ESSENTIAL
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In the Spotlight:
United Utilities

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Essential Fleet Manager - Issue 1 (2022)

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Smart motorway rollout to be **paused** as Government responds to Transport Committee report

Current stretches of smart motorway to be further upgraded with best-in-class technology and resources

The rollout of new smart motorway schemes will be paused until a full five years' worth of safety data is available, as the Department for Transport invests £900 million to improve safety on existing All Lane Running (ALR) motorways.

In line with the Transport Committee's most recent recommendations, the rollout of new ALR smart motorways will be paused until a full five years' worth of safety data becomes available for schemes introduced before 2020. After this point, the Government will assess the data and make an informed decision on next steps.

Although available data shows smart motorways are comparatively the safest roads in the country in terms of fatality rates, while their rollout is paused, the Government will go further by ensuring current smart motorways without a permanent hard shoulder are equipped with best-in-class technology and resources to make them as safe as possible.

This will include investing £390 million to install more than 150 additional Emergency Areas so drivers have more places to stop if they get into difficulty. This will represent around a 50% increase in places to stop by 2025, giving drivers added reassurance.

The Department for Transport has welcomed the Transport Committee's report, which endorsed its focus on further upgrading the safety of existing ALR smart motorways rather than reinstating the hard shoulder. As

concluded by the Committee, evidence suggests hard shoulders do not always provide a safe place to stop, and by reducing motorway capacity, they could put more drivers and passengers at risk of death or serious injury if they were to divert onto less safe local roads.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

"One of my first actions as Transport Secretary was to order a stocktake of smart motorways and since then, I have worked consistently to raise the bar on their safety. I am grateful to the Transport Committee and to all those who provided evidence for its work.

"While our initial data shows that smart motorways are among the safest roads in the UK, it's crucial that we go further to ensure people feel safer using them.

"Pausing schemes yet to start construction and making multi-million-pound improvements to existing schemes will give drivers confidence and provide the data we need to inform our next steps. I want thank safety campaigners, including those who have lost loved ones, for rightly striving for higher standards on our roads. I share their concerns."

National Highways CEO Nick Harris said:

"We have listened to public concerns about smart motorways and we are fully committed to taking forward the additional measures the Transport Committee has recommended.

"While we pause those all lane running schemes yet to start construction we will complete the schemes currently in construction, we will make existing sections as safe as they can possibly be and we will step up our advice to drivers so they have all the information they need.

"We are doing this because safety is our absolute priority and we want drivers to not just be safer, but also to feel safe on our busiest roads."

Independent road safety campaigner, Meera Naran, whose 8-year-old son Dev, died in a motorway crash on the M6 in 2018, said:

"Conventional and smart motorways both have their risks and benefits. I welcome this pause in the rollout of smart motorways which will give us all a positive opportunity to assess the future of our motorway network.

"I'm encouraged by the commitment of £900 million to improve the safety of our motorways, following my campaigning since Dev died. However, I'll continue to both challenge and work alongside the Department for Transport to ensure even more is done, including calling for legislation to be looked at for Autonomous Emergency Braking and further support for on-going driver education."

The Government's response to the Transport Committee builds on the significant progress already made against the Department's 18-point Action Plan to improve smart motorway safety, announced in March 2020, including adding emergency areas and upgrading cameras to detect Red X offences.

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The measures in the Stocktake and Transport Committee response represent over £900m of improvements in total, including £390m of new money for extra emergency areas, with the remainder of the funding delivering other measures such as Stopped Vehicle Detection and concrete central reservation barriers.

National Highways will also ramp up communications so drivers have better information about how to drive on smart motorways.

While the Department for Transport will be taking forward all the recommendations set out in the Committee's recommendations, it does not agree with the view that smart motorways were rolled out prematurely or unsafely. All ALR smart motorway schemes are, and will continue to be, subject to high standards of design, risk assessment and construction, followed by detailed monitoring and evaluation once opened to traffic.

While further data is being collected, National Highways will continue work to complete schemes that are currently in construction, which will all open with technology in place to detect stopped vehicles. These schemes are all more than 50% completed and halting progress on them now would cause significant disruption for drivers. Design work will also continue on those schemes already being planned, so they are ready to be constructed depending on the outcome of the pause. No preparatory construction work will take place.

Also, in line with the Committee's recommendations, National Highways will pause the conversion of Dynamic Hard Shoulder (DHS) motorways – where the hard shoulder is open at busy times – into All Lane Running motorways, while it investigates alternative ways of operating them to make things simpler for drivers. National Highways will also install technology to detect stopped vehicles on these sections.

'Positive, Pragmatic Progress'

AA reaction to DfT response to Select Committee 'smart' motorway report

The AA is delighted that the Transport Secretary has accepted the original AA demand, and Select Committee recommendation, that emergency refuge areas (ERAs) should be no more than three-quarters of a mile apart wherever physically possible. Applying this to new schemes and retrofitting current schemes is a major step in the right direction.

