW RULES FOR VANS

The requirements of good repute, stable establishment and professional competence will apply to the new rules being implemented for vans travelling internationally.

The main differences are a lower level of financial standing related to the operation of light goods vehicles (LGVs), and transitional arrangements exempting people with substantial relevant experience in the operation of LGVs from requiring a



Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) qualification for a period of time.

The DfT said it wants to allow individuals who declare they have continuously managed LGVs for 10 years prior to August 20, 2020, to be issued with a limited validity acquired rights certificate, allowing them to continue to manage LGVs for a transitional period.

The approach is designed to give businesses the time to ensure that experienced and long-standing fleet managers currently undertaking this role can achieve the necessary CPC qualification.

A licence granted with a designated transport manager through these 'transitional acquired rights' will be restricted from operating larger vehicles until they complete the CPC.

The Government has suggested that acquired rights will be time-limited to three

years and these rights, and the associated qualification, will expire after May 20, 2025.

After that date, all UK transport managers will be required to have obtained the Transport Manager CPC certificate.

Transport managers with this qualification who are hired to fulfil this function, but who are not directly employed by the operator, are currently restricted to the management of 50 vehicles, spread between a maximum of four different operators.

Webb is hoping the Government will address the number of vehicles they can manage, with new rules bringing more vehicles into scope.

He said: "We might get a ratio, such as for every 50 HGVs you can have a 2:1 ratio of vans. I just hope it doesn't stay as it is, otherwise there's a resourcing and a skilling issue for everybody to deal with."

Operators affected by the new

operating licensing regime will be required to apply for an international O-licence.

TACHOGRAPHS MANDATED

The new rules, which are included in the EU Mobility Package, will also require operators to keep their vans safe and in good condition, while records of all safety inspections and maintenance undertaken, including any by a third-party maintenance contractor, will need to be kept for a minimum of 15 months.

Furthermore, from July 1, 2026, the EU Mobility Package will require LGVs, with a maximum permissible mass, including any trailer, or semi-trailer exceeding 2.5 tonnes (but not exceeding 3.5 tonnes) that are used on international journeys, to be fitted with tachographs to comply with EU drivers' hours rules.

The Government consultation did not cover the future introduction of tachographs.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

By Andy Picton, chief commercial vehicle editor, Glass's



Plug-in van grants Last month saw plug-in grants for vans slashed again along with a change in eligibility criteria. Small vans saw their funding reduced to a

maximum of £2,500, from the £3,000, while large vans fell to £5,000 from a maximum of £6,000. Grants were also limited to 1,000 per customer per financial year, dealing a blow to those larger fleets who want to electrify their vehicles now and to those sole traders and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) who will rely on the used stock as a longer-term source of affordable electric vans in years to come.

Toyota Corolla/Proace City

I was invited to Millbrook Proving Ground to drive the all-new Toyota Corolla Commercial hybrid van and the Proace City Electric van. The Corolla is unique in commercial vehicle terms, with no real direct competitor. Think Vauxhall Astra van in terms of dimensions and you wouldn't be a million miles away. It's also built in the UK, but that is where the similarities end.

The hybrid set-up is the ideal combination of zero-emission driving for urban areas, while having the ability to complete longer journeys without the need to recharge the battery. Based on the Corolla Touring Sports 1.8 hybrid passenger model minus the rear seats, the cabin features the same car-like quality and layout.

I expect the Corolla Commercial hybrid to be popular with both fleets and SMEs alike.

The Proace City Electric has a range of 168 miles on a full charge, ample for the majority of urban delivery companies. There are two lengths to choose from, with the L2 offering a payload of up to 800kg and a 4.4m3 load volume. Power comes from a 50kWh battery and a 134PS motor and features CCS fast-charging capabilities that will allow a charge rate of up to 100kW and an 80% charge in as little as 30 minutes.

