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Fleet spotlight: VolkerWessels UK

‘Our brand is not to be put at risk’

Stuart Webster-Spriggs and Spencer Ward welcome scrutiny: it’s proof management take fleet safety seriously

Manufacturer spotlight: Nissan

‘We want to be an EV leader not follower’, says Peter McDonald

Commercial Fleet: drivers

Solving the driver shortage issue

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

IGNITION

FLEET SAFETY IS No1 FOR SERIAL AWARD-WINNERS P20

CHARGING MORE IMPORTANT THAN RANGE P30

COMMERCIAL FLEET

A failure of an EV's driveline components would mean a roadside repair would not be attempted. The vehicle would be recovered to a suitable workshop

Lack of EV-trained repairers may pose a problem for fleets' uptime

Workshops need to accelerate training so SMR staff are capable of working safely and swiftly

By Matt de Prez

Fleet operators and company car drivers with electric vehicles (EVs) are set to face longer periods of downtime in the event of a mechanical failure or collision if automotive aftersales businesses don't adapt more quickly to handle new models.

As CO_2 caps and taxation are expected to push more drivers into electrified cars over the coming years, and environmentally-conscious businesses seek to increase their electric van fleets, dealerships, workshops and bodyshops are under greater pressure to deal with repairs and maintenance to the batteries and high-voltage electrical components in these vehicles.

While maintaining an electric or hybrid car or van is often no more difficult than one powered by a combustion engine, technicians must be specially trained in order to avoid getting shocked by the electrical system.

EVs with a driveline fault, or those involved in a collision can prove the most difficult to deal with as manufacturers are often slow to release technical repair information and roll out training.

Michael Brown, fleet manager at Virgin Media, said: "You need to build in things like if an EV is involved in an accident, it's going to have to go to a specialised dealer to be repaired. There is also a higher risk of the vehicle getting written off if the battery is damaged.

"We've had problems with Teslas. Someone had a rear bumper repaired and it was literally just a new bumper needed to be put on. Our approved bodyshop wasn't allowed to touch it, so they had to put it on a recovery truck, drive it 200 miles to a Tesla-approved repairer and then the driver sat there and waited while it got repaired."

> "FRANCHISED DEALERS AND MANUFACTURERS ARE QUICKLY RETRAINING THEIR STAFF AND, AS A RESULT, THERE IS CURRENTLY NO EXPECTATION OF LONGER WAITING TIMES"
>
> **SUE ROBINSON, NFDA**

The number of plug-in cars on UK roads is low at the moment, accounting for less than 1%. Many of them are in the hands of private buyers as fleets have struggled to get hold of high volumes of stock.

This year, a number of manufacturers promise to increase EV fleet volumes, meaning there will be more on the road doing more miles.

By 2030, the National Grid predicts there will be between 2.7 and 10.6 million EVs on UK roads. As part of its Road to Zero Strategy, the Government plans to end the sale of petrol, diesel and hybrid cars altogether by 2035.

2.7-10.6m
EVs are predicted to be on UK roads by 2030

Pete Eden, national business process and technical manager at the National Body Repair Association (NBRA), said: "Most OEMs have programmes in place that see hybrids and EVs are recovered and taken to facilities that have trained personnel to repair them. They also have recovery agents in place trained to lift such vehicles safely."

But not all UK dealers have the personnel or equipment to work on electrified vehicles – yet.

"EV/hybrid tooling is widely available now, the main thing missing from the repair of EVs/hybrids is knowledge," Eden added.

5%
of technicians are EV trained at present

Paul Taylor, fleet manager at Morgan Sindall, said manufacturers are still playing catch up when it comes to maintaining EVs.

He explained: "The problem, particularly with electric commercial vans, for us in the outlying areas is getting the maintenance done because they've not got that big a range. When we put our first few (electric vans) in at Heathrow, the supplier told me where the nearest dealer was and I said I couldn't get there."

Work is being done to boost the level of EV-trained technicians in the industry, which currently stands at about 5% according to the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI).

Sue Robinson, director of the National Franchised Dealers Association (NFDA), which represents franchised car and commercial vehicle retailers in the UK, said: "Due to the rapid growth of the EV market, franchised dealers and manufacturers are quickly retraining their staff and, as a result, there is currently no expectation of longer waiting times for repair and servicing of EVs.

The organisation launched its own Electric Vehicle Approved (EVA) scheme last year, which requires that retailers have enough EV trained technical staff so customers will not face 'unreasonable wait times and barriers to servicing or emergency repair work'.

More than 60 dealerships have now been 'EV approved' responsible for several major brands. These include Nissan, Volkswagen, Kia, Hyundai, Renault, Audi, Mitsubishi, JLR, BMW and Volvo.

Last October, the IMI's TechSafe standards for car technicians working with EVs were officially endorsed by the Government's Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV).

The accreditation is designed to give fleet operators and EV drivers confidence that their vehicle is being maintained or repaired by competent individuals.

Allianz Partners UK, which provides roadside assistance technicians to work on behalf of OEMs, is ensuring its entire workforce achieves the accreditation. Its technical development manager Ian Burchette, said: "As EVs become more popular we have a duty of care as an assistance provider to protect not only our technicians when they

repair these vehicles, but also the public and our partners.

"We have always invested in the continual professional development of our technicians, making sure they are trained to the highest level. The skills and professionalism of our roadside assistance technicians are at the heart of our success, and this new commitment enables us to continue to deliver the best customer service on behalf of our manufacturer clients."

The AA told *Fleet News* that all its technicians are trained to work on EVs, minimising the wait time in the event of a call-out.

A spokesperson said that, while the most common reason for a call-out was a flat tyre, easily fixed at the roadside, if the vehicle was to suffer a failure of the driveline components, the technician would not attempt a roadside repair and, instead, the vehicle would be recovered to a suitable workshop.

BODYSHOPS REPLACE WORKSHOPS

Much of the danger involved in the handling of EVs and hybrids is best understood by the body repair industry, where risks from damaged components are higher, leaving it best placed to handle repairs of these vehicles.

Graham O'Neill, CEO of ACIS, a distributor to the accident repair market, predicts 21st century bodyshops will replace traditional mechanical garages and servicing centres as EVs become mainstream.

He says bodyshops will become vehicle "hospitals" with all the expertise to perform battery transplants.

"Bodyshops are different to what they used to be and the more professional ones are certainly ahead of the game when it comes to EV training on how to repair vehicles safely.

"We have put many of these bodyshop technicians through the ACIS EV and ADAS (advanced driver assistance systems) training programmes, as the demand is there," O'Neill said.

It's possible that in the future there won't be servicing of engines, simply the replacement of the batteries or the repair of electronic components.

Currently, many dealerships are already outsourcing these services to manufacturer-approved bodyshops because they don't have the room or the ability to recalibrate the vehicle's ADAS systems post-repair.

"This outsourcing extends the process and the complexity and cost to drivers who are increasingly looking to reduce their key-to-key time so they can get back on the road as fast as possible. Today's bodyshops have become more agile and customer-centric," O'Neill added.

Initially, manufacturers only provided training to approved bodyshops, making it difficult for the independents to attend. This has changed, according to Eden, who says there is a "growing market" offering training on hybrid/EV systems.

"The OEMs don't always get the vehicle directed to them as some are insured independently. These vehicles find their way into independent repair facilities. Today, many of the UK independent repair shops are investing in the equipment to repair EVs and hybrids," Eden said.

HOW NORWAY IS COPING WITH EV REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

Norway is often seen as a benchmark for electric vehicle adoption. In just a few years, the country has achieved a rapid growth of EVs on its roads, enabling it to have Europe's lowest average CO_2 emissions.

The country's network of workshops and recovery agents has been forced to adapt rapidly to this changing dynamic.

Car manufacturers have been instrumental, by internally certifying Norwegian mechanics to be able to handle the high-voltage batteries and other diagnostic tools required to repair and maintain the vehicles.

Erik Lorentzen, head of analysis and consultancy at the Norwegian EV Association, said: "In 2019, the market share for new EVs reached 42%. It was a significant growth of 30% compared with 2018. So, of course, we have seen a significant growth in workshops offering service and repair on electric cars, by providing both the necessary tools and certification.

"This increases competition. The Norwegian EV Association has been encouraging this for a number of years since it benefits all EV owners."

Will the aftersales sector be EV-ready in just 15 years?

BY STEVE NASH,
CEO, THE INSTITUTE OF THE MOTOR INDUSTRY (IMI)

Of course, no one can argue with the spirit of the earlier deadline for a ban on the sale of new petrol, diesel or hybrid vehicles – it has all the right intentions.

But the IMI is not alone in highlighting that some serious work needs to be done if the motor retail sector is going to be ready for this complete change in the motoring landscape. And it needs a wholesale commitment from right across the sector – as well as, of course, any funding available from Government.

While there is urgent and intense debate among the manufacturing community, as well as considerable focus on the charging infrastructure required to go from today's profile of motoring to that expected from Government by 2035, there is another equally urgent matter that needs to be addressed. And that is the upskilling of the sector to be able to cope, safely, with every aspect of the new generation of motor vehicles.

It goes beyond upskilling of the current workforce. We need to be working now to attract and build the new generation of electric vehicle experts who will know exactly what to do in the dealer's workshop.

Currently, just 5% of the sector is appropriately qualified to work on electric vehicles so in the next 15 years the race is on to get the rest of the workforce up to speed. There also needs to be a change in attitude to attract the next generation of workers to what will be a very different motor repair environment to that of the past 20 years – never mind the past 100 in which the IMI has been operating!

Last October, the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) gave its endorsement to the IMI TechSafe standards for people working on electrified vehicles, which comply with the Electricity at Work regulations enforced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

This means there are now clear standards for those recruiting, as well as a focus for retraining for those already working in the sector.

The culmination of detailed work to develop the Electrified Vehicle Professional Standards, championed by the IMI with support from other industry bodies, the new EV TechSafe Standards give technicians an easy way to certify their EV competence. They will centre on EV qualifications, IMI accreditation, accredited training, professional behaviours and a commitment to CPD (continuing professional development) over an agreed number of years.

But there is still a big challenge ahead to ensure there are sufficient qualified technicians. Those who aren't properly trained or equipped to work on EVs would be risking serious injury or potentially fatal shock. And while it's easy to say it's the Government's job to make sure the sector is ready – there also needs to be a whole-hearted commitment from right across the sector to get EV-ready.

Currently most of the headlines focus on the latest manufacturing developments.

What worries me is whether the work is really going on behind the scenes to make sure the workforce is available to prepare, repair and maintain these new vehicles.

Without this commitment, the whole vision of a cleaner motoring environment could fall at the first hurdle.

Manufacturers assessing Covid-19 impact on parts supplies from China

Carmakers cautiously optimistic as factories restart after nationwide Chinese shutdown

By Gareth Roberts

Manufacturers insist that lead times and the availability of parts for the aftermarket are not being impacted by the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19).

However, with the number of people contracting the illness growing globally each day, some have suggested parts shortages cannot be ruled out longer term.

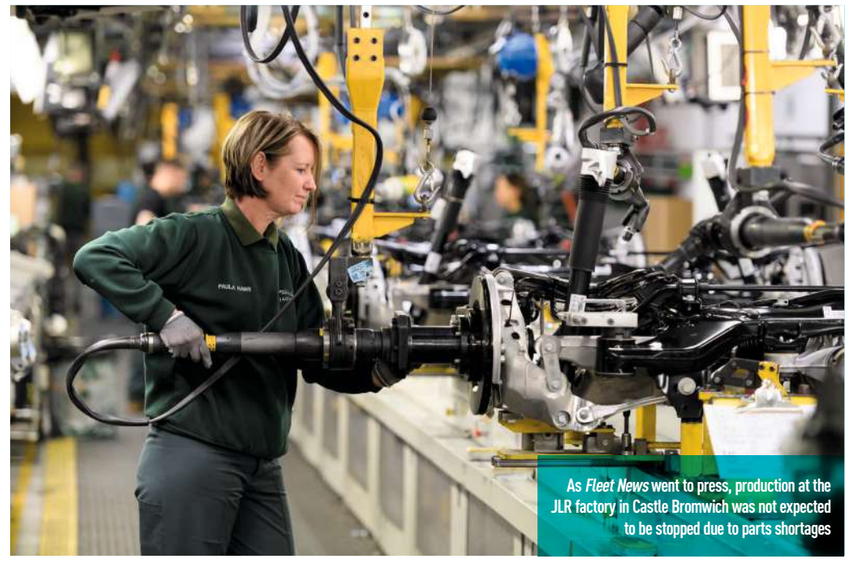
Hubei province in China – the centre of the outbreak – is a major hub for vehicle parts production and shipments.