The key concern for the AA in its decade-long campaign to improve the safety of 'smart' motorways is that is 38% of breakdowns on smart motorways occur in live lanes.

If there are not enough refuges and not accurate enough technology to warn of the dangers, then drivers become 'sitting ducks'.

The commitment to 150 new ERAs, alongside better technology, reduces that risk.

The original M42 pilot in 2006 worked quite well as refuges were only 400/500m apart but the roll-out with refuges at 2,500m apart, without decent technology, meant that lives have been put at risk.

The Select Committee produced a well-balanced report that included many of the things that the AA has called for.

The AA is also pleased that the Transport Secretary has committed to investigate the concept of an 'emergency corridor' which is a proposal the AA raised with DFT ministers in person and in a letter in November 2017.

The idea is to update the Highway Code to include the manoeuvre to help emergency services and traffic officers to access incidents when traffic is congested. In effect, traffic in the right-hand lane pulls over to the right and on the left-hand lane pulls over to the left, which leaves a corridor so that emergency services can access any incident rapidly.

The AA is also encouraging the Transport Secretary to further investigate 'controlled' motorways which have a hard shoulder and all the gantry technology but are deemed to be the safest type of motorway. The committee also called for their safety and economic case to be reviewed for future schemes.

The AA gave both written and verbal evidence to the select committee and most of the AA's recommendations are included in the report and have been accepted by the Transport Secretary.

Commenting on the Government response, Edmund King, AA president, said: *"The AA has been a major critic of 'smart' motorways in our campaign for over a decade to improve their safety. At last, we have a Transport Secretary who has made progress and taken a positive and pragmatic approach. He has today accepted many of the measures we have been calling for and our important demand that emergency refuge areas should be no more than three-quarters of a mile apart.*

"We would like further investigation, which the Transport Secretary has agreed to, of our proposal for All Lane Running schemes to revert to the hard-shoulder between 7pm-7am to avoid confusion and to offer a refuge to counter live lane collisions that happen at night.

"We are pleased our call for better evaluation of the Stopped Vehicle Detection technology has been accepted but still question why it wasn't fitted before schemes opened. The AA view remains that controlled motorways with a hard shoulder are the safest option and we are pleased that the business case for these will be examined."

King adds: *"The AA called for a new Highway Code rule in 2017 to create an emergency corridor in stationary traffic to allow emergency services access to incidents on motorways where there is no continuous hard shoulder. We are pleased that the Government has endorsed that call and we are already working with National Highways on this matter.*

"Whilst 'smart' motorways will never be perfect, we do believe that considerable progress has been made to make them safer.

"We will be holding the Government to account to ensure these actions will be implemented as soon as possible."

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Plug-in Grant changes for vans: what the industry thinks

December saw the government reduce the Plug-In Van Grant and Plug-In Car Grant

The Department for Transport confirmed funding for small vans up to 2.5 tonnes in gross vehicle weight (GVW) has now fallen to a maximum of £2,500, from the £3,000 level introduced last spring.

Meanwhile, for large vans between 2.5 tonnes and 3.5 tonnes, the amount has dropped to £5,000 from £8,000.

Each business, organisation or individual may receive up to 1,000 Plug-in Van Grants each financial year and there are no changes to grant rates for larger commercial vehicles over 3.5 tonnes.

The government said the changes will enable a more sustainable grant scheme and ensure taxpayers' money is distributed more fairly across businesses seeking to transition their vehicles to zero emission.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said: *"The government is seeking to focus the grants, which are funded by the taxpayer, on the areas where they will have the most impact and where the market still needs government support."*

However, both businesses and trade bodies have criticised the decision to cut the grants at the very time they are making a crucial environmental and economic difference.

Mike Hawes, SMMT's Chief Executive, said slashing the grants for electric vehicles once again is a blow to customers looking to make the switch and could not come at a worse time, with inflation at a ten-year high and pandemic-related economic uncertainty looming large.

"Industry and government ambition for decarbonised road transport is high, and manufacturers are delivering ever more products with ever better performance", he explained.

"But we need to move the market even faster – from one in a hundred cars on the road being electric, to potentially one in three in just eight years – which means we should be doubling down on incentives.

"Other global markets are already doing so whereas we are cutting, expecting the industry to subsidise the transition, and putting up prices for customers. UK drivers risk being left behind on the transition to zero-emission motoring."

SMMT figures show that battery electric van uptake soared by 142.3% in 2021, although this equates to a relatively modest 12,759 zero emission vans and a total market share of 3.6%. With petrol and diesel vans facing the same end of sale date as passenger cars, this shows just how far the LCV BEV market needs to grow even to replicate the shift taking place in the passenger car market where BEVs account for one in nine registrations as opposed to one in 28 in the van market.