Ford Transit Custom MS-RT

Received a Ford Transit Custom MS-RT double-cab in van demo recently. A real head-turner, the distinctive MS-RT with its flared wheel arches, spoilers, twin exhausts, interior additions and unique 18" alloy wheels looks the part.

Powered by Ford's 2.0-litre 185PS EcoBlue engine and mated to its 10-speed automatic gearbox with the added premium features added by MS-RT, it was the perfect blend of comfort and quality.

Glass's

ADVICE LINE

By Ray Marshall, senior transport advisor, Logistics UK

Is there a dispensation on gross weights of an electric truck? One manufacturer had a launch recently and claimed that you can operate up to 45 tonnes because the electric vehicle's weight is heavier. Is this the case?

The Road Vehicles (Authorised Weight) and (Construction and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 aimed to encourage the uptake of certain vehicles in international traffic which use alternative fuel (low carbon) technology by increasing the maximum authorised weight of such vehicles by up to one tonne.

The increase in the permitted maximum weight ensures that the extra weight of the powertrain does not result in a reduced payload, as this would penalise the road transport sector in economic terms by putting operators of such vehicles at a disadvantage compared with those operating conventional petroland diesel-fuelled vehicles.

For heavy goods vehicles, this allowance applies to two-axle rigid



vehicles up to 18 tonnes and threeaxle rigid vehicles up to 26 tonnes. It does not apply to the 44-tonne gross vehicle weight truck/trailer combinations, and the current maximum

weight in Great Britain remains at 44 tonnes. For buses, this allowance applies to three-axle rigid vehicles up to 26 tonnes and three-axle articulated vehicles up to 28 tonnes.

Two of our drivers have a 0 different opinion on when you can enter a yellow box junction. What are the official guidelines for complying with a box junction? The official guidance can be

found in the Highway Code under Rule 174 which states "you must not enter the box until your exit road or lane is clear. However, you may enter the box and wait when you want to turn right and are only stopped from doing so by oncoming traffic, or by other hicles waiting to turn right. At signalled roundabouts, you must not enter the box unless you can cross over it completely without stopping."

In some regions of the country, these yellow box junctions are monitored by CCTV cameras which detect a contravention of the junction, which could lead to a penalty notice being posted to the registered keeper of the vehicle.

driving licence design are as

The driver number has been

justified left and is now in line with

Driving licence design change

follows:

the licence.

the front.

the other text.

New designs for the driving licence, tachograph card and Driver Qualification Card (DQC) have been developed. Stocks of the new driving licence cards were delivered to Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and went live in early December.

All versions of the GB driving licence will change. Some of the more notable changes to the

The secondary image of the licence holder is now located on the front of the card.

The Union flag has moved to The OVI (colour-shifting ink) the top right corner of the front of design has been reinstated and updated to the back of the licence. The Royal crest is visible on A new hologram has been added (the shape is now a circle

and the design has changed). Existing photocard and paper licences will remain valid. They will be replaced with the new version in due course when drivers apply to renew, update or replace their current licence. Drivers do not need to apply for a new driving licence card before their current card expires.

There will also be changes to all variants of the tachograph cards. These are expected to be issued this month.

AWARDS

VAN MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR WINNER FORD BEST COMPANY SUV WINNER FORD PUMA

Uptime and transparency help Ford grow van market share. *Stephen Briers* reports

a c

or Ford, 2021 was a tale of transparency and new projects designed to keep customers' vans on the road.

Transparency in communicating the lengthening lead times caused by the semiconductor and parts supply shortages kept customers informed about developments, while Ford also suggested specification alterations to speed up deliveries on some model lines.

As customers kept hold of vans for longer, it brought Ford's work on maintenance, repair and uptime into sharper focus, with projects such as Ford Pro and Ford Liive helping to minimise costs and downtime, even as vans aged.

Such innovations in the commercial vehicle sector helped Ford claim the title of Van Manufacturer of the Year in 2021, a highly prized award, according to fleet director Neil Wilson.