In 2019, China exported car parts to a value of more than $60 billion, (£47bn) according to customs data.

Dr Ralph Speth, CEO of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), which produces almost 400,000 vehicles per year at its three factories in the UK, told attendees at the opening of the National Automotive Innovation Centre in Coventry the supply of parts was a concern.

"This is an issue for the complete car automotive industry," he said. "We don't know how long it will take before the supply chain comes on stream again in China."

A JLR spokesman told *Fleet News:* "While we cannot rule out the possibility of parts shortages impacting production the longer the disruption continues, we do not currently expect to stop production in our plants as a result of parts shortages."



As *Fleet News* went to press, production at the JLR factory in Castle Bromwich was not expected to be stopped due to parts shortages

> "BUFFER STOCKS TO RIDE OUT SUPPLY DISRUPTIONS WILL BE LIMITED"
>
> **DAVID LEGGETT, GLOBALDATA**

Nissan said it had restarted operations in three of its plants in China, but at this time, the restart timing of Xiangyang Plant (Hubei Province) and Zhengzhou Plant (Henan Province) had not been determined.

The spokesman added: "In Japan, we are planning or have carried out temporary production adjustments at certain plants. There has been no impact on our plants outside China."

Toyota says it is investigating the impact, with parts also produced by Chinese suppliers, but stressed at this stage it did expect an impact on the availability of product in the UK.

Mercedes-Benz told *Fleet News* that it gradually started production in China last month and all of its other plants were running as planned.

"Currently the supply is secured," a spokesman said. "Possible effects depend on the development of the general corona situation, as suppliers, transport logistics, etc. are also affected by the government regulations in China."

Meanwhile, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), BMW, Kia, Vauxhall, and the Volkswagen Group, including Audi, Škoda and Seat, all said they were closely monitoring the situation.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that the world is in "uncharted territory" on the coronavirus outbreak, while the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has warned the global economy could grow at its slowest rate since 2009.

The think tank has forecast growth of just 2.4% in 2020, down from 2.9% in November. But it said a longer "more intensive" outbreak could halve growth to 1.5%.

The forecast came after the Bank of England vowed to help stabilise markets, which suffered steep losses at the end of February.

Coronavirus is already forcing businesses to suspend operations in China and elsewhere as officials try to contain its spread.

The OECD forecasts the global economy could recover to 3.3% growth in 2021, assuming the epidemic peaks in China in the first quarter of this year and other outbreaks prove mild and contained. But it said the picture would be much worse if the virus spread throughout Asia, Europe and North America.

David Leggett, automotive editor at analytics firm GlobalData, said: "With a typical car containing 20,000 parts, some Chinese-sourced content in every car is a given.

"Procurement managers at the car companies will be struggling to get visibility on where the critical supply-chain pinch points are – both in terms of what they directly source and also what comes in from tier one suppliers in the form of sub-assemblies and their sourcing difficulties further down the supply-chain."

Leggett added that carmakers will look at options such as switching to alternative supply sources, but for some critical parts that may be very difficult to do in the short-term – thus halting production when supply dries up.

"All they can do is closely monitor the situation and look at risk mitigation measures where they can," he said.

"Buffer stocks to ride out supply disruptions will be limited due to the predominance of 'just-in-time' lean manufacturing processes that keep inventory levels low."

Speeders increasingly choose an awareness course over points/bans

Data suggests business drivers are involved in eight speeding events per mile

By Gareth Roberts

A record number of people avoided penalty points on their licence last year, after taking driver awareness courses.

The figures, from the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme, show almost 1.5 million people, including company car and van drivers, chose to take a course, rather than add points and face a possible ban.

That equates a threefold increase in the past nine years, when a little more than 467,000 drivers attended a course.

In 2019, the vast majority – some 86% (1.28m) of drivers – avoided points by taking a speed awareness course, up 8.1% (96,000) on the previous year.

This was followed by almost 107,000 drivers, who were sent on the 'national motorway awareness course' for offences committed on smart motorways, including breaking variable speed limits, ignoring red 'X' signs and wrongly stopping in emergency lay-bys.

The course was introduced three years ago.

A further 76,000-plus drivers took the 'what's driving us?' course aimed at drivers caught tailgating or using a mobile phone at the wheel.

The classroom-based courses can cost up to £100 and take about four hours to complete.

Research by the RAC Foundation – based on Home Office data for 2018-19 – suggests that 44% of all speeding offences detected in England and Wales result in someone being sent on a course.

"It would be good to think that as more and more people pass through the doors of these courses so our roads are getting safer," said Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation. "For some, at least, that appears to be true. The challenge is in making the lessons stick once the motorists attending them are back out in the often all-too-aggressive world of modern traffic."

Analysis of 5,000 UK business drivers over a 12-month period revealed that they exceeded speed limits by 19.4%, on average (48mph on a 40mph stretch and so on).

The RAC Foundation hopes drivers attending awareness courses will result in greater road safety

The data, from telematics firm Airmax Remote, also showed that there were, on average, eight speeding events per mile.

Richard Perham, managing director of Airmax Remote, said: "Speeding is a major issue, especially for businesses that rely on fleets – not only from a safety point of view, but also the impact on fuel economy and poor mpg.

"It is imperative that drivers who are guilty of speeding are given the appropriate training to ensure that they comply with road speed limits.

"Not only can businesses suffer from a poor profile resulting from speeding (as company branding can appear on a vehicle), the extreme of this is a corporate manslaughter case and if the driver responsible for a fatal accident is known to have a long history of speeding, then blame can be placed on the business."

Home Office figures show there were 2,386,780 speeding offences detected in England and Wales in 2018-19 – a 37% rise on the 1,740,217 detected in 2011-12.

It was also 4% higher than the 2,292,534 speeding offences recorded in 2017-18.

> "THE CHALLENGE IS IN MAKING THE LESSONS STICK"
>
> **STEVE GOODING, RAC FOUNDATION**

The total number of all motoring offences detected across the two countries in 2018-19 was 2,837,661, meaning speeding accounted for 84% of them.

Of the 2,386,780 speeding offences detected in 2018-19: 44% resulted in the offender being sent on a speed awareness course; 34% attracted fixed penalty notices (FPNs); 12% were later cancelled; and 10% resulted in court action.

The analysis – based on Home Office data and carried out by Dr Adam Snow of Liverpool John Moores University and Doreen Lam of the RAC Foundation – reveals the headline figure for those caught speeding hides large variations between constabularies.

West Yorkshire topped the list with 181,867 people caught speeding in 2018-19; second was Avon and Somerset (159,210) followed by the Metropolitan Police, including City of London (157,494).

At the other end of the scale Wiltshire Constabulary caught only 807 people speeding, Cleveland caught 11,937 and Derbyshire 12,256. Wiltshire turned off its speed cameras in 2010.

Across the 43 constabularies of England and Wales, the vast majority (97%) of offences were detected by speed cameras.

The variations across police forces will, in part, be down to geographical area, road type and traffic volume. They will also be created by local policing priorities.

Gooding concluded: "The simple rule for drivers who don't want to risk ending up with a speeding ticket is not to break the limit in the first place."

Signs activated by air pollution will go on trial in central Bedfordshire

If successful, technology might help councils to avoid introducing CAZs

By Gareth Roberts

Vehicles will be diverted away from pollution hotspots by signs that react in real-time to increases in harmful emissions.

The technology will be trialled in the Central Bedfordshire Council region thanks to a new network of 24 air pollution sensors.

The network, which has been installed by Westcotec in partnership with Airly, provides open-access, real-time air quality information via an online live map link.

Speaking at the launch of the network at the Move urban mobility exhibition in London, last month, Central Bedfordshire Council senior road safety engineer, Tim Oxley, set out the opportunities now available to reduce exposure to high levels of pollution.

"This project provides a significant step forward in relation to the action we can take when air pollution levels are high," he said.

"We previously had to wait for data, meaning we were unable to make on-the-spot interventions. Now, by integrating the real-time data with other roadside technology, we can take immediate action that will reduce exposure to high levels of air pollution – steps such as putting traffic diversions in place."

Oxley believes the real-time sensors provide an "excellent opportunity" to be proactive in dealing with air pollution and to minimise its impact on people.

> "WE CAN CREATE DIVERSION SIGNAGE THAT WILL ONLY TRIGGER WHEN POLLUTION LEVELS ARE HIGH"
>
> **OLLY SAMWAYS, WESTCOTEC**

Westcotec specialises in vehicle-activated signs and traffic safety systems

He says the council has a number of initiatives planned, thanks to the new network, including projects with schools, monitoring pollution from buses and traffic diversions using vehicle-activated signs when air quality levels require.

Westcotec, which specialises in vehicle-activated signs and traffic safety systems, is monitoring the air quality levels and developing future signage to work in conjunction with the air quality reading.

The first sign showing live pollution data will be revealed at a trade show in Amsterdam planned for April.

Westcotec head of sales and marketing Olly Samways explained: "We have always been interested by pollution rate against traffic flows and speeds.

"As a step on from monitoring, being able to reduce the actual amount of pollutants when a high level is reached was an even larger area of interest. We regularly install over-height and flood monitoring devices that divert vehicles so this would work in a similar way."

The technology has the potential for local authorities to focus their efforts on those specific areas which require action, rather than the blanket restrictions imposed by clean air zones (CAZs).

Oxley told *Fleet News* the level of interest from other local authorities in the technology had been "extremely high".

Central Bedfordshire Council was keen to get involved in the trial after learning Westcotec was looking for a test bed for the technology.

In terms of how the air pollution signs will work, Samways explained that the data can be sourced using the open API.

"When a pre-determined figure is reached, an alert can be sent through the internet to a 4G modem within the sign, which can enable the sign to display such messages as 'HGV DIVERT AHEAD' together with directional arrows," he said.

"We can create diversion signage that will only trigger when pollution levels are high, and which will guide specific categories of vehicle – such as heavy goods vehicles and buses – away from at-risk areas at these times."

Real-time air pollution sensors mean immediate action can be taken

The technology trial in Bedfordshire comes as Coventry City Council announced it would not be introducing a CAZ, after receiving Government support for an alternative emissions reduction plan.

It includes vehicle restrictions on specific roads, new cycle routes, electric buses and changes to road layouts.

A £1 million scrappage scheme will also be trialled in Coventry next year, with motorists given up to £3,000 worth of mobility credits to ditch their car.

The credits will be provided on a smartphone app through which participants will also be able to plan and book their journeys.

Later in the year, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) will invite people, who are willing to give up their cars, to apply for the two-year pilot project.

TfWM, part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), is working up the detail of the scheme ahead of its launch.

The trial is funded from the £22m Future Mobility Zone grant to the region by the Department for Transport (DfT) to develop and test new transport technology and schemes.

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

IN DETAIL
To view the full story go to fleetnews.co.uk/news

FEB

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GEELY AND VOLVO PROPOSE MERGER

Volvo and its parent company Geely are considering a merger to create a new global automotive group. The proposed deal would see all the Geely brands merge in one new group, building around two million cars per year.

13

BIRMINGHAM CAZ DELAYED DUE TO ONLINE VEHICLE CHECKER ERRORS

MOST COMMENTED

The data's accuracy has been questioned after it showed some cars were compliant, when, in fact, they would face a daily charge of £8 to access the city centre.

14

EDF ACQUIRES POD POINT IN £110M DEAL

The acquisition is EDF Group's largest investment in the EV market and forms part of its plan to become the leading energy company for electric mobility.

18

MASERATI GHIBLI PLUG-IN HYBRID TO KICKSTART BRAND'S ELECTRIFIED LINE-UP

Pitched to rival the BMW 530e and Mercedes E 300 e, the new car aims to give the Italian brand a foothold in the low-emission premium car market.

19

REBECCA STEAD TO ASSUME FLEET RESPONSIBILITY AT HONDA

Stead replaces Phil Webb who is moving to a role in Honda Motor Europe (HME).