Vauxhall believes the grant changes provide a confusing message to UK consumers and will harm EV adoption when the country needs to do everything possible to move to fully electric vehicles by 2030.

In the view of the company, further work is needed on other fiscal incentives, such as considering a reduction in VAT for electric vehicles, and also aiming support at those that financially need it to make the move to EVs.

Paul Willcox, Managing Director of Vauxhall, said: *"Whilst we understand the government's desire to phase out the plug-in vehicle grant at some point, we really need to see a more strategic, longer-term approach.*

"A lack of clarity and certainty for customers can only harm EV adoption and leave the UK lagging behind other countries in the race to decarbonise personal transport.

"Whilst electric vehicle adoption is growing rapidly at the moment, EVs still represent a small percentage of the overall UK vehicle parc."

Online leasing business Vanarama believes the grant cuts could stifle the huge demand for electric vans it is expecting in the next 12 months.

Towards the end of 2021 the company announced that its EV sales had risen by more than 1,000% in 2021.

Andy Alderson, Vanarama founder and CEO, said the move by the government will damage consumer confidence and hit the automotive industry hard just as it is showing signs of recovery from the pandemic.

He said: *"The government announcement came as a complete shock to the industry and has the potential to do enormous damage both economically and environmentally.*

"We all knew grants couldn't continue forever but to slash them so savagely and with immediate effect just as the industry prepares to hit the EV tipping point in 2022 doesn't seem sensible at all.

"We had no warning and no time to prepare. This move is ill-timed at best"

According to van hire specialist Northgate, the Plug-in Van Grant funding should have been retained at its current level on the basis that electric vehicle adoption for van operators remains behind car fleets.

The company describes the grant reduction for 2.5 tonne GVW vans or less and vans between 2-3.5 tonnes GVW of 35% of their purchase price to a maximum of £3,000 and £5,000 respectively as a possible "deal breaker".

It also says barriers for companies that are looking at moving some or all of their fleet to electric could keep the van sector behind the EV adoption curve for longer.

Neil McCrossan, Northgate Vehicle Hire's Sales and Marketing Director, said: *"We are increasingly spending more time woking with companies to evaluate how electric vehicles fit into their current fleet mix.*

"There is a growing interest from companies in reducing their fleet emissions and working towards Net Zero, particularly on vans which work primarily in an urban environment.

"With this momentum building it's disappointing the grants have been reduced."

For the move towards electric vans to increase further, more incentives and support are vital, and the message coming from the industry is that now is not the time to reduce or remove them.

Source: www.smmt.co.uk

Know the rules or pay the price

Latest research from a leading rental organisation highlights a worrying lack of awareness of Clean Air Zone regulations

The research has shown that despite welcoming improvements to air quality in our cities and towns, fleet managers will face new challenges when it comes to building a flexible fleet that not only meets the demands of the business itself, but also meets the rules of the Clean Air Zones (CAZ) and London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).

Key data

- 1 in 5 businesses are not aware of the rules for different zones
- For 89% of businesses a quarter or more of their fleet need to enter a Clean Air Zone more than once a week
- Just under 30% of businesses had not calculated the potential cost for their fleet to enter a Clean Air Zone or the extended London ULEZ
- 64% of businesses plan on extending their use of public transport and/or shared mobility solutions for their employees in response to the growing number of Clean Air Zones
- 40% said that they intend to use long-term/flexible rental as a way of increasing the number of 'Clean Air Zone friendly' vehicles in their fleets
- 48% of businesses plan to decrease the use of 'grey fleet' vehicles to ensure they do not face additional costs

For 1 in 5 businesses the main concern around switching to a lower emissions fleet is cost. The ability to build a flexible fleet that does not put cashflow or capital expenditure under pressure is paramount for businesses that rely on their vehicles to get goods and people in the right place at the right time.

Potential cost savings can be made through the rental of compliant vehicles. With charges of £8 per day for cars, taxis and LGVs for Birmingham's Clean Air Zone and £12.50 for London's Ultra Low Emission Zone, the annual saving for a business which has just 25 vehicles a week entering a Clean Air Zone could be up to £16,250. However, businesses that aren't prepared could see a significant rise in outgoings.

Another area of concern is the reliance on 'grey fleet' vehicles which tend to be older and more polluting, with nearly half of businesses questioned looking to reduce the number of employee-owned vehicles being used for business trips. However, with current supply issues still ongoing and likely to continue for the first half of this year, ensuring consistent access to compliant vehicles will require forward planning.

Understanding **your workplace** charging requirements

Correct implementation of workplace electric vehicle charging infrastructure is crucial to the viability of electric fleet vehicles. It makes charging an easy process and enables vehicles to be ready for use when required. So, how can you ensure that the charging system that you are installing are the best fit for your fleet and your business operations?