Fleet News: What would you say Ford did well during 2021, a difficult year for everyone?

Neil Wilson: We worked hard to keep customers' businesses operational. We learnt to be more transparent on our evolving lead times and production plans. This has helped us to sell a healthy amount of CVs (commercial vehicles) – we're still number one and we've grown our market share by 2.7% overall and by 3.7% in true fleet. We've managed new ways of working with customers, a blend of virtual and face-to-face.

FN: How have you helped customers keep vans on the road?

NW: We have had two important launches. The first, Ford Liive, has been a great success, with hundreds of customers signed up for the free-of-charge vehicle health data which proactively manages downtime. We predicted a 60% saving for fleets, and we are already seeing significant savings from avoiding downtime, for example on oil changes and making maintenance events more efficient by carrying them out while the vehicle is in the workshop. One customer has avoided six engine breakdowns because they knew the oil light was on. We are also working with our dealer network on triaging vehicles when they are off the road to ensure repairs are done as quick as possible.

Our second launch was Ford Fleet Management (Fleet News, December 2020). We have several customers that have signed up, including Culligan Group, VanElle, Metro Mechanical, Hermes, Power Electrics, Falco Construction and Addison Lee. They are taking advantage of the great variety of services. Ford Fleet Management gives us a new and different way to offer our services to customers.

FN: Mobile servicing has also helped Ford to get customers' vans back onto the road more quickly. How is this service developing?

NW: We have 125 vans now operating out of the Transit Centre network – 80 at TrustFord sites – and have plans to grow the network. Our customers are really engaged with this service proposition, which is helping to optimise uptime; it's a great asset to be able to offer this level of flexibility, with maintenance at a customer's site or at home. The vans can do most servicing and warranty work – anything where the vehicle doesn't have to be on a ramp.

FN: Ford Liive and Ford Fleet Management both link into the global Ford Pro concept. What else can we expect to see? NW: Ford Pro will come to life this year. One key area is the hardware and software charging solutions for home, work or public to make it as easy as possible for customers to run electric product. Ford Pro will provide an ecosystem of solutions for fleet customers, using telematics data, digital services and financing to help customers get the most out of their vehicles. More details will follow in April, but we are having conversations with customers now as they get ready to place orders for the e-Transit.

Winners' Enclosure

awarγ

Ford of Britain fleet director Neil Wilson displays the two awards

FN: The e-Transit (196 miles range, 34-minute 15-80% DC fast charge) is clearly a huge model for Ford, giving you your first all-electric model. And it enters the large panel van sector where fleets are desperate for a viable option.

NW: We have several customers with trial vehicles to give us real-world feedback and they're delivering on the range we promised. The trials help us to understand how to get the best out of them – for example, use of speed limiters and acceleration controls. We hope to have the first full production models by the end of March and we have lots of customers waiting to place orders.

> ord is anticipating demand for electric vans to accelerate during 2022 as more fleets understand that they now offer real-world solutions.

The only caveat is the ongoing supply chain issues affecting all manufacturers. Ford is seeing six-to-12-month waiting times for its commercial vehicles, dependent on specification, and four-to-six months on passenger vehicles.

"Demand for the e-Transit could easily outstrip supply, so we are working with customers on lead times," says Wilson. "The only thing certain about this year is the uncertainty!"



A range of actions aimed at boosting driver recruitment and retention look set to improve driver availability. *John Lewis* reports



ruck fleets have grounds for cautious optimism with the availability of drivers looking likely to improve in the coming months. However, there is no

room for complacency.

These are the key learnings that can be drawn from the Logistics UK Skills Report 2021, produced by the trade association in partnership with independent research house Repgraph. So says Logistics UK policy director Elizabeth de Jong.

The report does not disguise the bleakness of the situation that has arisen over the past year, with the vast majority (92.7%) of UK distribution businesses reporting driver recruitment problems.

Data recently published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that an estimated 268,000 people were employed as truck drivers between July 2020 and June 2021.

