

A SPECIAL REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY **FleetNews**

HOLMAN – REDUCING VEHICLE DOWNTIME WITH PROACTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND A WORLDWIDE NETWORK

In association with

Holman



The schedule of a modern fleet is very finely tuned. So, any delay or interruption can be a significant cause for concern. A single vehicle off-road (VOR) has the potential to have critical implications. From the moment that vehicle is declared VOR until its return to operations, a driver is at risk of being unable to carry out their tasks, with a negative impact on the fleet and customer(s) alike. Minimising vehicle downtime is, therefore, a sector-wide priority.

Responding to this challenge, fleet management and funding company, Holman, has achieved a significant reduction in vehicle downtime with a record low of 2.24 days in August 2024 and an average VOR time of 2.63 days in the past year – establishing a new benchmark in fleet uptime.

Holman's UK head of operations, Dominic Hutchinson, spoke to *Fleet News* about how the brand has achieved this record, and what his company's achievements mean for modern fleets.

SIGNIFICANCE OF VEHICLE DOWNTIME

Hutchinson sees the importance of vehicle downtime as simple, but crucial, in terms of its impact on his fleet customers.

"Ultimately, it comes down to the utilisation of the fleet," he explained. "We have a lot of customers with really bespoke needs."

He quoted examples of fleets that require specialised vehicles such as an ambulance or hears. "You can't just give them a courtesy car and say 'go about your business'. It's just not viable."

Through its work to reduce vehicle downtime, Holman is demonstrating its capabilities as a provider that responds to the priorities of its customers – a familiar and proven approach when one considers the brand's history.

A TRUSTED BRAND

Founded in 1924, Holman has been helping fleets for more than 100 years across the globe. Hutchinson explained the brand's reach, and the importance of its long-standing family leadership.

"Fundamentally, Holman is still a family-run business," he said. "Our Chair is Mindy Holman, and we are a US-owned company. We also have large operations in Canada, Mexico and Germany."

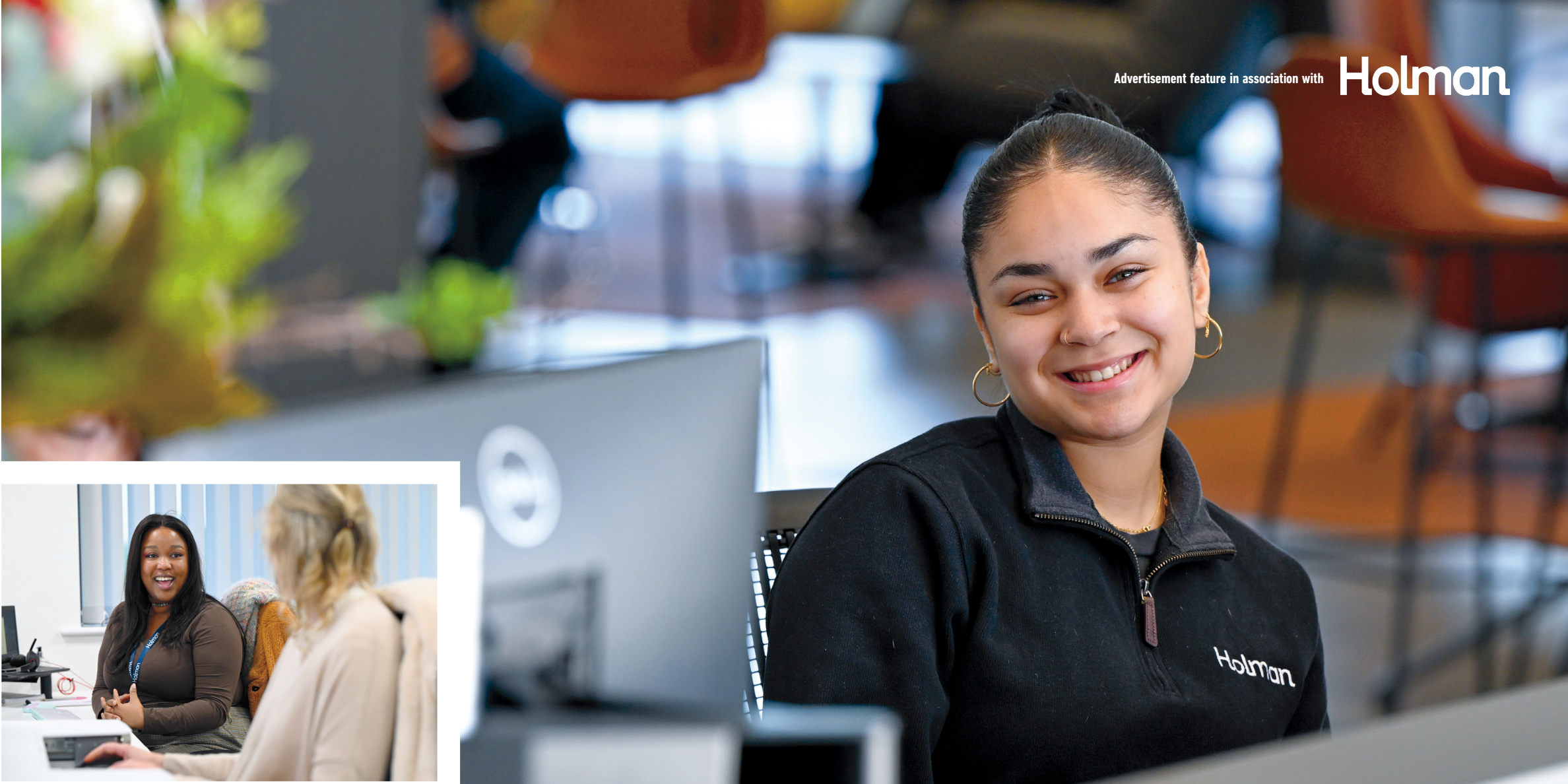
Holman approaches fleets with a Buy-Drive-Service-Sell offering – providing assistance across the entire lifecycle of its vehicles. But Hutchinson was quick to point out that the organisation does not have a 'one size fits all' strategy.