Choosing the Vehicle:

The type and use of the vehicles and the required charging speed determines the charging infrastructure required.

One ElectrAssure customer is a train network operator within an Ultra-low Emission Zone and is under pressure from the franchising authority to adopt low emission vehicles for its fleet. Its engineers operate on an 8 hour shift and return to the central depot with a typical daily mileage of less than 100 miles. This operating structure lent itself perfectly towards implementing an electric vehicle fleet.

However, there were circumstances where emergency call-outs were necessary, and the operational fleet needed to mobilise quickly to satisfy their SLA. Because of this, a rapid charger was proposed - as the customer pointed out, *'the penalty for missing the SLA would pay for a rapid charger'.*

ElectrAssure specified a fully customisable 50kW Delta Ultrafast Charger that can be upgraded to 150kW and has on-board load management software. The result is a flexible and upgradable EV charging solution that supports the client's business now and makes provision for the predicted requirements for the next 3 years.

Finding the Power

Without adequate electrical capacity, charging will be slower than required or the chargers will overload the electrical supply.

ElectrAssure conducts detailed surveys of the existing electrical infrastructure and supply to each site. This determines whether there is capacity available for the electric vehicle chargers.

But what if it isn't?

It is all too common for the existing supplies to be unsuitable for substantial charging installations. There are, however, options available that can be relatively inexpensive and relatively disruption free.

The electricity network operator (DNO) can advise on the possibility of an increase in supply either through upgrades to the fuses, incoming cabling or both to allow the for the increased loads required by charging equipment.

Alternatively, some manufacturers of charging equipment offer load management capabilities. Load management enables the chargers to operate at a pre-defined maximum load and balance the power required across all active chargers. Dynamic load management operates in a very similar way, but it monitors the total electrical load and only supplies the capacity available to the chargers.

One of ElectrAssure's large operational fleet customers with a varying and growing number of vehicles had a supply capacity problem. ElectrAssure was invited to survey their main depot after two other contractors had provided proposals for charging infrastructure.

When carrying out the survey it was found that there was simply no spare capacity. Not only that, but by installing the proposed charging equipment, the customer would have been in breach of their contracted maximum capacity from their energy provider and this would have resulted in fines and sanctions.

Enquiries were made with the local electricity network operator and it was found that an upgrade of the supply was available by simply changing the main fuses and metering equipment. This, coupled with a load managed charging solution, will allow the customer to install the larger number of EV chargers required to support their ever-growing fleet of electric vehicles.

Had the capacity survey not been carried out prior to installation of the new charging infrastructure, the customer would have a charging system that was not viable.

Managing the chargers:

'Smart' electric vehicle chargers are connected to a cloud-based management network known as a '*back office*'. A correctly specified back office records and controls the use of the chargers by authorised users, allows payment to be taken for use of the chargers and provides remote monitoring and maintenance.

In excess of 90% of reported faults can quickly be rectified on-line which enables very high levels of charger availability.

In summary, there is no *'one fits all'* blueprint for installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure for fleets. It must be tailored to the individual needs of drivers, the vehicles and the operation of the business to enable you to realise all of the benefits of electric vehicles.

For more information visit: www.electrassure.co.uk

Green fleet initiatives

In the spotlight: Steve Wolstenholme, Head of Fleet at United Utilities

Steve Wolstenholme, Head of Fleet at United Utilities

United Utilities is the largest listed water company in the UK, serving a population of 7 million in North West England. As well as the supply of clean water, it also manages and treats sewage for this same population, distributed across the counties of Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire and a part of Derbyshire, as well as the large conurbations of Merseyside and Manchester.

Operations and a vast infrastructure are supported by a large and diverse fleet of 2,400 vehicles and recent initiatives are aimed at converting the entire fleet to green technology by 2028. It's part of United Utilities' wider ambition as signatories to the UN Race to Zero campaign, contributing to the UK water industry's commitment to be net zero from 2030.

Essential Fleet Manager sat down with Steve Wolstenholme, Head of Fleet at United Utilities, who describes the background to their green initiatives and how they will be implemented.

Q: Could you summarise the infrastructure that is maintained and developed by United Utilities, to give us a true picture of the scale of your operations?

United Utilities employs more than 5,000 employees and provides water and wastewater services for 7 million people across the North West region. From urban areas like the cities of Manchester and Liverpool to the remote Lakeland fells and the Pennine Moors, it's a highly diverse geographic area.

We own and manage over 56,000 hectares of land, mostly around our reservoirs, making us the largest corporate landowner in England.

We supply 1,800 million litres of water a day through a network of 88 water treatment plants and 42,000km of water pipes. And after our customers have finished with the water, we transport it through 77,000km of sewers to be treated at one of our 570 wastewater treatment works before it is returned clean to the environment.