24

HMRC PUBLISHES NEW ADVISORY FUEL RATES EFFECTIVE MARCH 1

MOST READ

Changes include a new 13p per mile (ppm) rate for a diesel car with an engine size of more than 2,000cc and a 1p reduction for a petrol company car with an engine size of more than 2,000cc.

TESLA DRIVER DIED 'PLAYING GAME ON MOBILE PHONE'

27

MOST SHARED

An investigation into a fatal crash involving a Tesla Model X being driven on autopilot in Mountain View, California, has found that the driver was distracted using his mobile phone.

INCHCAPE FLEET SOLUTIONS TO REBRAND AS KINTO

28

KINTO

Kinto is the new mobility brand launched by Toyota, which acquired Inchcape Fleet Solutions earlier this year.

ZENITH ELECTRIC VEHICLE ORDERS UP 300%

Orders for EVs have leapt by more than 300% in salary sacrifice fleets and 250% in company car fleets over the past six months.

MAR

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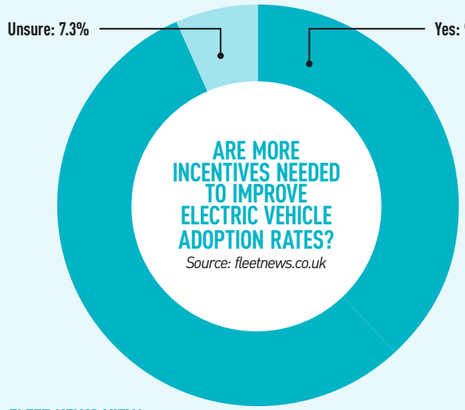
FLEET NEWS POLL



FLEET NEWS VIEW:
Our poll shows that there is overwhelming support for the Government to help fleets and company car drivers make the switch to an electric vehicle (EV). Fewer than one in 10 respondents (7.3%) were happy with the status quo. New company car tax rates will help, but fleets and drivers will be hoping that, with the Government keen to end the sale of new diesel, petrol and hybrid vehicles by 2035, it makes the transition a little easier for fleets.

THIS ISSUE'S POLL: **If you have a plug-in hybrid car, how often do you drive it in pure electric mode?**

THE BIG PICTURE

A new evil is emerging in the fight against transport-based air pollution: tyre and brake particulate matter.

I say new; it was an issue first raised by *Fleet News*' then sister publication *Commercial Fleet* two years ago. We noted that the relative contribution of non-exhaust sources would increase in the forthcoming years due to stricter control in exhaust emissions.

Now an Emissions Analytics study has claimed that pollution from tyre wear can be 1,000 times worse than that from a car's exhaust – and perhaps even more if the tyres are incorrectly inflated.

It blames the proliferation of SUVs, which are heavier, electric vehicles (EVs) which also weigh more due to their batteries, and the growing use of budget tyres. It raises question marks over the true environmental credentials of EVs at a time when they are starting to gain traction (pure EVs accounted for 3.2% of the market in February, compared with 0.9% a year ago; all EV/hybrids took 5.8%).

This issue is not driving the Government agenda. Its conversations centre on exhaust air pollution, congestion and the need for 'healthy streets' by reducing city centre traffic.

Yet, it's an important one because of the type of matter emitted: PM2.5 and PM10 non-exhaust microscopic particulates, which penetrate deep into the lungs.

A study by the Royal College of Physicians estimated they are a contributory factor in 29,000 annual deaths in the UK.

The industry – manufacturers and suppliers – are working on solutions, but Government intervention may be required to stimulate the necessary action that results in technological leaps.

You can do your bit by fitting good quality tyres and ensuring they are correctly inflated.

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

HAVE YOUR SAY

LINKEDIN UK fleet managers group
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EMAIL fleetnews@bauermedia.co.uk
COMMENT ONLINE fleetnews.co.uk

EDITOR'S PICK

VEHICLE EMISSIONS

Company car revival can help cut CO_2

Paul Gauntlett wrote:
Having read 'Maserati Ghibli plug-in hybrid to kickstart brand's electrified line-up' (fleetnews.co.uk, February 18), the more company cars we can switch to electric, the sooner we will get to all vehicles on the road being able to drive with zero tailpipe emissions.

The Maserati Ghibli is a beautiful car. If Maserati can get the CO_2 under 50g/km to take advantage of the low-emission incentives, then I have little doubt it will be very appealing as a company car among senior managers.

It is also perhaps a real signal that the decline the industry has seen in company cars is coming to an end as we play a crucial part in helping Britain become carbon neutral.

• THE EDITOR'S PICK IN EACH ISSUE WINS A £20 JOHN LEWIS VOUCHER

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Defleeted EVs will need to be kept warm

Steve wrote:
Having read 'Remarketing companies concerned over EV power demand' (fleetnews.co.uk, February 12), this is unlikely to be a problem.

Being mostly stationary, each car can use a very low power charger 'trickle-charge-plus'. Yes, one or two higher power chargers will be needed, but the bulk sitting for days can get away with only 1 or 2 kW.

You will need lots of chargers though, and ideally keep the vehicles indoors (heated) or on connection during a hard winter. Batteries are damaged by cold.

This is also a concern for second-hand car dealers.

TESLA DEATH

ADAS can 'mislead' drivers

Colin Paterson wrote:
Having read 'Tesla driver died 'playing game on mobile phone' (fleetnews.co.uk, February 27), the increasing proliferation of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) on vehicles can be as distracting and misleading as they are beneficial. 'Auto-pilot' and similar terms might lull the 'driver' into a false sense of security – literally.

Iain Storey wrote:
One has to wonder why the proposed ban of non-emergency use of a mobile device would only be applied to work-related activities? (A recommendation from the investigating body in the US).

Surely this is an opening which would leave extensive 'room' for legal challenges?

An outright ban (as there is in the UK) is the correct solution, as complacency and reliance on technology is already showing signs of failure to prevent foreseeable events which this example, unfortunately, highlights.

CHARGE POINTS

VW and E.On ultra-fast move welcomed

Neil wrote:
Having read 'VW and E.On develop new solution for ultra-fast charging EVs' (fleetnews.co.uk, February 13), we are about to test EVs for a fleet of 180 vehicles covering approx. 4.4 million miles per annum.

Technology is changing every day, and this would be a welcome introduction to reduce downtime and increase range at the same time.

HMRC RATES

EV reimbursement rate doesn't add up

Dan wrote:
Having read 'Electric vehicle charging costs differ dramatically' (fleetnews.co.uk, February 27), if you assume an average of three miles per kWh then it is worth noting that the Advisory Electricity Rate of 4p per mile would only cover the cost of charging at Source London sockets.

I would like to see HMRC explain how they arrived at 4p per mile. A home energy tariff of 16p per kWh would be 5.3p per mile, and there aren't that many completely free public charging options available.

CHARGE POINTS

Convenience comes from fast chargers

The Engineer wrote:
Having read 'EV charge points at supermarkets double in two years' (fleetnews.co.uk, March 2), a lot of supermarkets have time-restricted parking now making slow chargers there little more than virtue signals.

Well done to Lidl for concentrating on rapid chargers, anyone who shops there regularly will know you can do a week's shop in half an hour. A slow charger wouldn't be worth the effort of opening the charge flap.

Dusz wrote:
For business users it is also necessary for hotels to provide charge points otherwise where are people who travel going to charge?

What better way to charge than while you are asleep? Sadly, in the four years that I have had a PHEV, only one hotel has offered charging facilities.

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5 YEAR WARRANTY 100,000 MILES

WHAT CAR? CAR OF THE YEAR 2020 Small electric car Winner

Fleet safety is number one

Road risk management is given the attention it deserves at VolkerWessels UK, resulting in eight consecutive RoSPA Awards for its biggest fleet, VolkerRail. *Sarah Tooze* takes a closer look

Spencer Ward, head of fleet at multi-disciplinary contractor VolkerWessels UK, welcomes scrutiny. He is responsible for 1,853 vehicles across the group's five business units (VolkerFitzpatrick, VolkerRail, VolkerStevin, VolkerHighways and VolkerLaser) and when the managing directors of each business unit question fleet safety information in the monthly board reports, he sees it as proof that fleet is taken seriously.

"Our brand is not to be put at risk," Ward says. "It's driven from the very top. The information we provide gets challenged, it gets questioned, which is great for me because it means it's being read. I'm not uneasy about that in any way. I welcome that.

"The five MDs all have their different questions. It could be about penalty charge notices or risk scores from our licence checker, for example. They really home in on those and want to know more detail. They recognise it's their business and they want to do the right thing."

Doing the 'right thing' could mean further driver training or identifying if there is something affecting an employee's wellbeing.

"We need to get to the bottom of it because they could be a risk to themselves or a risk to someone else," Ward says.

VolkerWessels has a comprehensive approach to road risk management which incorporates risk assessments, licence checks, on-the-road training, an annual medical, daily walkaround checks using tablets and smartphones, speed limiters, telematics, campaigns and an internal safety award.

It also spreads its road safety message externally by visiting local schools, where children have the chance to sit in the cab of one its vehicles and appreciate the blind-spots the driver faces, and through sub-contractors it promotes its standards to.

Stuart Webster-Spriggs, HSQE (health, safety, quality and environmental) director at VolkerRail, which has the lion's share of the VolkerWessels fleet (430 company cars, 326 vans and one HGV), says that in the latter case it works both ways.

"Some of the supply chain have quite large fleets themselves so we're learning from them as much as they're learning from us," he says.

"For instance, one of our sub-contractors did an education piece to the industry about driver fatigue and we've taken that on board."

The five business units within VolkerWessels also share best practice.

For instance, VolkerRail has adopted the documentation, briefing and training which VolkerHighways has done on safe loading.

"Spencer co-ordinates and shares best practice with everyone else," Webster-Spriggs says.

TEAM OF 10 AT HEAD OFFICE

VolkerWessels has a central fleet team of 10 people, based at its head office in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, which manages procurement of the entire fleet.

The team is split into two disciplines: cars and commercial vehicles. The latter is made up of a group transport manager and fleet compliance officers who manage and police the six operating licences and accreditations with FORS and Driving for Better Business.

"They're regularly doing audits to ensure we're as compliant as we possibly can be," Ward says.

The car fleet team manages everything from procuring company cars through ➲

VolkerWessels head of fleet Spencer Ward (right) alongside VolkerRail HSQE director Stuart Webster-Spriggs. VolkerWessels' total fleet is 1,853 of which 756 are run by the rail business unit

VolkerWessels' leasing company Lex Autolease to the compliance of the grey fleet.

An additional team member at the Doncaster office works specifically for VolkerRail, helping to manage the deployment of the fleet and policies, procedures and compliance, and reports into Ward.

"VolkerRail is quite vehicle-intensive on its projects so we felt we needed to have a person in situ within that office," Ward says.

It is VolkerRail which has so far received recognition for its work on road safety, picking up the Brake company driver safety (medium fleet) award last year in addition to receiving its eighth consecutive RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) award for fleet safety, thanks to Webster-Spriggs putting the business forward.

However, Ward, who has been managing the fleet since July 2018, says fleet standards are consistent across the whole group.

Licence checking is carried out by the central fleet team. Drivers with no points are checked bi-annually while those that accumulate points are checked every six months, then every three months, then monthly.

"We have a person dedicated within the fleet team monitoring that constantly," Ward says.

Managers are also alerted when a driver reaches a certain number of points.

New starters who are under 21 or who have a high number of points or who will be driving a larger vehicle go out on the road with their line manager to address any concerns before they are given training with AA DriveTech and earn a 'passport to drive'.

Webster-Spriggs says: "It's the line manager's responsibility to make sure the people under their control are competent to drive those particular vehicles. We're not afraid to say to people 'we don't think you're right to drive this type of vehicle'."

Ward adds: "We have put people through further training on occasions. It's about their safety and the public's safety.

"There are a lot of people that think a vehicle is there for them to get from A to B and it's not. There are more injuries on the road than there are on site so we need to give that the importance it deserves."

On the road training is also given for drivers with poor telematics scores and those who had at-fault collisions.

ANNUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

All commercial vehicle drivers go through an annual health assessment to ensure they are fit to drive. The assessment includes an ergonomics check to assess whether they have any issues with the vehicle they are driving.

Daily vehicle inspections are carried using a tablet or smartphone and drivers cannot access their work until it has been complete. Any defects are reported directly to the driver's line manager.