"We have robust processes, but it's all about knowing and having a relationship with the customer," he added.

Instead, Holman embraces a customer-focused approach that prioritises clear communication and understanding each customer's needs.

"Our teams really want to understand what is important to a customer," said Hutchinson. "They work with them to learn what their key drivers are. We see times where having vehicle availability is the number one priority, not the cost. At other times, the priority might be compliance – at any cost."

Flexibility was listed by Hutchinson as a key element of Holman's strategy, and a real strength when working with fleets.



He said: "We focus on continuing to be agile enough to be able to react to different customer needs. Our customers have customers, and understanding the demands of all parties is the important piece for us. It's about knowing those demands, not just assuming what's important, asking the question."

This flexibility is only possible thanks to the level of expertise that is present across Holman's operations. Hutchinson explained that members of the downtime control team collectively have more than 100 years of technical experience. They work more as problem solvers than downtime controllers – able to engage with customers through transparent conversations that foster real trust and unique relationships.

"All team members actively engage on a daily basis with customer fleet teams, offering solutions. Often we're in this scenario... there are these solutions and maybe two or three different options will be on the table. Normally, we understand that you'd want to do this, but in this scenario, if you did this, this would be the best outcome – that's the important bit."

This approach, with clear and transparent conversations, empowers Holman's fleet customers and allows them to make informed decisions about their VOR experience with repair options that balance cost and speed.

Once a decision is made, fleets can rely on Holman for a range of repairs – with straightforward ones expedited by its dedicated downtime controllers, and a specialised team is on hand to resolve any complex issues.

The company's tiered downtime management approach ensures rapid response and escalation for complex vehicle repairs, maximising efficiency and minimising disruption for customers.

NETWORKING FOR SUCCESS

When working to get a vehicle back on the road, it is crucial to have the right parts available. This can be a complicated enough issue when repairing a new or widely available vehicle, but becomes an increasingly difficult prospect when working with older or more specialised models in critical and time-sensitive VOR moments.

"Parts supply has always been a bit of a challenge," confirmed Hutchinson. "Some fleets have vehicles up to 20 years old that we've got to look after."

To address this issue, Holman has established a network of 2,000 suppliers; creating connections to ensure that parts can be obtained from all over the globe where necessary.