Q: What is the current breakdown of your fleet assets and broadly speaking, how are they deployed?

United Utilities Fleet consists of over 2,400 vehicles including 190 HGVs. We have a diverse fleet ranging from company cars though to small, medium and large vans, and HGVs up to 44 tonnes. The HGVs are used in our water, wastewater and bioresource operations. For example our Alternative Supply Vehicles are used to maintain water supplies during planned maintenance or pipe bursts, and we also use HGVs to clear blockages in our sewer network, and to move treated and untreated waste.

Q: What proportion of your fleet can be reviewed and assessed with a view to replacing with battery electric vehicles?

We have set the ambition to convert our entire fleet to green technology by 2028. Broadly speaking we are looking at implementing battery electric vehicles to replace our van and company car fleet. For the HGV fleet we are assessing a range of technologies including HVO and CNG.

Q: How much more complicated is it to look at other parts of the fleet not currently suited to battery electric vehicles? What are the alternative green fuel options?

We have an incredibly diverse fleet due to the scale of United Utilities' operation so one size doesn't fit all when converting the fleet to green technologies. So far we have started deploying electric vehicles to replace some of our vans and pool vehicles, successfully implemented HVO into some of our Alternative Supply Vehicles by bunkering fuel on our site and have our first CNG trucks arriving this year for our Bioresources business.

We're also about to launch a salary sacrifice scheme for our employees to help transition to electric vehicles for personal usage.

Q: What are the main challenges that you have faced so far and with a range of issues such as supply chain constraints, what do you foresee on your road to your 2028 objective?

We have found the two main factors key to successful transformation to be the engagement with our employees and ensuring our transition has been data-led. We have worked really closely with our trade unions and operational teams to ensure our drivers have heavy involvement in our transformation to green.

We're training our Fleet Technicians to safely maintain our vehicles and utilising Process Excellence, enhancing the capability at our workshops to maintain EVs.

We have recently deployed Vodafone Telematics in our vehicles which has transformed our safety and maintenance performance as well as the road to green. We have set the ambition to have zero accidents whilst driving by 2030 and to support this we now issue driver behaviour reports to give our drivers specific feedback on their driving, rewarding great performance. The telematics has transformed our maintenance approach and we now remotely monitor the performance of our entire Fleet 24/7. We've set up a new regional operations centre which consists of a team of maintenance experts who continually monitor and intervene with predictive and proactive maintenance to reduce vehicle downtime. The telematics also means we understand vehicle usage for data led vehicle transition to green and have we have geofenced all our operational sites to model vehicle dwell time to make informed decisions about our charging infrastructure deployment.

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Q: How important is it for you to have strong relationships with expert suppliers?

This is the key to our whole transformation programme. We have relied significantly on external expertise to help us shape our transformation journey. One example is we have worked with Mina and Allstar in order to deploy home charging for some of our employees with commercial vehicles. This solution utilises data from the home charger, and Mina's back office capability to directly reimburse each employee's domestic electricity account each month when they have used it to charge a United Utilities van.

Q: Are there vehicle categories that you think might be dominated by Hydrogen?

I expect battery electric power to be the dominant power source for our light vans. However for our specialised vehicles, and larger HGVs Hydrogen is likely to be a fuel of the future where the use case doesn't lend itself to electric. I believe that alternative fuels such as biomethane, and HVO diesel will play a part in decarbonising the fleet over the next decade.

Q: Are there any operational constraints related to green/alternatively fuelled vehicles?

We provide vehicles for over 2,400 employees in over 100 different operational roles each with different transport requirements and cover a diverse geography ranging from heavily urbanised areas such as Manchester and Liverpool through to rural areas such as the Lake District. This means we need to work closely with suppliers looking at different solutions and think innovatively about how we transition to green– one size doesn't fit all!

Q: The primary motivation when "greening" your fleet is plainly environmental. How would you summarise the full range other benefits to both yourselves and the population you serve?

Following COP26 last year it's great to be part of the transformation in carbon reduction. There are so many benefits of transitioning to green technologies ranging from employee engagement, improving air quality for our customers and simply being really proud of seeing our green vehicles on the road. Most recently we're preparing for the implementation of Manchester Clean Air Zone. It's an incredibly exciting time for our whole industry.

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Van fleets not already planning for the arrival of electric light commercial vehicles (eLCVs) should use 2022 to set out how to successfully integrate them into their operations, says Arval UK

The sustainable fleet and mobility company says that availability of these vehicles is likely to remain constrained this year. Therefore, companies which have a clearer plan of their future requirements will be in a better position to place vehicle orders and help secure supply.