That was 39,000 fewer than in the 12 months

ending June 2019, and 53,000 fewer than the peak for driver employment – 321,000 – during the year ending June 2017, the ONS says.

"However, we have now seen a 25.6% rise in the number of drivers taking tests and a three-fold increase in applications for vocational provisional licences," says de Jong.

Training provision has improved, she adds, with the Government spending up to £10 million on funding so-called Skills Bootcamps to train prospective truck drivers.

Funding for C+E Large Goods Vehicle driver apprenticeships is now available at £7,000, and at £5,000 for the new Class C-based Urban Driver Apprenticeship.

"Companies subject to the apprenticeship levy are paying for it anyway, so they should use the money," says head of urban policy at Logistics UK Natalie Chapman.



AVERAGE DRIVER PAY SURGED 10% IN THE NINE MONTHS TO OCTOBER 2021 TO ENABLE COMPANIES TO RETAIN EXISTING STAFF AND ATTRACT NEW DRIVERS Better wages after a period of salary stagnation are helping to spark increased interest in truck driving among prospective employees.

"Average driver pay surged 10% in the nine months to October 2021 to enable companies to retain existing staff and attract new drivers," adds de Jong.

Some businesses which had been paying C+E licence-holders driving 44-tonners $\pounds14$ an hour are now paying $\pounds16$ -to- $\pounds18$ an hour or more.

Smaller operators with reduced financial resources are not finding it easy to offer higher wages, however, says de Jong, and their ability to recruit drivers is suffering as a result.

FLEXING MUSCLES

The shortage has given trade union negotiators more scope to flex their muscles.

A number of recent pay settlements achieved by them have been well into double figures, with Unite securing rises of up to 30% for its members dependent on the shifts they are on.

Further underlining the fact that cash is king, 2021 saw leading supermarkets and distribution companies offer driver signing-on bonuses of anywhere between £1,000 and £5,000. The trend is continuing.

At the time of writing, DHL was offering C+E drivers a \pounds 1,500 signing-on package, but with \pounds 1,000 of the payment deferred for six months to help ensure loyalty.

Last year saw distribution group Gist adopt a similar approach with a £5,000 sign-on deal



based on £2,000 upfront and the balance split into three further payments in a bid to ensure continued service.

Miniclipper Logistics pays what it describes as "healthy monthly bonuses" to employees who drive with fuel efficiency in mind and remain accident-free

It also operates a modern fleet, says managing director Peter Masters. "We don't ask them to drive old smokers." he adds.

The appeal of modern trucks with plenty of power and a big cab with all the creature comforts - leather interior trim, fridge, microwave oven, air conditioning and so on - cannot be overestimated in the battle to ensure drivers do not start looking for another job.

That is something which has long been recognised by Maze Logistic Solutions.

"Throughout our 10 years in business we have been very conscious of the needs of our drivers," says director Ryan Jiggens.

"We've chosen ever-higher vehicle specifications as we've looked to enhance the driving experiences while simultaneously supporting our retention programme."

With this in mind, it has acquired a limited-edition Mercedes-Benz Actros Edition 2 tractor unit with a highly-distinctive exterior paint and styling scheme. Cab interior features include eight different colours of ambient lighting and a flatscreen TV among other goodies.

The Actros has been allocated to one of Maze's most highly-regarded drivers.

COMPANIES SUBJECT TO THE **APPRENTICESHIP** LEVY ARE PAYING FOR IT ANYWAY. SO THEY SHOULD USE THE MONEY 🗾

NATALIE CHAPMAN, LOGISTICS UK

VEHICLE SPECIFICATION

Driver acceptability has influenced Owens Group's decision to replace 90% of the trucks operating out of its Carrington, Greater Manchester, site with Volvo FH 460 Globetrotter tractor units.

The decision was made after trialling the FH against equivalent models from two rival brands.