Telematics, along with speed limiters, was introduced in 2014 to the commercial vehicle fleet and the scores have consistently fallen, according to Webster-Spriggs.

VolkerRail's insurance claims have reduced from an average of 135 during 2015 and 2016 to 40 last year in the rail operation.

Overall, the VolkerWessels UK fleet has maintained a low number of at-fault claims despite a growth in the fleet size.

VolkerRail's insurance claims have reduced from an average of 135 during 2015 and 2016 to 40 last year. Overall, the VolkerWessels UK fleet has maintained a low number of at-fault claims despite a growth in the vehicle numbers.

The commercial fleet was awarded 'gold' under the Masternaut Fleet CO_2 Certification Programme for achieving more than a 5% improvement on industry benchmarks (based on fleets of a similar makeup).

Webster-Spriggs believes that having telematics has instilled a sense of ownership among commercial vehicle drivers.

"They have an individual fob so the vehicle they're getting into is their responsibility. They need to ensure it looks professional.

"For the crew type vehicles where they swap between each other, that's self-policing. If they get into a vehicle and it's not how they would like it to be they ask the line manager to interrogate the system to see who had it before them."

TELEMATICS LEAGUE TABLES

Drivers are also keen to understand and improve their telematics scores.

"Each department has a league table and it has become self-managing," Webster-Spriggs says. "They want to be better than the other divisions."

Telematics has proved its worth during incidents, too.

"We had an incident at night in winter where a third party came round the bend on the other side of the road because it was icy and took our vehicle off the road.

"In Rail, we have a 24/7 control centre so the occupants of our vehicle phoned the control centre, our control centre was able to access the telematics data and tell exactly where they were so the emergency services could be deployed to that location with pinpoint accuracy," Webster-Spriggs says.

Telematics data has also been used to exonerate drivers when members of the public have made false claims.

"We have 'how's my driving?' on the back of all our commercial vehicles and we sometimes get a few spurious claims from members of the public," Webster-Spriggs says. "The first thing we do is go straight to the telematics to confirm our driver was in the location at the particular time – and quite often they weren't. We can then look at speeding offences, harsh acceleration and braking to confirm whether the complaint is justified. If it isn't, then it goes in the driver's favour."

The use of telematics and more recently dual-facing cameras, which are being trialled in 26 vehicles until the end of this month, has gained greater acceptance among drivers.

Ward says: "It's not big brother. It's not continually recording, they are incident-based recorders where they will only record 10 seconds pre-incident and 10 seconds post-incident.

"Drivers see it as benefit to them because as drivers of vans they can be an easy target.

"With safety cameras you can get clear footage and there is no argument.

"It provides such a good training and behavioural safety tool to enhance the driver behaviour, we think that it could be the next move for us."

> "THE INFORMATION WE PROVIDE GETS CHALLENGED, IT GETS QUESTIONED, WHICH IS GREAT FOR ME BECAUSE IT MEANS IT'S BEING READ"
>
> **SPENCER WARD, VOLKERWESSELS UK**

The collaboration of Ward (left) and Webster-Spriggs has helped VolkerWessels earn numerous safety awards

ORGANISATION: VolkerWessels UK
FLEET SIZE: 1,853 – company cars 810; vans 941; HGVs 102
HEAD OF FLEET: Spencer Ward
FUNDING METHOD: contract hire
REPLACEMENT CYCLE: four years/80,000 miles for cars and vans
BRANDS ON FLEET: cars – predominantly Audi, BMW, Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan; vans – predominantly Ford and Mercedes-Benz

WARD ON....

...the road to zero

VolkerWessels UK has set up an alternative fuel vehicle (AFV) working group, chaired by Spencer Ward, with representatives from each business unit, to look at how the fleet feeds into the company's overall sustainability strategy on carbon reduction.

The intention was for 20% of the fleet to be AFV by the end of the year and 40% by 2030, but the Government's plans to bring forward its deadline banning the sale of new diesel and petrol cars and vans to 2035 or earlier, including hybrids, has seen the company put greater focus on pure electric vehicles (EVs), although it is still placing orders for hybrids.

Since last June, 34% of VolkerWessels company car orders have been hybrids but there is growing interest from employees in pure EVs due to the tax benefits. However, like all fleets, it is facing supply issues.

Ward is managing the situation through monthly meetings with Lex Autolease.

He believes that reviewing the benchmark cars and bringing in more AFVs as well as introducing a decision tree last year have encouraged employees to choose hybrid vehicles.

"Every driver goes through a decision tree that ultimately indicates the right fuel type vehicle for them," Ward says.

"If they choose to go against that, we get involved and talk with them. Ultimately, it's their choice, but we try to educate them through that process."

VolkerWessels introduced EVs at the start of 2019 and currently has 11 Nissan e-NV200s and two BMW i3s, which are used by VolkerHighways in its local authority borough work.

It is using dongles in VolkerRail vehicles to assess whether it could deploy EVs.

"The challenge for us is the commercial vehicles which carry equipment and materials," says Ward.

"We're keen to see and work with manufacturers to help develop vehicles that will be fit for use for us.

"The smaller vehicle is a no-brainer and we'll be moving to them relatively quickly, wherever we can, but the bigger vehicles, HGVs, will be a difficult challenge."

VolkerWessels already has workplace charging points at its Hoddesdon, Doncaster and Preston offices and is looking to roll them out further.

Ward is also working with VolkerSmart Technologies (part of VolkerHighways) to look at back office solutions for employees to access charge points and home charging options.

‘We want to be an EV leader, not a follower’

New Nissan fleet director Peter McDonald has put electric at the core of his fleet strategy. *Stephen Briers* reports

Orders for Leafs are five times higher than this time last year

FLEET DIRECTOR: Peter McDonald
TIME IN ROLE: 3 months
ANNUAL SALES (2019): cars – 92,372; vans – 12,926
ELECTRIC VEHICLES SALES (2019): Leaf – 5,274; e-NV200 – 1,876
MODEL RANGE: cars – Micra, Juke, Leaf, Qasqai, X-Trail; vans – NV200, e-NV200, NV400, NV400 Cabstar, Navara

Nissan sold almost 5,300 Leafs last year – 14% of the total electric vehicle (EV) market (cars and LCVs) - with just less than half going to fleet. While private registrations of Leaf have dipped for the past two years, fleet was up 5.5% on 2018 and by 83% compared with 2017, at 2,588 units.

That trajectory steepened in January, in line with the total EV market, with a 200% year-on-year rise as employees and companies reacted to climate and air quality pressures by seeking alternatives to diesel. The order take for Leaf is five times higher than this time last year.

In the light commercial market, registrations of the e-NV200 increased 184% in 2019, to 1,876, giving Nissan more than 60% of the electric van sector. Like cars, the growth rate accelerated in January, with a 266% year-on-year (YOY) increase.

The opportunities offered by EVs is a major reason why Peter McDonald decided to leave Seat last November to become fleet director at Nissan, following the departure of Iker Lazzari to Volkswagen Financial Services.

McDonald enjoyed five successful years at Seat, tripling true fleet sales over that time. He had a board position and was benefiting from a significant broadening of the brand’s product range and mass appeal with user-choosers.

In contrast, Nissan’s true fleet car sales have been in decline, with the company becoming increasingly reliant on rental registrations to plug the gaps.

Last year, rental surged by 69% to account for 10% of its total registrations, compared with 5.3% a year earlier. And, while leasing was up 10%, total true fleet (leasing and fleet other) fell 11%.

No wonder the move raised a few eyebrows. However, McDonald has no misgivings.

“I saw an opportunity in Nissan,” he says. “The big difference is the electric vehicle and the fact the brand has the heritage and legacy – 10 years in the case of the Leaf. The future of fleet is going down an EV avenue and Nissan is at the core of that.”

Of course, every manufacturer is now rushing EV models to market, in part to bring down average CO_2 emissions to meet CAFE (Clean Air For Europe) regulations, but McDonald stresses that Nissan has the established technology today with the added bonus that its cars are built in the UK. Nissan is, he adds, an EV leader, not a follower.

“Being a follower is when everyone understands EVs and has them on their fleet. But we are in a different place: the fleets we talk to, it is their first EV and we are the ones supporting them by taking a consultative, advisory role. That’s leadership, and that’s a core part of our role.

“We work with a lot of large fleets, helping them to make the transition, and this promotes loyalty – but it also comes with huge responsibility.”

He’s referring to the responsibility of ensuring EVs work for the business and its drivers. This involves fleets taking a conscientious approach with carefully managed pilot projects, working with advocates within their employee base.

“They want to take a prudent view about how to introduce them and that’s exciting because we are part of that process,” McDonald says. “That is not the role a follower plays because the job will have been done.”

Demand for electric is being fuelled by climate crisis pressures at national level to decarbonise and, in the car market, at driver level by the taxation benefits of zero CO_2 from April.

But it requires fundamental changes by both fleet and employee when it comes to charging, infrastructure and the type of journey profiles best suited to EVs.

“Business and people have to think differently about how the vehicle is fuelled, which is based on different journeys – short versus long,” explains McDonald. “But with home charging and rapid charging within 20-30 minutes, anyone can drive an EV as long as they think about how they do it.”

McDonald speaks warmly of his predecessor Lazzari – “a friend of mine” – particularly in reshaping the structure of the fleet team, but he is making some changes to “sharpen our strategy and put EV at the core”.

Businesses need the support of manufacturers to decarbonate – “fleet is lower hanging fruit” – he says, adding: “So the question is ‘what do fleets need from manufacturers? And, on the back of that, we have to answer how do we change what we do?’.”

This will result in a “more tailored approach” to the corporate market. Nissan “wants to work with everyone”, but it is being selective by focusing its investment in supporting major fleets with pilot initiatives to test EVs and speed up deployment.

It has launched a fleet hub where customers can access terms and agreements. The hub will evolve this year with the addition of more tools on wholelife costs and journey calculators to give fleets a one-stop shop for electric intel.

“Wholelife cost methodology is important: when you take into consideration fuel, national insurance and personal use contributions, it means EVs can fit into more junior and middle management roles,” says McDonald.

Residual values are further strengthening the wholelife cost financial case; they have risen in recent years and Nissan predicts further increases as legislation forces advocacy, such as the ban on diesel, petrol, hybrid and plug-in hybrid from 2035 and the introduction of zero emission zones, starting with London and Oxford.

Nissan is “a couple of months away” from having a new EV app that gives a virtual test drive with advice about how to charge, local charging infrastructure and range (up to 239 “reliable miles” for Leaf).

McDonald has identified three key primary markets for EVs: major corporates which have lots of company car drivers and robust carbon commitments; private hire companies because of their city centre journeys in clean air zones (CAZs – potentially soon to become zero emission zones); and the public sector, which has its own Government targets to hit. SMEs and PCH are also important parts of the overall mix, but as a secondary uptake market.

Nissan’s global ambition is one million EVs by 2022. The UK is the company’s biggest market in Europe and is expected to account for the largest proportion of EV sales, but McDonald is coy about his targets. However, 42% of all Nissan vehicles will either be full electric or ‘E-Power’ (where the battery drives the wheels and is charged by a petrol engine) by 2022 – equating to eight models. Crossovers are likely to be the next launches, as signposted last year by the Ariya at the Tokyo motor show and IMQ concept at Geneva.

Nissan has one more card up its sleeve: vehicle-to-grid (V2G) charging technology. It’s available on both Leaf and e-NV200, enabling them to draw off the grid at low demand, low cost times and feed back at high demand, high cost times. It smooths the peaks and troughs.

The company is about to start two V2G trials in partnership with EDF: one with residential properties and retail buyers; one with fleet, targeting around 1,000 cars.

“We want to future-proof network charging and make decision-making simple,” says McDonald.

“Does a business need to install a charging infrastructure? Not necessarily, provided drivers know how to charge, and they can do so at home. V2G is an added bonus.”

McDONALD ON AUTONOMY

Nissan is investing heavily in autonomous technology and has already introduced ProPilot as standard on many models.

ProPilot is autonomous drive technology designed for use in single-lane traffic. It combines steering, accelerator and braking to maintain vehicle-to-vehicle distance within a pre-set speed range (approx 20mph to 60mph) and keeps the car in the middle of the driving lane. It breaks to standstill and maintains stop.