Paul Hyne, Arval UK Commercial Director, explained: "*We're keen to help LCV fleets to plan ahead for their needs, as we know electric van adoption is lagging well behind that of electric cars. That's likely to be for a number of reasons, ranging from low production numbers and current vehicle choice, to the absence of a clear and obvious tax incentive such as the benefit-in-kind situation with cars.*

"However, as the production of diesel vans, just like cars, ends in 2030, fleets need to be examining in detail how to begin the process of electrification, if they're not already doing so. Next year is a good time to take that step and order vehicles to help secure availability ahead of supplies potentially increasing in 2023."

Paul said that Arval is finding that larger van fleets tend to be further ahead in their plans.

"Many larger business that have put successful electric company car policies in place and are now focusing their attention on electrifying their vans.

"The general findings so far are that eLCV adoption is probably going to be trickier for many than cars – but it's easily possible with a plan and starting the process of getting vehicle orders placed. We're already seeing a situation where electric car whole life costs are comparable, or in some cases more favourable, than ICE vehicles, but this is not currently not as clear for van fleets.

"Operational questions are sometimes not always as easy to answer either, such as how to access overnight charging for van drivers without off-street parking and how to quickly charge vans that are used regularly for longer journeys.

"There are solutions to all of these questions, but they do require more consideration and planning than electric car adoption – this is something that we will continue to help our customers to work through over the next year."

Paul also said that feasibility studies and trials involving a small number of vans were one way of fleets developing effective eLCV policies and gaining support from their drivers with 'first-time-drive' experiences.

"Where we have appropriate eLCVs within our mid-term rental fleet, we're encouraging operators to rent one or two as a taster, to help them see how they operate in different roles across their business and in real-world conditions. Showing the effectiveness of these vehicles is a great way of creating acceptance amongst drivers and gaining support at board level too."

Van driver safety resources created by National Highways added to **FleetCheck app**

A series of van driver safety resources created by National Highways through its Driving for Better Business campaign has been added to FleetCheck's widely-used Vehicle Inspection App.

The Van Driver Toolkit is included in the latest update to the product, which has been used to complete more than 11.5 million car, van and truck safety checks since its launch nearly four years ago.

The resources are designed to provide practical advice to drivers of light commercial vehicles about day-to-day safety issues, covering everything from winter driving to safe towing, and driving licences to speed limits.

Peter Golding, managing director, said: "*We have a longstanding relationship with Driving for Better Business, which exists to transform fleet road safety in the UK, and are an enthusiastic supporter of their aims.*

"Incorporating their advice into a safety inspection app is a fleet industry first, we believe, and we are sure will help van drivers to stay safe while out on the road. It's a simple yet potentially highly effective innovation."

FleetCheck's Vehicle Inspection App was introduced in April 2017 and creates the means for drivers and fleet managers to schedule, carry out, confirm, follow-up and audit all kinds of legally-required inspections from daily walkarounds to weekly or monthly checks.

It has been continually enhanced, notably to incorporate a range of advanced features such as support for languages commonly used among UK fleet drivers; a fit-to-drive declaration; an improved trailer inspection routine; an option for employees to view documentation and policies; and enhanced damage, defect and collision reporting.

Peter said: "*The app has been one of our major success stories of the last few years. There has been a general increase in awareness of the importance of this kind of digital safety check product in the market both among car and commercial vehicle fleets, displacing previous paper-based systems, and we have been well-placed to take advantage of the trend.*

"However, there have also been a number of developments emerging during the pandemic that has accelerated usage. Van fleets engaged in round-the-clock delivery of frontline services and increasing numbers of people working from home both need to carry out remote safety checks that can be tracked and audited by their fleet managers. Now, with the emergence of Omicron, it feels as though these features have renewed relevance.

"The Van Driver Toolkit is the latest step in our programme of continual enhancement and has already been enthusiastically embraced by our user base. It's very much the kind of practical and effective improvement that we see as a FleetCheck hallmark."

For more information visit: www.fleetcheck.co.uk

Arrival begins proving ground trials of its **electric Bus**

Arrival has announced it has started trials of the Arrival Bus at a testing facility in the UK. The vehicles will be going through rigorous validation and testing ahead of certification.

The Arrival Bus is creating a new and improved public transportation experience for all users – from the drivers and passengers to the engineers, cleaners, and fleet owners – and reducing costs for operators, making the transition to electric vehicles more economically viable. The vehicle takes advantage of Arrival's software ecosystem, enabling full connectivity, digital customisation, and deep access to vehicle behaviour and data. The vehicle can be tailored to meet local cities' needs with its modular design, which enables configuration of length, range, battery, and passenger capacity.