"With an average 11.4mpg it came out on top for fuel and got a great reception from our drivers in the process," says Owens Group head of fleet and compliance Andy Williams.

"We're confident our 60 new Volvos will help us to attract and retain the very best drivers," he adds.

In-cab facilities include a 33-litre under-bunk fridge-freezer.

More and more firms are stressing the overall package of benefits they offer.

Busy recruiting C+E drivers to work out of its depot at Avonmouth, Bristol, Culina Logistics is emphasising the availability of life assurance and a pension scheme along with hospital, dental and optical health care plans.

What it describes as its benefits platform offers discounts on purchases such as holidays and cinema tickets.

Worth noting too are its shift patterns - five days on and three off - for an average annual salary of up to £37,488, or up to £39,488 for five days on and two off, with some weekend working.

Such an approach recognises the importance of time off for younger employees who may have family responsibilities and could, potentially, attract more female drivers

"Only 1% to 2% of the driving workforce is female," adds Logistics UK's Chapman.

Bearing this in mind, one option some fleets could consider is employing drivers part-time.

The suggestion is included in a 12-point plan drawn up by the Road Haulage Association (RHA) to help its members tackle the shortage.

PART-TIME WORKING

Part-time working has been embraced by bus and coach operators for many years, especially when it comes to the provision of school services.

They require drivers solely in the morning and \supset



C the afternoon during term-time, with no weekend working.

Passenger transport companies have, of course, proved especially adept at recruiting female drivers and drivers from the ethnic minorities.

One industry pundit muses: "When did you last see an Afro-Caribbean or Asian truck driver? It sometimes seems as though the haulage industry has written them out of the equation."

Some fleets have set up their own training schools in a bid to nurture C and C+E driving talent.

Hermes is up-skilling existing employees who want to drive its trucks with training at its driving academy in Nuneaton, Warwickshire.

Gist has set up a training centre at Spalding in Lincolnshire which it says should produce up to 300 truck drivers annually for its fleet.

It funds all the costs associated with obtaining a licence which, it says, should save drivers around £3,000 annually compared with self-funding.

"The Government is taking steps to support our industry, which is a welcome move," says Gist managing director, temperature controlled logistics, Julian Bailey.

"However the reality is that more still needs to be done, and fast. That is why we have launched our in-house training academy so we can produce home-grown talent and train the next generation of drivers."

Drivers who have been through the course are already transporting chilled products for Gist's clients, including Marks & Spencer. A barrier to drivers who would like to return to the transport industry is the need to complete 35 hours of training in order to obtain a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

Employers could consider meeting the cost of the course and paying drivers while they take it.

Late last year, the Government announced it would be carrying out a review of the CPC, but there is no indication that it will be abolished.

CAR DRIVER HOSTILITY

Other issues that need to be addressed are the hostility of some car drivers towards trucks, the UK's poorly-maintained road network and the paucity of facilities available to truck drivers when they are out on the highway.

De Jong adds: "The lack of available overnight parking spaces continues to be a huge impediment to attracting more people to join the industry.

"Without safe and secure locations in which to take legally-mandated rest stops it will be impossible to diversify the workforce and attract new employees to the sector."

In response, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak announced in the 2021 autumn Budget that £32.5m would be invested in better facilities for truck drivers nationwide.

In the meantime, the Government is attempting to identify lorry parks where short-term facilities, such as temporary toilets, showers and catering outlets, can be installed over the next few months. The Department for Transport (DfT) says the Government also emphasised its expectation that councils consider new proposals for these vital facilities constructively and has committed to reviewing guidance that will assist this.

The DfT's comment highlights a key challenge when it comes to providing amenities for drivers. Truck stops require planning consent and invar-

iably run into opposition from nearby residents.

For example, an attempt by Moto to obtain consent to construct a 200-space/24-hour secure truck stop on the A20 in Kent close to Junction 2A of the M26 is currently being challenged by local councillors and householders.