This is just the first phase. Nissan recently undertook an autonomous vehicle (AV) trial with a Leaf travelling from Cranfield to Sunderland as part of its Human Drive project. Human Drive is intended to replicate human behaviour in terms of road positioning, acceleration and braking.

The only driver input was when the car required charging; all other driving was completed autonomously on a variety of roads, including country, and weather conditions, including fog and heavy rain.

“We definitely see a role for AVs on the motorway and connectivity – to infrastructure and other cars – is important, but we are still in the research phase and it needs 5G to work,” says McDonald.

Bullish Mercedes talks up electric appeal in true fleet

New product and restructured fleet team will help to build momentum says Tom Brennan. *Stephen Briers* reports

Mercedes-Benz has enjoyed a strong period of sustained success in fleet dating back to the launch of the third-generation A-Class in 2013.

Over that time, its true fleet registrations – as a measurement of 'contract hire/leasing' and 'fleet other' by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders – has risen 49%, from 53,600 to almost 80,000.

Mercedes-Benz's own true fleet calculations, which remove certain channels from fleet other, put the number at 63,067 cars in 2019, a year in which it collected best compact premium car for the A-Class and best premium car for the C-Class at the Fleet News Awards. It represented a small 2% fall year-on-year in a sector down 6%.

The priority this year is to build the momentum by targeting growth in the corporate and SME (small-to-medium enterprise) markets.

Head of fleet sales Tom Brennan is bullish about the opportunities for two reasons: new product and a restructured fleet team.

One year on from his appointment, Brennan has divided his team into three components: leasing/Motability, rental and end-user/retail. He recognises that it follows a path well-trodden by other manufacturers, but it is a fundamental change from the previous structure which lumped together end-user corporates with leasing.

Brennan has also created four new roles: two contract hire and leasing managers (one for north and one for south), one fleet operations manager and an aftersales development manager.

"We made the changes last October and it will help us to grow in the SME and corporate markets," says Brennan in his first official interview with the fleet press.

"It feels like there is big pent-up demand in fleet and we expect to see a move back from grey fleet and PCH because of the BIK options offered by ultra-low emission vehicles, especially BEV and PHEV."

Under its Ambition 2039 strategy, Mercedes-Benz is targeting a carbon-neutral car fleet within two decades for which it requires more than half of global sales to be full electric or plug-in hybrid by 2030.

Ten battery electric models will be launched by 2022, of which three – including EQV (V-Class) and EQA compact car – are scheduled in the UK this year.

"We are building 50,000 EQs this year. In the UK, we hope to have a sizeable chunk of that, especially as we go into Q2, 3 and 4," Brennan says.

He is confident of fulfilling fleet demand for electric product; unlike some manufacturers, vehicles will not be exclusively reserved by

deposit, which has excluded many businesses from placing a pre-order.

"We see a bigger opportunity in fleet and so we will have the supply to deliver our growth ambitions. I've built my team around this product," he says.

Consequently, the roll out of electric and PHEV models is crucial to Brennan's fleet aspirations, not least as they counter the potentially damaging impact of the WLTP tests on diesel/petrol CO_2 emissions.

He is dismissive of the Government estimations of a 10% jump in emissions as the figures move from NEDC to WLTP – "it is absolutely not what we are seeing" – with Mercedes' own data showing 20% increases for petrol and 30-40% rises for diesel. Conversely, CO_2 emissions have fallen slightly for plug-in hybrid models as the battery element is more prevalent under the WLTP test cycle.

"The biggest issue is the data – it doesn't exist in the way it should," Brennan says. "It can require API (application programme interface) links, which are hard to manage, and you have a range for emissions dependent on the model derivative. It's a grey area."

Nevertheless, Mercedes-Benz has supplied all its data to leasing companies and pricing guides, assisted by a model simplification strategy which removed low uptake single options and created packages with high uptake single options and model lines.

This has reduced the data complexity and will enhance residual value forecasts as the packaged options now have a Cap code. Simplification also makes it easier for drivers to build their car online, catering for the growing demand for digital purchasing.

With the rise in CO_2 emissions due to WLTP, does Mercedes-Benz anticipate a move away from diesel towards petrol? Brennan sees it as less a migration, more an opportunity to attract new customers.

"Diesel still has a role to play, especially in small cars," he says. "In bigger cars, E-Class upwards, because of BIK, it will be more challenging. Here, we see a move to PHEV and BEV."

The one caveat to a full-blown stampede towards electric is the uncertainty created by muddled Government messaging.

"We need clear policy and the infrastructure," he says. "Home charging is critical and work charging is very important. But we need public charging – our view is that it's there when it's needed."

In 2019, Mercedes-Benz increased its rental registrations in three of the four quarters, taking it to a year-on-year rise of 12.5%, although Q4 was down 58%. It was the second fastest growth channel, behind Motability which was up 36%.

Despite the rise, rental accounts for a manageable 7.8% of total volume, behind the industry average of 9% and it is lower than BMW but higher than Audi.

"We have a stable supply of rental; it will ebb and flow, but we don't see it changing," says Brennan. "We have a fixed position with our big five rental partners where we manage the supply. It's a good marketing opportunity and they are also being used for car clubs as well."

He adds: "We see Motability as an opportunity for our network, especially with small cars. There is no remarketing risk because they are good three-year-old low mileage vehicles."

Mercedes-Benz established its CASE (connected, autonomous, shared services and electric) division four years ago to future-proof the business. Research is continuing across all elements, but the two most relevant for today are electric and connected.

The company is building a business version of its Mercedes Me driver app to help fleet decision-makers and leasing companies manage their vehicles more efficiently.

It will offer a pick and mix for customers with real-time data on driver behaviour, car tracking/location, usage/utilisation, SMR diagnostics and even predictive maintenance. Already available in Germany, a UK launch is imminent.

"We have sight of the customer types and where we want to go first," Brennan says. "It will come with a cost, so we have to look at where the most value is for fleets and leasing companies."

FleetNews AWARDS 2019

JUDGES COMMENTS

BEST PREMIUM CAR

A mid-life refresh has turned a good car into a great car. Competitive running costs and excellent to drive, the C-Class epitomises everything a premium fleet car should be.

BEST PREMIUM COMPACT CAR

The new A-Class showcases segment-leading safety and connected technology. Enjoyable to drive, particularly over longer distances, it is roomy and has great engines. Faultless.

> "HOME CHARGING IS CRITICAL AND WORK CHARGING IS VERY IMPORTANT. BUT WE NEED PUBLIC CHARGING – OUR VIEW IS THAT IT'S THERE WHEN IT'S NEEDED"
>
> **TOM BRENNAN, MERCEDES-BENZ CARS UK**

Tom Brennan, head of fleet, Mercedes-Benz Cars UK (middle), picked up the award for Best Premium Compact Car from Simon Dicks (right), director of Insurance, VisionTrack

MERCEDES-BENZ HAS A THREE-PRONGED ATTACK IN THE ELECTRIC MARKET:

1. **EQ Boost: mild hybrid and hybrid assist**
2. **EQ Power: plug-in hybrid including A-Class, C-Class, E-Class and S-Class**
3. **EQ: full battery electric, including EQC and Smart ForFour and ForTwo**

MINI ELECTRIC

Fast to recharge rather than long range is the focus in Mini's electric offering

By Matt de Prez

The small car segment is rapidly becoming electrified. We've recently driven the new Peugeot e-208, the Vauxhall Corsa E is just around the corner and Renault is already on its second-generation Zoe.

Expanding the level of choice for company car drivers further is the new Mini Electric. This British-built fully-electric version of the existing Mini Hatch is available now.

It's offered in three-door guise only and promises to be both exciting to drive and affordable.

Mini has cleverly integrated the 32.6kWh battery pack into the car's floor, taking up the space previously occupied by the fuel tank and exhaust.

The T-shaped power unit gives the Mini a noticeable extra bulk, but, crucially, has no impact on practicality.

While not particularly capacious, the car's boot can still take the same 211-litres of cargo as a regular petrol or diesel model.

The brand has worked hard to minimise the differences between the electric version and its siblings. All versions are built on the same production line and, to the untrained eye, the car looks and feels much the same as any other Mini.

In keeping with Mini's focus on personalisation, there are some key features that can be selected to set electric models apart, such as Energetic Yellow door mirror caps and grille plus special Electric Corona Spoke two-tone alloy wheels.

Equally, customers can choose to make their Mini Electric look as discreet as a regular Mini.

Other than colours and wheels, there is a choice of three trim levels with no individual options.

All models are equipped with LED headlights, sat-nav and air conditioning. Entry-level versions are known as Level 1 and have a P11D of £27,845.

The Level 2 (£29,845) is probably the best bet for fleets. It comes with heated seats, parking sensors and keyless entry.

Range-topping Level 3 gets pretty much all the available features from other Minis, including a panoramic sunroof, Harmon Kardon stereo, larger sat-nav screen and adaptive LED headlights. It's priced at £33,845.

The car's electric motor develops a healthy 184PS, giving it a performance advantage over its rivals. Acceleration from 0-62mph takes a spritely 7.3 seconds and mid-range performance is impressive, thanks to the car's 270Nm of torque.

Official range is quoted as 144 miles (WLTP) with a promise of up to 4.1 miles per kWh. During our test drives at the launch event we found the car to be less efficient than claimed. After a 50-mile drive on mixed roads the car was showing a remaining range of just 40 miles. The best figure we achieved from the car was 3.3 miles per kWh.

Admittedly, it was cold and we were using the heater and heated seats, but it's worth pointing out that the 144 miles feels a touch optimistic in less-than-ideal conditions.

Luckily the car can recharge from 0-80% in 36 minutes, when using a rapid charger.

In order to accommodate the battery under the car, Mini engineers had to raise its suspension by a few centimetres. But, in adding around 145Kg to the car's floor, the centre of gravity is lower than that of a petrol Cooper S. The car also achieves a 50:50 weight distribution over its axles.

The resulting drive is enjoyable. It has sharp steering and instant throttle response. Equally, on motorways and A-roads refinement is high. There is little wind and road noise, making the Mini Electric a relaxed commuter.

However, like all Minis, the ride is very firm, which can be unsettling on poor road surfaces.

Powertrain noise is minimal. There is none of the annoying whine some other electrics emit.

Each time the car is started it sets off in the stronger of two regeneration modes. This is our biggest gripe with the car. Switching to a less aggressive mode – trust me you'll want to – is done via a toggle switch on the dash, but, irritatingly, there is no way to switch it off completely.

Every time you lift-off the accelerator the car bucks forward as it tries to recapture energy.

> "IT'S OFFERED IN THREE-DOOR GUISE ONLY AND PROMISES TO BE BOTH EXCITING TO DRIVE AND AFFORDABLE"

While the softer setting does it in a less stomach-churning way, we'd like to see a freewheel mode that allows the car to coast.

Based on our initial test, we'd be comfortable using the car for trips up to around 100 miles.

Mini says the average trip is less than 30, making the Mini Electric's range usable for the majority of people. By using a smaller battery the brand has focused on a fast recharge, rather than a long range.

Rival cars can cover more distance, but do it in a less stylish, less enjoyable and less prestigious manner. As the electric car market expands there will be a greater choice of models to suit different needs. If the Mini Electric works for your drivers, then it's highly unlikely they'll be disappointed.

The suspension has been raised by a few centimetres to accommodate the battery

Energetic Yellow is used to highlight elements of the Mini Electric's interior

	FLEET PICK Mini Electric Level 2	ENTRY LEVEL Mini Electric Level 1	RANGE TOPPER Mini Electric Level 3
SPECIFICATIONS			
P11D Price	£29,845	£27,845	£33,845
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	0	0	0
Monthly BIK tax (2020/21)	0%/£0	0%/£0	0%/£0
Range (miles)	144	144	144
Fuel cost (ppm)	3.5	3.5	3.6
Annual VED	£0	£0	£0
Class 1A NIC	£0	£0	£0
Residual value (4yrs/80k)	£9,400/31.5%	£8,725/31.3%	£10,325/30.5%
AFR (ppm)	4	4	4
Running cost (4yrs/80k)	32.5ppm	30.5ppm	36.4ppm

RIVALS

	PEUGEOT E208 Allure	HONDA E	RENAULT ZOE R110 Iconic Rapid Charge
SPECIFICATIONS			
P11D Price	£29,695	£21,755	£18,870
CO_2 emissions (g/km)	0	0	0
Monthly BIK tax (2020/21)	0%/£0	0%/£0	0%/£0
Range (miles)	211	136	245
Fuel cost (ppm)	n/a	4	4.1
Annual VED	£0	£0	£0
Class 1A NIC	£0	£0	£0
Residual value (4yrs/80k)	£8,400/28.3%	£8,800/29.7%	£7,900/25.1%
AFR (ppm)	4	4	4
Running cost (4yrs/80k)	n/a	32.3ppm	35.6ppm

MERCEDES-BENZ C 300 DE

Petrol plug-in hybrids cannot match the fuel consumption of this diesel PHEV newcomer

By Matt de Prez

Mercedes-Benz is hedging its bets on diesel with the C-Class plug-in hybrid, replacing the petrol C 350 e with this new C 300 de.