"This is a key milestone for Arrival and we're thrilled to have started proving ground trials, where the Bus is currently going through testing, ahead of EU certification and public road trials next year," said Franck Dessenis, Vice President of Bus Platform, Arrival. "*We've seen a strong interest in the Bus this year, specifically from governments who are looking to upgrade their public transportation networks, in order to achieve their zero-emission pledges. We're partnering closely with governments, cities, and operators to build infrastructure solutions and seamless mobility services for local communities to support their clean energy targets."*

"This marks an important day as all of our milestones for 2021 have been achieved. We now look forward to bringing our vehicles, led by the Bus, to the market beginning in 2022, built by our Microfactories and helping to make the air cleaner around the world" said Avinash Rugoobur, President, Arrival.

The first Arrival Bus features up to three doors, with flexible passenger seating capacity across the entire flat floor, allowing for greater accessibility, as well as creating more usable standing space and the ability for passengers to travel more comfortably. The vehicle also has wrap-around exterior and interior screens, adaptable lighting, a transparent roof, and a suite of digital features. The Bus uses in-house components that are also found on the Arrival Van and Car, and Arrival's lightweight recyclable composite materials. This, alongside common suspension and the wheels and tyres at front and rear, means the Bus is estimated to be lighter than other battery-electric buses in the market today.

Following proving ground trials, Arrival will commence public road trials of the Bus with First Bus - one of the UK's largest transport operators - in Q1 2022. The trials will see Arrival's vehicles operating on existing First Bus routes in the UK. Arrival is expected to begin production for the Bus in Q2 2022.

Mercedes-Benz Econic is a proven winner for **Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council**

Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council adhered to a tried and tested formula when commissioning its latest refuse collection trucks, a pair of Mercedes-Benz Econics.

The 26-tonne chassis arrived with the West Midlands authority via the Coventry branch of Dealer Midlands Truck & Van.

As 2630 L variants the new trucks are powered by 7.7-litre 'straight-six' engines that produce 220 kW (299 hp). They drive through six-speed Allison automatic transmissions, while steered rear axles enhance manoeuvrability.

Fitted with FAUN Variopress compactor bodies and Zoeller Delta high-level automatic split binlifts, Nuneaton & Bedworth Council's latest six-wheelers have joined a Mercedes-Benz- dominated fleet of 16 refuse collection vehicles.

The authority serves approximately 57,000 households, from which it collects recyclable material, general waste and garden cuttings in wheeled bins.

Head of Waste & Transport Glen McGrandle said: *"The 6x2 rear-steer Econic with FAUN Zoeller bodywork is now firmly established as our preferred configuration. The chassis offers excellent build quality and reliability, cost-effective performance, a high level of safety, and comfort and ease of use for our crews.*

"Operatives appreciate the ease of access, while the cab is spacious, airy and well laid out. The low seating position and deep, panoramic windscreen provides drivers with a great view and makes it much easier for them to keep a close eye on colleagues working around the vehicle as well as other vulnerable road users, particularly cyclists and pedestrians.

"Our area has a lot of narrow terraced streets," he continued, "and the rear-steer set-up means these trucks are also very nimble for their size."

As with all new Econics supplied through the official Mercedes-Benz Trucks Dealer network, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council's new vehicles are backed by comprehensive three-year/160,000 km manufacturer's warranties, and came with an impressive arsenal of standard safety equipment.

The Active Brake Assist 5 emergency braking aid, for example, combines camera and radar technology to detect vehicles ahead and stationary objects in its own lane, at speeds of up to 56 mph (90 km/h). Detection of a dangerous situation triggers a three-stage reaction: first, the system warns the driver with visual and audible alerts; then, if the driver fails to react, it applies partial (approximately 50%) braking; finally, if the driver has still not intervened, it initiates maximum braking to bring the truck to a halt, applying the Electronic Parking Brake and activating the hazard warning lights to alert drivers behind.

At speeds of up to 31 mph (50 km/h) Active Brake Assist 5 is capable of applying full braking when encountering pedestrians crossing its path, approaching from the front or walking ahead. Not only does this remarkable technology increase safety for vulnerable road users and vehicle crews, but it also helps to relieve stress for drivers.

Mr McGrandle continued: *"These new trucks were part of our rolling replacement programme and have slotted seamlessly into our bin collection operation. Experience has proved that the Econic is extremely well engineered and can be trusted to provide many years of dependable service.*

"The HGV fleet is maintained primarily by our transport partner Coventry City Council, supported by NBBC's internal transport team and by regular parts deliveries from Midlands Truck & Van, and if expert warranty or technical advice is ever needed we know it's only a phone call away."

Moving up the **Isuzu truck** range benefits **Flogas Britain**

As part of its objective to drive operating efficiencies and realise carbon footprint improvements in line with its corporate emission targets, Flogas Britain has continued the investment in its Cylinder fleet of vehicles, with the addition of 28 new Isuzu N55.150(N) 5.5 tonne narrow bodied trucks.