The objections centre around claims – by no means always justified – that truck stops inevitably generate too much traffic, pollution, noise and mess, no matter how necessary they may be.

One option is for hauliers to arrange for drivers to park in each other's yards, a facility that is available to firms that happen to be members of the Transport Association. It's far better than expecting them to stop overnight in an isolated and insecure lay-by.

Transport fleets may also wish to have a quiet word with managers of regional distribution centres they service who may be in the habit of refusing visiting drivers access to toilet and handwashing facilities.

Such a stance is unlikely to encourage drivers to remain in the industry and is in any event illegal under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

COMMERCIAL FLEET: FIRST DRIVE

ISUZU

ISUZU N75.150

Isuzu Trucks' N75.150 offers the visibility that urban distributors need

(HUD)

By Tim Campbell

he 7.5 -tonne urban distribution sector has many competitors ranging from the market-leading Daf LF with its conventional European-style cab to the 'leaner' product offerings from Asian-based producers such as Fuso and Isuzu Trucks.

Both have their operational strengths and weaknesses with the Asian-based products scoring high in low kerbweight/high payload and generally lower chassis and cab height, helping with visibility.

The Isuzu 'Forward' series, not to be confused with the heavier 'F Series', is its offering for the lightweight truck segment and is popular among some of the niche sector fleets. A great example of sectors where low kerbweight is a definite advantage are vehicle recovery/ roadside assistance and chilled/frozen distribution.

	MODEL TESTED	
SPECIFICATIONS		
Model	N75.150	
Cab	Day	
Engine	JZ1 E6-E Isuzu	
Power	150PS (110kW) @ 2,800rpm	
Torque	370Nm @ 1,250-2,800rpm	
Gearbox	Easyshift six-speed automated	
Front axle	3,100kgs	
Rear axles	5,800kgs	
GVW	7,500kgs	
Chassis weight	2,634kgs	
Wheelbase	3,365mm	
Brakes	Discs all round	
Tank	90 litres/16 litres AdBlue	

THE RANGE

Isuzu Trucks has two offerings at this weight with two engines and two power settings at 150PS and 190PS, a manual and automated gearbox and a number of conversion offerings. The 150PS model conversions are based around the popular dropside and tippers sector with the higher horsepower version also including a curtainsider and box body.

DRIVELINE

Here, we look at the popular N75.150 powered by an Isuzu 3.0-litre four-cylinder turbo intercooled diesel setup to the latest stage 'E' Euro emission standard rated at 150PS (110kW). The torque is 370Nm with a wide band range from 1,250rpm to 2,800rpm. Further down the driveline is a fluidcoupling torque converter-type clutch connected to a six speed electro hydraulically-controlled automated gearbox which Isuzu Trucks calls 'Easyshift', with a 0.708 overdrive gear at the top end.

WEIGHTS

The '75' part of the nomenclature denotes the 7,500kgs gross vehicle weight (gvw) with a standard gross train weight of 8,250kgs and an optional 11,000kgs. The front axle has a design plated at 3,100kgs and the rear is 5,800kgs, which offers a credible load latitude of 1,400kgs. It has a low kerbweight which, in the case of the day-cabbed shortest wheelbase, is 2,634kgs, split 1,654kgs at the front and 980kgs on the rear. The body and payload ranges from 4,866kgs to the longest wheelbase 4,812kgs. This equates to around 500-750kgs improved payload compared with European manufacturers.

CHASSIS /SUSPENSION

There are four chassis wheelbases starting at 2765mm to 4475mm, which cover recommended

body lengths from 4,267mm to 6,096mm, with all having a 90-litre fuel tank and 16-litre AdBlue tank for the SCR system. The reverse Elliott-I beam front axle is attached to the chassis by parabolic steel springs with hydraulic shock absorbers and anti roll bar. The banjo fully floating rear axle is suspended by semi-elliptical steel springs with hydraulic shock absorbers and an anti-roll bar.