It shares the same powertrain as the E 300 de we tested for six months last year.

The 2.0-litre diesel engine, also found in the C 220 d, is mated to an electric motor inside the nine-speed automatic transmission.

A 13.5kWh battery pack lives in the boot, providing a range of up to 32 miles.

While diesel isn't exactly everyone's favourite fuel at the moment, it makes the C 300 de a plug-in hybrid that is usable for high-mileage drivers.

We thought it made a lot of sense in our long-term E 300 de, averaging more than 60mpg over a six-month period.

In the lighter, smaller C-Class, the powertrain promises even better efficiency and performance.

The engine serves up a combined 306PS, giving a 0-60mph time of less than six seconds. More impressive is the torque, 700Nm – the same as you'll get from the V8 in an AMG-powered C 63 S.

The fuel economy achieved during our test

It means the C 300 de is able to dispatch some serious mid-range grunt, which should put a smile on the face of anyone behind the wheel.

Bigger smiles will come from the benefit-in-kind tax bill. With CO_2 emissions from 38g/km, a driver could pay as little as £114 per month.

Fleet managers should be equally pleased. Official fuel consumption is rated at some 200mpg, but even in real-world use the car should be able to manage 60-80mpg and cover at least 25 miles on a charge.

During the week we spent with the car, we managed 61.4mpg over 600 miles – with more than a third on electric. Even with a depleted battery, it managed more than 50mpg on a trip from Coventry to Peterborough.

Petrol plug-in hybrids simply cannot match this performance.

The C 300 de costs from £43,000 – making it around £3,750 more than the equivalent BMW 330e. Running costs, on paper, favour the BMW at 48 pence per mile (ppm) versus 52ppm, but we're confident the real-world fuel savings would balance the books for those who regularly exceed the electric-only range.

Boot space suffers as a result of the C-Class' platform not being geared-up for electrification. Both the saloon and estate feature a sizeable lump in the cargo area, losing around 150 litres of space.

There is also a weight penalty to the tune of 300kg, when compared with a C 220d. While the engine's massive torque is enough to shrug this off when accelerating, stand on the brakes and you'll soon feel it.

Our AMG Line test model felt firm, with weighty steering, making the drive more engaging but it lacks the 330e's finesse.

Plug-in hybrids are rapidly gaining traction as company car drivers look for tax-friendly alternatives to the models they know and love. The C 300 de not only ticks all the boxes to keep a driver happy, but will also keep fuel costs in check for a business.

	MERCEDES-BENZ C 300 DE AMG LINE EDITION
SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D Price	£44,455
Monthly BIK (20%)	16%/£118
Class 1a NIC	£982
Annual VED	£0 then £455
RV (4yr/80k)	£12,875/29%
Fuel cost	7.8ppm
AFR	11ppm
Running cost	53.5ppm
CO2	38g/km
Fuel economy	217mpg

PEUGEOT 508 HYBRID

The 508 is in top nick when cruising but the gearbox takes a while to wake up and deliver

By Matt de Prez

Alongside its exciting new fully electric 208 and 2008 models, Peugeot is giving some of its existing range a boost with plug-in hybrid variants of the 3008 and 508.

With benefits aimed squarely at fleet customers, the low-emission, low-tax, high-performing models join an ever-expanding crop of partially electric models in the heartland of the user-chooser market.

The 508, already a favourite of *Fleet News* – having been Highly Commended in our Best Upper Medium Car category at the Fleet News Awards receives a new petrol electric powertrain in hybrid guise with CO_2 emissions of just 38g/km.

By fusing the existing 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol engine with a gearbox-mounted electric motor, the front-wheel drive 508 hybrid serves up 225PS – the same as the range-topping petrol GT.

The hybrid's electric-only range is rated at 33-39 miles under WLTP, giving drivers adequate range for short-to-medium journeys.

Interior refinement and comfort levels are high

Our test route saw the battery charge deplete at a rate that makes that range believable – around 34 miles. During longer trips and at higher speeds, the petrol engine jumps into life to minimise the load on the battery.

Like all petrol plug-in hybrids, the zero-charge fuel consumption is likely to be pretty poor. The non-hybrid version (with essentially the same petrol engine) has a WLTP fuel consumption figure of around 38mpg. Once you factor in the hybrid's 280Kg weight penalty, it's likely the car will exhibit a bit of a thirst.

While we are talking about that extra bulk, the 508's finesse in the bends has been somewhat diminished as a result. The lighter BlueHDI versions are more engaging and probably more efficient in the real world.

Performance is on par with rival cars like the Passat GTE, with a sub-eight-second 0-60mph time. But the 508 hybrid doesn't feel particularly sprightly. The EAT8 gearbox takes a while to wake up and deliver the combined force of the engine and electric motor.

With its relatively small capacity, the petrol engine feels a tad strained too. Those used to a diesel may find the setup a little lacklustre.

When cruising, the 508 is much more at home. Its interior is like no other on the market and refinement and comfort levels are high.

The infotainment set-up leaves a little to be desired, but Peugeot has ticked all the boxes by providing Apple Carplay, Android Auto and a suite of connected services that include app-based interactivity.

Drivers can spec the hybrid powertrain on Allure, GT Line and GT versions of the 508. It is also available on the svelte – and more practical – Sport Wagon.

Peugeot has managed to engineer the battery pack into the chassis in such a way that there is no impact on boot space or rear passenger space.

Prices start at around £35,000 for the Allure, which comes with all the equipment fleet users should need. GT Line versions are more desirable with a sportier edge, while range-topping GT (north of £40k) comes fully loaded.

	PEUGEOT 508 FASTBACK HYBRID ALLURE
SPECIFICATIONS	
P11D Price	£34,875
Monthly BIK (20%)	16%/£93
Class 1a NIC	£770
Annual VED	£0 then £135
RV (4yr/80k)	£9,125/26%
Fuel cost	N/A
AFR	14ppm
Running cost	N/A
CO2	38g/km
Fuel economy	235.4mpg

VOLVO S60

No diesel option and the T8 is the winner for emissions

By Matt de Prez

Unlike its V60 counterpart, the Volvo S60 is not available with a diesel engine – so fleets are faced with just two versions: the T5 petrol and the T8 plug-in hybrid.

High CO_2 emissions prevent the former from being an economic choice, so the £49,750 T8 is the one we are focusing on.

From launch, it is offered in two trim levels: R Design Pro, with CO_2 emissions of 42g/km, and Polestar Engineered. The latter receives a comprehensive makeover from Volvo's tuning firm, boosting power from 390PS to 415PS and CO_2 to 48g/km. It also costs £6,000 more.

The S60 T8 out-performs rival plug-in hybrid compact execs by a considerable margin

In either guise, the S60 T8 out-prices and out-performs other plug-in hybrid compact execs by a considerable margin.

Clever packaging means the 11.6kWh battery does not impact on the car's 390-litre boot.

Unlike most plug-in hybrids that have launched recently, the S60 mounts its electric motor in the rear axle rather than the transmission. This means it has all-wheel drive. The S60 reaches 0-60mph in just 4.6 seconds (4.4 in the Polestar) and the S60 T8 can gather pace rapidly when needed. Power delivery isn't as consistent as we'd like though and the eight-speed automatic gearbox is sometimes slow to respond.

As for fuel economy, we failed to get close to the official 123mpg during our test – but that is no surprise. Mid-40s should be achievable with a restrained right foot but with a depleted battery we were getting low-30s.

While that is less impressive than other plug-ins in this segment, considering the car's performance it's not too bad.

FORD FOCUS

This diesel remains a winner for the higher-mileage driver

By Andrew Ryan

Given the diesel bashing which has taken place in recent times, it's no surprise that the popularity of the fuel has fallen among fleets and company car drivers.

Figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders show that, last year, diesel's total fleet market share fell from 39% to 33%.

However, while this decline is expected to continue, it is still currently the best choice for many applications, offering lower CO_2 and greater fuel economy than comparable petrols.

The Ford Focus is a good example of this. In 1.5 TDCi Ecoblue 120PS ST-Line Nav trim, it produces 92g/km of CO_2 and combined fuel economy of 61.4mpg: in comparison, the petrol 1.0T Ecoboost 125PS offers 97g/km and 51.4mpg.

In diesel guise, the Focus still offers a sporty yet comfortable ride

The diesel model's running costs are lower, too. According to data from KeeResources, over four years/80,000 miles, the 1.5 TDCi, which has a P11D price of £23,490, will cost 34.5ppm to operate, compared with the petrol model's (P11D price £23,060) 35.3ppm.

We were fortunate enough to run a 1.0T Ecoboost 125PS petrol Focus as a long-term test car for six months last year, and it was a really impressive package: fully living up to being named best lower medium car in the 2019 Fleet News Awards.

The diesel offers the same qualities of the petrol: sharp handling, a sporty yet comfortable ride, and impressive build quality and practicality.

However, its powertrain is more responsive, making it more relaxing to drive. This, coupled with the lower running and fuel costs, makes the diesel a better all-round choice for higher-mileage drivers.

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PLUS: FTA REBRAND INTENDED TO GIVE 'BIGGER IMPACT' WITH GOVERNMENT • FTA COMPLIANCE ADVICE

Rebrand will give FTA 'bigger impact' with Government

Change to Logistics UK due in June, but challenges facing the association remain constant

By Stephen Briers

Freight Transport Association (FTA) or Logistics UK? Fleet reaction to the impending change of name – effective from June – has been mixed, but the organisation feels Logistics UK gives it more clout when discussing policy with national and local government.

Elizabeth de Jong, FTA policy director, explains: "The fact we represent the whole of logistics gives us much greater trust within Government and we now have committees in all areas of logistics to help develop policy. Government is also moving in a more multi-modal way, so we will have a bigger impact."

A former head of contract management for rail at the Department for Transport and policy director at Rail Delivery Group, de Jong has been at FTA for a little less than three years. Her role expanded this year to encompass European and global policy, after deputy chief executive James Hookham took a step back from day-to-day operations.

Europe, for obvious reasons, has taken the lion's share of her time. UK-EU relations, with or without an agreement, Irish border controls and new trading arrangements remain firmly in the spotlight.

Just a week before our interview, the Government conceded that, contrary to its original assertion, the cross-border movement of goods would not be "frictionless". Instead, business needed to prepare for an operational border at the end of the year with a seamless process not likely until 2025 when new IT systems will be in place.

"So, now we are looking at areas where simplifications will help the process," says de Jong.

FTA policy is divided into permanent 'themes', including safety, new transport modes and the environment. Skills and employment is another long-running topic, which this year is focused on persuading Government to turn the Apprenticeship Levy into a Skills Levy.

"As an industry, we claim back very little of the levy," says de Jong. "A skills levy would allow previously unused funds to be utilised for flexible training programmes. The Government is promising a review."

NAME: **Freight Transport Association (to be renamed Logistics UK from June)**
MEMBERSHIP: **logistics companies in road, rail, air, water**
POLICY DIRECTOR: **Elizabeth de Jong**
TIME IN ROLE: **Two years, eight months**
POLICY SUCCESSES: **70 in past year**
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP: **18,026**
VAN EXCELLENCE: **91 members**

Now responsible for European policy, Elizabeth de Jong is also more involved in van policy

At any one time, FTA is also working on specific campaigns; for example, a key lobbying point in vans is the need for investment in the right charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.

Policy wins are tracked – in terms of things that have or haven't happened as a result of FTA intervention – with 70 successes claimed over the past year. It's one way to show results to the members.

