

# “PRACTICALITY AND CHOICE OF ELECTRIC LCVs IS GROWING”

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Light commercial vehicles with an electric drivetrain make up just a small fraction of around 100,000 ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) that have been registered since the introduction of grants from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) in 2012.

The market has remained largely dominated by cars but LCVs could provide an easy win, given that many have very predictable, regular daily duty cycles on a return-to-base model.

With longer-range vehicles the practicality and choice of electric LCVs is growing as seen by the revision to Renault's Kangoo ZE which extended its range by 50% (from 106 miles to 168 miles) and the announcement of the Master ZE for urban and municipal roles.

Ford's trial with a fleet of Transits with range extenders (confusingly labelled PHEVs contra to the terminology used with cars) will also be closely watched in London later this year.

An electric LCV now costs around £15,000, excluding VAT but including the plug-in van grant and discounts, with the battery (warranted for eight years) also in the price.

Although there is still a premium over a diesel, total cost of ownership modelling reveals how much it will recoup longer-term when considering reduced service parts, energy costs and, where applicable, absence of congestion charging.

Conversations with fleet operators reveal they are concerned about restrictions that may be applied to vehicles travelling into urban areas, not just in London, but any major city with a clean air zone (CAZ) proposal.

However, the talk is less about additional levies, more about being confident of being allowed to drive into the zone at all.

A car dealer I know runs a parts delivery hub. One of its Peugeot Partner vans has been able to cover 70 miles in the morning and 50 in the afternoon. Having had success with EVs, the dealer invested in a semi-rapid DC charger (20 kW) to turn customers' vehicles around in less

than an hour. It also allowed switching to an EV delivery van by using the charger over the lunch hour, while loading it for the afternoon round.

The van covers around 28,000 miles per annum, costing £900 in electricity but saving more than £4,000 in diesel.

OLEV grants are available for domestic and workplace charging. It's often overlooked that the home grant can be claimed even for an electric LCV for a single domestic address, enabling that vehicle to be charged safely and providing a low-BIK vehicle to an employee.

Evidence suggests that the uptake of proper charging points lags behind the number of vehicles being registered, in part due to many vehicles being supplied with a so-called 'granny' cable (because it's slow) with a familiar 'three-pin' plug for domestic sockets.

There can be issues with these, such as properly earthing the vehicle and the potential to overload sub-standard wiring.

## Subsidy offered

OLEV's workplace charging scheme offers a subsidy of £300 towards each charging connection, up to a maximum of 20.

Workplaces often experience a snowball effect in the uptake of EVs and PHEVs as colleagues share their experience of the cars and the financial savings.

It's worth planning expansion of the charging provision early to ensure there are enough connections, power and spaces to meet demand.

Where companies are encouraging the use of EVs or PHEVs they should examine the opportunity to install their own renewable generation, such as a solar array on their roof, which can be scaled to meet the demand of charging their fleet – especially commuter vehicles that will generally be present throughout the peak output.

Intelligently networked charging can also allow many more vehicles to be charged without straining the supply to the building.

70

miles in a morning is the distance covered by Peugeot Partner van

£4,000

saving in diesel by van used to deliver parts