SAFETY/BRAKES

The braking system starts at the engine with an engine exhaust brake system, and there are standard braking systems such as ABS, electronic brake distribution (EBD) and anti-slip regulation (ASR). A stereo camera system at the front provides data for the lane-departure warning systems which alerts the driver via a warning buzzer and LCD monitor. The camera system is also utilised by the advanced emergency braking system.

CAB

The Isuzu Truck sits very low to the floor with an overall cab height of just 2,265mm. At the rear chassis, height is just 830mm (840mm on the longest wheelbase) when unladen. There are airbags for driver and passengers.

SUMMARY

The Isuzu Truck Forward series has earned an excellent reputation with operators that have specific operational needs mainly revolving around the first-class payload. One area that has, until recently, been potentially undervalued is how low the cab sits on the chassis, which offers the driver good visibility – a key feature for any company operating in an urban distribution environment. This is also aided by the deep-cut side windows of the cab which help reduce blind spots.

THE LAST WORD

SPENCER HALIL

CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, ALPHABET GB

Halil is a lover of sci-fi who is also down to earth in his interests. Nature and the land are recurring topics in his responses and the theme continues in his list of hobbies – he is a keen beekeeper

My favourite movie quote is too long to write here, but it's the speech Rutger Hauer's character gives to Harrison Ford at the end of *Bladerunner* before he dies. I love sci-fi and this is one of the best, but this speech also underlines the idea that we are only here for a short while, so we must live well.

A book that I would recommend others read is *Underland* by Robert McFarlane. It's a beautifully written description of his journeys through the natural world beneath our feet.

My first memory associated with a car is the old orange VW Golf my dad bought me to learn in. The engine bay was held on with bungee cords, but it did the job.

If money was no object – I'd be a woodsman and live off the land, with a few months off each year to keep connected. If I were made transport minister for the day I would help our customers by pushing the Treasury to provide some long-term certainty over the future of motor-related taxation and communicate some concrete plans to support more accessible electric vehicle charging for all.

> My hobbies and interests are – running to keep physically fit, spending time with friends and family to keep mentally fit and keeping bees.

> > The song I would have on my driving playlist is – *Bigmouth Strikes Again* by The Smiths. I'm an '80s indie kid at heart.

The advice I would give to my 18-year-old self is – don't worry so much, you've got years of great experiences ahead of you.

> My pet hate is – wacky conspiracy theories. I love a good debate, but please make it credible.

Why fleet?

I have always enjoyed being part of change initiatives and dynamic environments. Fleet and leasing are experiencing so many fundamental changes right now. Being given the chance to be part of this and move sectors within the industry I've spent many years in, on the retail motor finance side, was too good to miss.

How I got here

I've spent 25 years in retail motor finance, joining BMW Group in 2006 to help launch a then new finance company, Alphera Financial Services. It's here I found my passion for building a sales business and this took me to Australia, to run the sales division for various BMW brands. In 2015, I returned to Alphera in the UK, and then in 2020, Nick Brownrigg, Alphabet GB CEO, asked me if I would come onboard as CCO. I jumped at the chance to help support the rise of mobility as a service.

Latest products, developments and achievements

There's a lot we're working on including some exciting developments for our PCH offering, Alphabet Motion, to make it the backbone of a digitally-enabled future sales process. We're also extending our comprehensive range of rental-based products with BMW Rent to develop our 'mobility as a service' offering.

My company in three words? Mobility made easy.

Career influence

Working with incredible teams to help deliver stand-out performances and in particular, my team at Alphera, who were a huge inspiration. I'm already enjoying the same with the wonderful people at Alphabet.

Advice to fleet newcomers

Take the time to understand the complexity of this sector, but at the same time, be confident enough to challenge complexity where it is unnecessary or unproductive.

If I wasn't in fleet

It would be somewhere dynamic and working in a people-based role, perhaps in sales or communications.

Next issue: Evan Morris, training manager at RED Driver Risk Management

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