Van membership has undergone a big structural change over the past six months. A reshuffle was caused by the departure of the man widely credited with the creation of Van Excellence, Mark Cartwright (he's now at Highways England), as the van operation was brought under the association umbrella.

"We now run it like we run our other divisions; previously it was more standalone," says de Jong.

She adds: "Van Excellence is really important to us. Fleets won't see any obvious changes, but it will now be more closely wrapped up with our FTA experts."

VAN POLICY GROUP

The Van Excellence governance group remains, but FTA has introduced a Van Policy Group, with more than 30 fleets. It has met three times so far to discuss key issues facing van operators – topics included van security, ultra-light logistics, ultra-low emission vehicles and electrification of commercial vehicles – which will help FTA develop its position and create policy at local, national and European levels.

"This wasn't happening before, but now we will be able to better represent the van sector with Government," de Jong says. "With a 59% increase in vans on the road since 2000, we needed to give this sector more focus."

Government understanding of van operators is patchy and overly reliant on outdated data and research, in some cases at least a decade old, according to de Jong. The common belief is that around half of vans in London are service vans rather than delivery, yet most Government thinking is biased towards the distribution of goods.

"We need to have a better understanding of the role of vans to enable the Government to make decisions on access to urban areas," says de Jong. "There is talk of doing some van research, but it's not happened yet. We might see it as part of the Future of Freight Strategy."

Too frequently, the value attributed by Government to freight for economic appraisals and business cases is based on drivers' time, mirroring its approach when evaluating passenger movements.

"It needs to better understand the value of the goods and the value to the economy of enabling business to take place," de Jong says.

This includes recognising that "big can be good", a reference to the efficiency and traffic flow advantages offered by well-utilised trucks. A favourite FTA graph shows that a lorry can accommodate 10,000kg, a van 1,000kg and an e-cargo bike 100kg. One lorry, therefore, carries the same as 100 bikes, but takes up far less road space.

"We are starting to make headway in a lot of areas. The understanding of local authorities has vastly improved," de Jong says.

"But we also understand that there is a legal imperative to meet environmental targets. What we're saying is, it can't just be about banning things."

FTA has been pressing Government for greater clarity about the clean air zones (CAZs). It is calling for the creation of a single payment system for all the zones but doesn't expect one to be delivered for some time, "at least until after the first few zones go live", de Jong says.

She believes more could be done to manage congestion, such as traffic light sequencing and retiming deliveries to quieter periods. Figures show a vehicle which stops three times in a mile uses three times as much fuel and emits three times the level of carbon compared with one that doesn't stop.

"We would also like to see periods of grace for companies that work within CAZs so they have time to change their vehicles," says de Jong.

"Asset replacement life is an issue for the industry and can shatter the business case if you have to replace vehicles sooner than budgeted. We are an industry that operates with 2% margins so that makes the investment case hard."

MULTI-MODAL LANDSCAPE

Alternatives to the van are continually reviewed, as technology enables the development of new ways of moving goods about, and FTA's new Van Policy Group also feeds into this changing multi-modal landscape.

"The session on ultra-light logistics, such as drones, e-cargo bikes and scooters, will help us to represent all the modes as they change," de Jong says. "Businesses have to use the right mode for the right journey.

"Regulation could be needed – it's about legality and safe use. It's an area that appeals to ministers, but our view is that, while modes such as drones and scooters have a role, they will always be niche and aren't the silver bullet politicians seek.

"Enabling urban deliveries to be made at differing times, including overnight, could be more effective and environmentally-friendly."

FTA van membership has been growing, helping to fuel a 25% rise in total membership over the past five years to 18,026, but Van Excellence certification has stalled. Ninety-one fleets are accredited, down from 120 two years ago.

"We have aspirations to grow the scheme and we expect growth. But what that level should be is open to debate – it sets a standard and should be tough to meet," de Jong says. "There's also a lot we do through briefings and webinars to improve compliance in the industry."

The noise from Government about extending O-licence regulations to 3.5-tonne vehicles has gone quiet, although the recent EU Mobility Package recommended tachographs for vans over 2.5-tonnes that operate cross-border services.

"Greater regulation will always be looked at by Government, but it doesn't dominate our conversations with them, beyond CAZ," says de Jong. "Any regulation needs to be for the best of reasons. Our members' views are that any regulation needs to be proportional and result in a level playing field."

> "WE HAVE ASPIRATIONS TO GROW THE (VAN EXCELLENCE) SCHEME AND WE EXPECT GROWTH. BUT WHAT THAT LEVEL SHOULD BE IS OPEN TO DEBATE"
>
> **ELIZABETH DE JONG, FTA**

FTA ADVICE

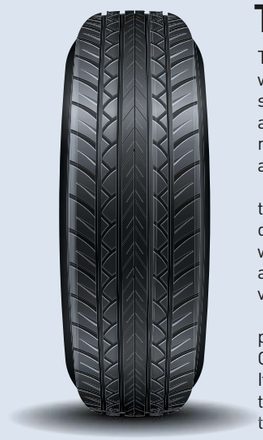
By Ray Marshall, senior transport advisor, FTA

Q If a holder of a Cat C licence has not renewed because they did not take a medical, will they be able to retain the entitlement if they subsequently take and satisfy the requirements of a medical or will they have to "start again" i.e. pass another test?

A The driver retains their entitlement and this will lay dormant until a medical has been undertaken. They would, therefore, require a medical before the entitlement was reinstated. The medical can be applied for using DVLA form D4 (Medical examination report for a group 2 lorry or bus driving licence) and DVLA form D2 (How to fill in your application for a lorry, bus or minibus driving licence).

Q We operate a small fleet. Recently one of our vehicles was stopped by DVSA at a roadside checkpoint and a prohibition was issued for a cut in the tyre. We replaced the tyre immediately and had the prohibition cleared. The driver said a probe was used by the vehicle examiner when checking the tyre – is this allowed?

A Where the examiner finds a tyre with a deep cut, they are permitted to use a probe to see if any cords are exposed or damaged. If the examiner finds exposed or damaged cords this could attract a prohibition at the roadside. Where there are small cuts and the cords are not exposed or damaged, the Categorisation of Vehicle Defects states: "Cuts which are deep enough to reach the cords or ply but are less than 25mm or 10% of the section width, whichever is greater, and have not damaged or exposed the cords or ply do not breach the legal requirements for tyres."



Tyres – the point of contact

Tyres are the point of contact for a vehicle with the road surface. They are the safety-critical component which must always be in good condition. This includes monitoring tyre pressures, tread depth and overall condition for damage.

The vehicle operator is responsible for the condition of the tyres. If this is not the driver, they will also have responsibility with regard to ensuring the tyres are in a serviceable condition when using the vehicle on the public highway.

Tyres are subject to extensive European and international regulations. Compliance is certified at type approval. It is illegal to sell tyres in the EU without the required type approval marking on the sidewall ('E-mark'). UK Construction and Use Regulation 27 lays down the requirements for the condition and maintenance of tyres.

All tyres must meet the manufacturer's spec; this will include size, speed, load index and ply rating.

Tyres must also be chosen with regard to the axles they are going to be fitted to, i.e. steer or drive axle, and the operation the vehicle is to be used for.

Vehicles/trailers with a design gross vehicle weight (GVW) exceeding 3.5 tonnes must have a minimum tread depth of 1mm excluding any tie bar or wear indicator and form a continuous band covering at least any 3/4 of the breadth of the tread around the entire circumference. The base of any groove of the original tread pattern must be clearly visible. Vehicles/trailers with a design GVW of 3,500kg or less must have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm excluding any tie bar or wear indicator, and form a continuous band covering the central 3/4 of the breadth of the tread around the entire circumference.

Tyres should always be looked after, never taken for granted and the correct tyres fitted regarding the type of operation and usage. This will pay dividends long-term for fuel economy, the environment and operating costs. With commercial vehicle technology including tyre pressure monitoring systems (TPMS) moving forward, this will also assist operators.

The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 – Regulation 26, Mixing of Tyres

The tyres you'll typically find fitted to your vehicle are made up of many plies – layers – from rubber and cords of polyester, steel, or other textile materials. When these plies are fused, they give tyres the strength and resilience they need to support your vehicle, keeping you safe on the road.

Cross-ply tyres are diagonally overlapped along the length of the tyre crown – the top surface of a tyre – down to the tyre sidewall (its side).

With radial-ply tyres, instead of forming an interlocking crown and sidewall, the plies are arranged radially – in other words, in the direction of travel.

Cross-ply and radial-ply each offer drivers different benefits, dependent on which vehicle they're fitted to and the anticipated stresses from speed and weight loads they're likely to experience.

This is the reason why you must not mix the two tyre types. If you do, your vehicle won't have a single, unified stress tolerance across all four tyres, and this means you're at risk of incurring tyre damage and experiencing a blowout.

Alongside are the regulations covering this area:

[1] Save as provided in paragraph [5] pneumatic tyres of different types of structure shall not be fitted to the same axle of a wheeled vehicle.

[2] Save as provided in paragraphs [3] or [5], a wheeled motor vehicle having only two axles, each of which is equipped with one or two wheels, shall not be fitted with – ***(a)*** *a diagonal-ply tyre or a bias-belted tyre on its rear axle if a radial-ply tyre is fitted on its front axle; or* ***(b)*** *a diagonal-ply tyre on its rear axle if a bias-belted tyre is fitted on the front axle.*

[3] Paragraph [2] does not apply to a vehicle to an axle of which there are fitted wide tyres not specially constructed for use on engineering plant or to a vehicle which has a maximum speed not exceeding 30mph.

[4] Save as provided in paragraph [5] pneumatic tyres fitted to – ***(a)*** *the steerable axles of a wheeled vehicle; or* ***(b)*** *the driven axles of a wheeled vehicle, not being steerable axles* – shall all be of the same type of structure.

[5] Paragraphs [1], [2] and [4] do not prohibit the fitting of a temporary use spare tyre to a wheel of a passenger vehicle (not being a bus) unless it is driven at a speed exceeding 50 mph.

[6] In this regulation -

- "axles" includes – ***(i)*** *two or more stub axles which are fitted on opposite sides of the longitudinal axis of the vehicle so as to form pairs and* ***(ii)*** *a single stub axle which is not one of a pair;*
- "a bias-belted tyre" means a pneumatic tyre, where the ply cords extend to the bead so as to be laid at alternate angles of substantially less than 90 degrees to the peripheral line of the tread, and are constrained by a circumferential belt comprising two or more layers of substantially inextensible cord material laid at alternate angles smaller than those of the ply cord structure;
- "a diagonal-ply tyre" as above, but not being a bias-belted tyre;
- "a radial-ply tyre" means a pneumatic tyre where the ply cord structure is stabilised by a substantially inextensible circumferential belt;
- "stub axle" on which only one wheel is mounted.

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Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO_2 emissions (g/km). New Vivaro range: Urban: 44.1 (6.4) – 56.5 (5.0), Extra-urban: 54.3 (5.2) – 61.4 (4.6), Combined: 50.4 (5.6) – 60.1 (4.7). CO_2 emissions: 125 – 152g/km.#

Model shown New Vivaro Sportive L1 Panel Van in Amber Red (no-cost option). #Fuel consumption data and CO_2 emission data are determined using the WLTP test cycle, and the relevant values are translated back to allow the comparability into NEDC. The values do not take into account in particular use and driving conditions, equipment or options and may vary depending on the format of tyres. For more information contact your local Retailer.

SOLVING THE DRIVER SHORTAGE CRISIS

Ageing workforce may be further reduced by HMRC's crackdown on the status of self-employed drivers in upcoming tax year. *Matt de Prez* reports

A "perfect storm" is brewing that could elevate the heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver shortage to unprecedented levels if fleets, businesses and the Government fail to take action.

Companies face higher costs, delayed deliveries and static vehicles, as a combination of factors threatens to impact the industry at its core.

The latest estimation of the HGV driver shortage by the Freight Transport Association (FTA) is that it has climbed to 59,000, with 64% of transport and storage businesses facing severe skills shortages.

It is now feared that the driver shortage could skyrocket to 150,000, in the worst case. This figure was presented by industry representatives to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Road Freight and Logistics in 2019, as part of a campaign to kick-start Government assistance on the issue.