"We source parts from Australia; we've worked with OEMs to get parts shipped from the US; we've sourced sensors from Lithuania; and we'll work with different parts suppliers who are holding stock."

This supplier network allows the Holman team to source parts for vehicle models that do not originate in the UK.

"We're happy to import something from a different country to make sure we get a vehicle back on the road for our customer," explained Hutchinson. "That's



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DOMINIC HUTCHINSON**





really the crux; trying to consider what you would do if it was your vehicle. We are all aware that if it was your vehicle off the road, you'd be scouring to find the exact part you need."

Holman's multinational status also allows its various teams to take advantage of any relevant innovations or learnings that occur within any arm of the organisation.

Hutchinson said: "There's a dedicated team based in the US that is constantly focused on innovation, and we all share best practices and common systems. There's consistent investment into how we operate and work. We've got great global support."

MORE PROACTIVE

This level of support from the wider brand enables Holman's teams to look beyond the day-to-day repairs and act in a more proactive manner.

"We will buy parts if we manage to source a replacement. Then we take the old one, get it refurbished and keep it in stock – building up a specialist range."

Hutchinson noted that this level of proactivity allows Holman to prioritise its customer-focused approach as a solution provider for modern fleets.

"We're trying to proactively recognise issues that are coming along. We've got some great data-driven insights using our system as well, so we don't wait for a problem to land on a customer's doorstep. Instead, we identify it, find a solution and put that in place," he said.

Holman's methods have allowed its fleet customers to benefit from increased vehicle availability, with the brand's improvements delivering more than 240,000 extra operational hours to its customers per year and savings of more than £15.5 million.

"Ultimately, they can do the jobs that they are actually there to do," Hutchinson commented. "We're often seen as part of their operation. We understand it and, therefore, they can do what they're there to do."

The fleet sector is continually evolving, and Holman will develop its services

and areas of expertise to best provide for its customers. Hutchinson discussed how the company has already put steps in place to be well positioned to help fleet customers in their transition towards electric vehicles.

"The industry's facing probably the biggest changes since we went from the horse and cart to a Ford-launched motor vehicle. Really, this is the biggest shift we have ever seen, and we can't just stand still," he added.

Holman runs extensive and tailored training courses to ensure that its employees have the tools to best assist customers.

"We have sent everyone into a workshop to understand how an EV works, and not just technical people. We work with the industry to understand what's coming down the line then liaise with a training provider to build learning materials around it – then we train our staff."

In this example, Hutchinson confirmed that even Holman's contact centre staff were trained – six months ahead of any customer queries – to enable them to discuss EV problems and other industry issues.