Sally Gilson, FTA head of skills campaigns, says: "The combination of an ageing workforce, low unemployment, declining EU net migration and difficulties attracting new candidates to the sector has created the perfect storm of driver shortages.

"The UK economy cannot operate without HGV drivers; they are an integral part of the logistics workforce and a vital cog in the UK's interconnected supply chain. Without them, businesses would simply come grinding to a halt and Britain would find it very hard to keep trading."

According to the FTA's Logistics Skills Report, 60% of HGV drivers are over the age of 44 and only 19% are under the age of 35. The number of HGV drivers is down 16,000 or 5% year-on-year.

James Clifford, CEO of Specialised Training Services, says: "With a chronic HGV driver shortage, there are continual mass job vacancies. This leads to drivers having zero loyalty to the companies they work for as there is always another job offer close by – and let's be honest, the grass always seems greener.

"Consequently, drivers will often leave to work for another company for (an extra) 20p per hour, seemingly better shift patterns or simply for a change of scene. In that sort of cut-throat atmosphere, recruitment agencies experience the unmanageable task of trying to provide the necessary number of drivers to their clients at the right times while juggling some of the highest drop rates in any industry as drivers find pastures new."

With such a high level of staff turnover and the low margin business model that hauliers are currently operating, companies are not able to invest in their staff.

IR35: THE END OF SELF-EMPLOYED DRIVERS?

New legislation could force more drivers away from the industry this April, as self-employed drivers may have to join company payrolls. IR35 has been designed by HMRC to ensure companies are paying employee taxes and not avoiding doing so by using self-employed contractors.

Companies with more than 50 employees and an annual turnover in excess of £10.2 million will be required by HMRC to assess the employment status of any contractor they use.

The changes could drive up the cost of labour by 25% to maintain driver pay rates, according to Kieran Smith, CEO of driver recruitment agency Driver Require.

Operators can be proactive and seek to build their own pool of drivers by attracting and training new recruits

8 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

1. Widen the recruitment pool by attracting more women, the young and those from ethnic backgrounds.
2. Improve facilities, including truck stops with toilets.
3. Offer better salary packages, or at least pay above the average. Difficult in a low margin business, but could be cheaper than constantly recruiting and training new staff.
4. Better working conditions – look at shift patterns and delivery schedules to improve the work/life balance.
5. Professional image. Promote your company and the job in local schools, career services and the media.
6. Back the FTA campaign to turn the apprenticeship levy into a training levy to ensure upskilling
7. Introduce a loan scheme to fund HGV driver training
8. Wait for fully autonomous trucks. A little flippant, but would change the role from driver to customer service.

Currently, businesses can save on labour costs by hiring drivers through agencies rather than employing them direct.

"This hike in costs means employers who have outsourced their standard operations to agencies will reconsider their agency policy and, most likely, bring their 'standard operations' labour needs back in-house – reducing the agency workforce to just what's needed to cover variability," says Smith.

Agency charges could rise by 20% if driver pay is to be maintained. Smith warns that drivers will leave *en masse* if businesses refuse to accept the increased costs.

"You need to have hard discussions about where this cost is going to be absorbed. There is not a lot of wiggle room with the agency. If you try to force the drivers' pay down, they will leave," he says.

BREXIT, EUROPE AND IMMIGRATION

Drivers from continental Europe have become increasingly important to vehicle logistics accounting for almost 344,000 (13.2%) of the near 2.2m employed in the sector.

These foreign workers have helped to fill the shortfall of British drivers entering the UK driver pool and many work in the agency sector.

Mick Skerrett, national driver development manager at Manpower UK, says: "The driving shortage is nothing new. It's existed for many years and created a situation where the UK has often looked abroad to import the workers they need. With around 13% of the HGV workforce of EU origin, the shortage is likely to worsen further as a result of immigration policy changes."

From January 1, 2021, the UK's participation with free movement across the EU will end and the UK will introduce a points-based system.

All applicants, both EU and non-EU citizens, will need to demonstrate they have a job offer from an approved sponsor, that the offer is at the required skill level and that they speak English. There is also a minimum salary requirement of £23,040.

The Road Haulage Association (RHA) is concerned the new proposals do not take account of the need for labour in the haulage sector.

"Many UK operators are totally reliant on European drivers. Putting a stop to the immigrant workforce will have a massive impact on the supply chain, and the next-day deliveries we have all come to expect will be a thing of the past," says RHA chief executive Richard Burnett.

"Profit margins are so low, between 1-2%, that employers simply cannot afford to train new drivers," he continues.

"For years we have been talking to the Home Office about getting the HGV driver skills shortage added to the UK Shortage Occupation list that includes all of the occupations that currently have a skills deficit."

20%
could be the increase in agency charges if drivers are to maintain income levels

While European drivers already living and working in the UK will be able to stay, the UK haulage industry is in competition with Europe where the driver shortage is even larger.

Germany and Benelux countries are offering increasingly attractive pay for agency HGV drivers, which could attract large numbers of UK-based drivers to move to the continent.

"Brexit is just making this scenario all the more likely by weakening the pound-euro exchange rate and by fuelling xenophobia – making our foreign workers feel increasingly unwelcome in our country," Smith says.

FUNDING NEW TALENT

Operators can be proactive and seek to build their own pool of drivers by attracting and training new recruits.

Hermes UK launched its Road to Logistics scheme last year, to enable unemployed and young workers to gain the possibility of full-time employment in the logistics sector.

Funded through the company's apprenticeship levy, Hermes plans to recruit a number of LGV apprentices who currently have no driving experience, supporting them to achieve their Cat C and Cat C&E license.

"We need to start investing in our workforce. The situation won't improve overnight. I'm confident our investment will return us a pool of new drivers," says Martin Colloff, Hermes UK head of client and network distribution.

"As well as growing our own resource pipeline, we expect to see reduced vehicle damage and improved mpg, but also better customer service, loyalty and flexibility.

"It's about attitudes and behaviours. We want these guys to be ambassadors for our business. We want them to give a great customer experience and represent us when out on the road," he adds.

Specialist cargo firm CTS has launched a similar initiative to develop drivers suited to its needs.

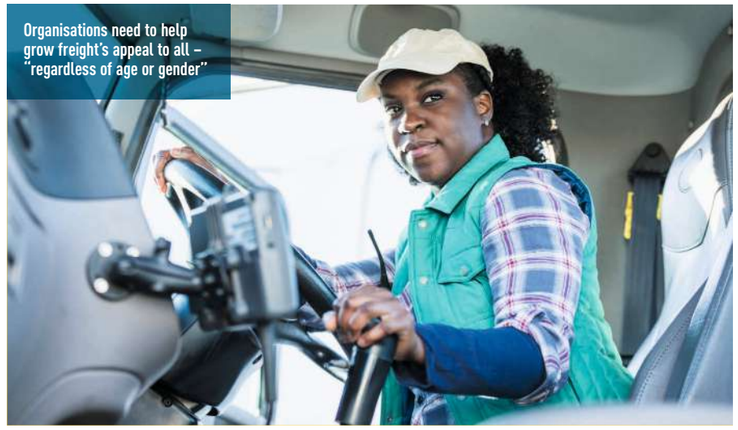
Trainees can become a Class 1 HGV driver in just 18 months with a mixture of classroom-based theory and on-the-job driving experience.

Nick Collins, CTS founder and managing director, says the company is "committed" to bringing younger drivers into the profession: "Our 'grow your own' initiative helps to train HGV drivers to the highest standard, so they are suitable for the specialist work CTS undertakes."

It's not just younger people that can be trained to drive HGVs. The Government has recently pledged £1m to support Road to Logistics – a not-for-profit scheme founded by the RHA and

Microlise. The scheme targets ex-offenders, the long-term unemployed and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Following a successful trial with HM Prison Sudbury and other prisons across the UK, Road to Logistics aims to train up to 300 drivers in the first year. The scheme will link potential drivers with employers, mentor them and put them through the necessary training including taking their HGV driving test



Organisations need to help grow freight's appeal to all – "regardless of age or gender"

IMPROVING REPUTATION

The industry has been short-sighted in the past 20 years and needs to change the way it recruits, hires and retrains staff, according to Skerrett.

"Businesses need to increase their appeal to new groups of workers in the UK, younger generations and more diverse gender pools by offering them more upskilling opportunities and a chance to build a fulfilling career in driving," he says.

Manpower's research shows that millennials and Gen Z's are hungry for skills development and flexibility and it believes a career in driving and logistics is a great opportunity to gain both.

"Showing tangible examples of how careers can progress in the driving and logistics sector is crucial to amplifying its appeal to new generations," adds Skerrett.

He says it also highlights the potential higher salaries that can be accessible later in the career ladder.

Manpower has partnered with Think Logistics for the past five years, and Skerrett is vice chair of its joint strategic board with partner Career Ready.

"Our work with Think Logistics stands out in improving social mobility for young people through skills development programmes across the logistics sector. We're showcasing the many opportunities available to young people in driving, so they can plan, and achieve, career progression within the sector. Across the industry, I would encourage organisations to highlight opportunities to help the industry grow in appeal to all regardless of age or gender, to plug the talent gap," Skerrett says.

Commenting on why the industry is struggling to attract new recruits, Kate Lester, CEO of Diamond Logistics, says: "Drivers are unfairly viewed as the pariahs of society and that needs to change. Our drivers are our ambassadors, they are an indispensable resource in our industry, an industry that is the lifeblood of the country. Government should be championing their contribution so that the wider public understand how vital they are and show them the respect that they deserve."

THE LAST WORD

RICHARD LILWALL

MD AND VICE-PRESIDENT, EUROPE, TELETRAC NAVMAN

Lilwall has been in transport his entire working life. He set up his own fleet company at 21 and is now MD of one of the UK's leading telematics and stolen vehicle tracking providers, Teletrac Navman

The advice I would give my 18-year-old self is to take more enjoyment in the journey and stop thinking so much about the destination. In my younger days, I was extremely focused and worked hard, maybe a little too hard, on where I was trying to get to. But was I getting enjoyment from the experience? I'm not sure I was.

A song for my driving playlist? *Baba O'Riley,* by The Who. It reminds me of my first half marathon. I vividly remember when that track came on. It was at that moment I thought I'm actually going to get around this course and it's stuck ever since.

My first memory associated with a car was when I passed my test at 17. I got a bit over-excited going round a roundabout and lost control – not a mistake I've made again.

My favourite movie quote is "life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it", from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off.*

My pet hate has got to be those absurd, staged photos people post online.

If money were no object... I'd get my children to experience the world and see other cultures, having travelled to Japan with my family for the Rugby World Cup.

The book I would you recommend others read is *Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. Having read it three times I just think it's a fantastically written, clever book.

Hobbies and interests? My life revolves around rugby – whether that's watching my kids play or going to watch competitions. In the past, I've enjoyed running, including half-marathons and a full marathon, but since I've become MD, I've definitely not managed to put my trainers on as much as I'd have liked.

If I were transport minister for the day I'd do more to accelerate electric vehicle technology in the UK.

How did you get to where you are now?
When I started my own fleet company at the age of 21 the sector it was in was largely unknown, making it an exciting and high growth area. After running it for 10 years, I sold it to Teletrac Navman, joined the business and worked my way through a variety of roles – from sales management to managing our stolen vehicle function, and finally moving into my current role as MD to head up the whole UK business.

What are your latest products/developments/achievements?
We've got some exceptional innovation, through the development of new technology solutions, coming down the track. Our capabilities and our value to customers is about to take a real step change and we're going to lead in many areas.

Sum up Teletrac Navman in three words?
Kaizen (our global operating model), colleagues and customers who are at the heart of everything we do, from our products to our processes.

What or who has been your biggest career influence?
Having children inspires me to work hard. But in terms of work, my predecessor Stuart (Berman) showed me how to think about steering the ship, rather than just being a passenger.

Best piece of advice given?
It's easy to allow work to consume your life, so getting your priorities right is key.

What makes a good MD?
Being customer-orientated is vital. You must drive customer experience to be the best.

What else would you do if you weren't in the fleet industry?
Something technology focused, as I think it's capable of improving peoples' lives enormously.

Next issue: Eamonn Tierney, managing director, Wex Europe Services

FEELS LIKE KNOWING IT'S 100% ELECTRIC. 0% BIK.*

SEARCH MINI ELECTRIC HUB

*from April 2020