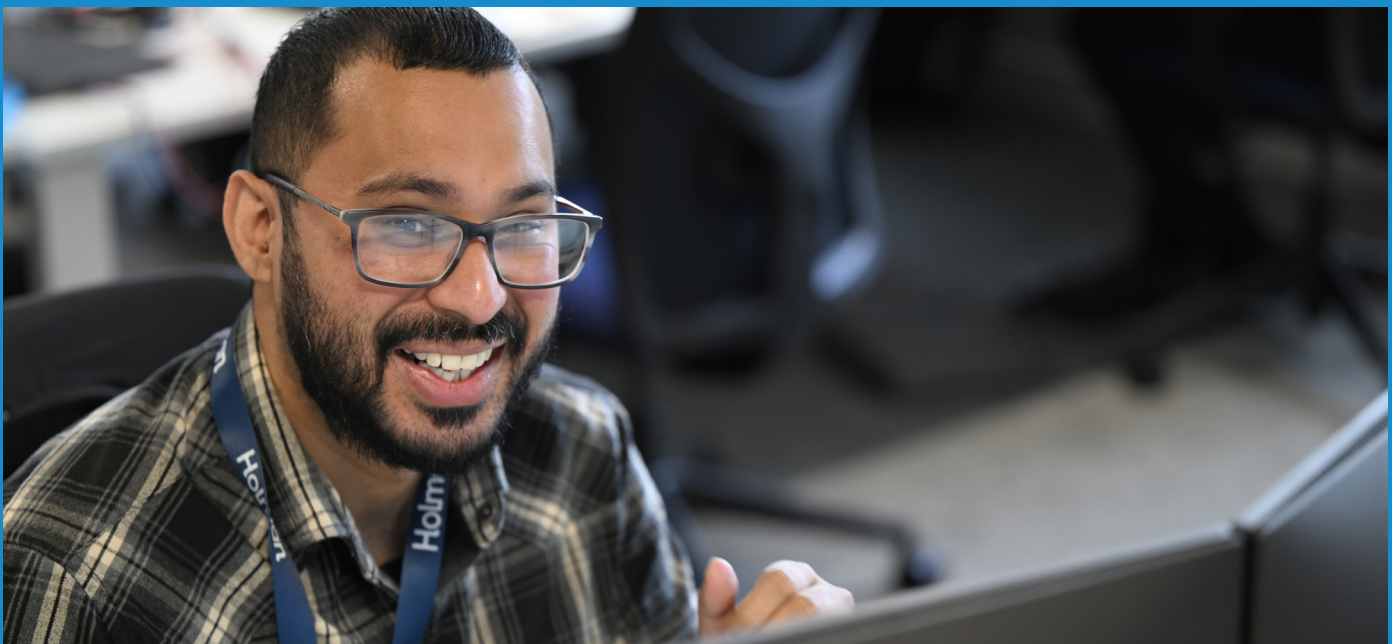
ELECTRIC GUIDANCE

Putting its EV expertise into action, Holman has significantly assisted its fleet customers in their electric journeys.

Across its customers, the brand has facilitated a 45% increase in electric cars and a 500% rise in electric vans across its managed fleets.

The brand assesses fleet readiness for EVs and guides its customers on selecting electric alternatives and installing charging infrastructure. All of Holman's technical teams are EV-certified and can advise or help across an EV's lifecycle.

Holman's commitment to its customers is on full display through its work to reduce their vehicle downtime. The brand utilises a winning combination of worldwide networking, expert facilitation, and the expertise of its teams – thereby fulfilling the needs of each fleet customer and maintaining its long-running position as a trusted solution provider for the entire sector.



CASE STUDY: MWH Treatment

The business of any fleet can only be performed if it has vehicles on the road. While problems with vehicles are to be expected and can sometimes require a vehicle to spend time off-road, a fleet's productivity and finances can be severely impacted by extended vehicle off-road (VOR) instances.

With 550 cars and 150 LCVs in daily use, water infrastructure provider MWH Treatment requires low VOR times to remain productive and deliver its services effectively.

"If we've got a vehicle out of service, our jobs can't continue. It means a big delay and impacts the delivery of the task," explains MWH's fleet & employee benefits manager, Leah Lindsay. "It may seem surprising, but one day of a vehicle being off-road can cost us anything between £400 and £500 in downtime."

From 2018, MWH Treatment has worked with Holman as its vehicle maintenance provider. Since taking on Holman's services, MWH's average VOR time has been reduced from 4.7 to 0.9 days. Lindsay credits this to the methods Holman has introduced – combining communication and time management to great effect.

"They're really strict about sticking to timescales, providing communication between the garage, the driver and ourselves, and giving us as much information as they can at any time."

The use of data as a tool to encourage proactive problem-solving is also a practice that Holman has introduced to MWH.

"We were very reactive before, where we would have a vehicle off-road, and then it would go back on the road and then be off the road again. Holman is really good about providing us with insight, supplying us data which shows a problematic vehicle. We can identify that vehicle before we've even got to the point of it actually costing us money. We have a complete review every month with Holman, so we can see our data, it's really visible to us, and we can identify potential problems before they actually occur."

Lindsay also commented on how Holman has proved itself a constant and steady partner.

"From my point of view, I deal with probably in excess of 20 different suppliers, and I can honestly say Holman is always there. It's really hard given we have such a complex fleet."

And regarding consistency? "If you have an account manager change every six or 12 months, you've got to then rebuild that relationship. They've got to learn about your company and fleet and that can be difficult. Holman provides a very robust, consistent and professional account management service."



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MWH TREATMENT FLEET & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS MANAGER LEAH LINDSAY

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