Fitted with specialist narrow aluminium cylinder bodies manufactured by Massey Truck Engineering, these new Isuzu vehicles are just about to roll out into the Flogas Britain fleet ahead of its winter peak season, in further support of the company's investment in its customer service proposition.

Explaining this latest fleet investment, Jackie Banks, head of fleet, Flogas Britain said, *"Our previous cylinder fleet had a high proportion of small footprint 3.5 tonne vehicles to deliver small loads into remote areas requiring narrow access. However, these vehicles presented challenges with payload, which impacted on their overall effectiveness and efficiency."*

Jackie continues, *"After trialling the 5.5 tonne narrow bodied Isuzu N55 model in 2020, their performance was met with positive reviews from our driving teams and in addition, we were able to realise a significant increase in vehicle efficiency due to the increased payload."*

The result of the previous trials with the initial 5.5 tonne Isuzu clearly showed that Flogas Britain could reduce the amount of empty running through reducing the amount of reloading, thus eliminating wasted mileage and enabling them to schedule the vehicles far more efficiently.

Part of DCC Ltd, Flogas Britain is a national supplier of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), operating through over 60 depots nationwide, with a commercial vehicle fleet of over 450 trucks.

"By working closely with Flogas Britain during the trial period, the partnership has realised a new specification of truck for the Flogas fleet that gives them both the additional operational and environmental benefits they were seeking. Once again, the flexibility of the Isuzu truck range has enabled us to provide a solution that works really well for Flogas Britain," said Lee Barwick, fleet sales manager, Isuzu Truck UK.

www.isuzutruck.co.uk

Picturered: Dudley's Contract & Development Officer Peter Cooper, left, Cabinet Member for Public Realm Karen Shakespeare, and Highways & Transport Maintenance Manager Graham Timmins, with their latest Mercedes-Benz Econic

Dudley Council plays it safe by choosing another **Mercedes-Benz Econic**

Proven reliability and unrivalled safety standards led Dudley Council back to the low-entry Mercedes-Benz Econic for the latest, highly specialised addition to its fleet.

The West Midlands authority's new vacuum tank gully emptier is based on a 26-tonne Econic 2630 L chassis supplied by the Kidderminster branch of Dealer group Rygor Commercials.

The truck is powered by a 7.7-litre 'straight-six' engine that produces 220 kW (299 hp) and drives through a six-speed Allison automatic transmission. The six-wheeler's steered rear axle enhances manoeuvrability.

Fitted with water tanks and jetting/vacuum equipment by Whale Tankers, of Solihull, it has replaced Dudley Council's previous, 18-tonne Econic gully emptier.

"The new vehicle's extra weight capacity and longer wheelbase has allowed us to fit larger water tanks," said Highways & Transport Maintenance Manager Graham Timmins. "This means there's less time travelling backwards and forwards to empty and refill, so it can spend longer on the job.

"It's a more efficient solution but one that also offers all the benefits of Econic operation, which we've come to appreciate in our borough over many years, as well as the excellent customer service we receive from Rygor Commercials."

Mercedes-Benz Econics are a common sight on the streets of Dudley, as the council also runs a fleet of 35 refuse collection vehicles based on the same model. The latest, though, is used for suction cleaning of drainage gullies on roads across the metropolitan borough, and to empty septic tanks at domestic and commercial properties. It can also clear blocked drains by jetting clean water at high pressure.

The Econic is equipped with a VisionTrack camera system, while Mercedes-Benz safety aids include Active Brake Assist 4 emergency braking technology – which can detect vehicles ahead and stationary objects in its own lane, at speeds of up to 56 mph (90 km/h). It can initiate maximum braking to bring the truck to a complete stop, and at speeds of up to 31mph

(50km/h) can also detect moving pedestrians.

"As well as being extremely reliable the Econic is very popular with our crews," continued Mr Timmins. "The low entry step to the cab makes life much easier for operatives who are in and out through the door many times in a working day.

"The deep, wraparound windscreen and low seating position, meanwhile, give drivers an unbeatable field of vision, while any areas that cannot easily be seen are covered by the camera system. This helps to enhance safety not only for our drivers and crews, but also for the general public, and particularly vulnerable road users.

"This Econic is a complex vehicle but Rygor's Fleet Sales Manager Jeremy Price liaised with the body equipment supplier on our behalf, as he always does. We'll maintain the truck in-house – our workshop team receives regular parts deliveries from Rygor to ensure we're never stuck waiting for a vital item, and, should we need it, expert technical advice is always just a phone call away."

As with all new Econics supplied through the Mercedes-Benz Trucks UK's Dealer network, Dudley Council's vehicles are backed by comprehensive three-year/160,000 km manufacturer's warranties.

Jeremy Price added: "I've been working with Dudley Council for two decades now and have supplied vehicles in different sizes and configurations for a variety of roles. The close relationship we've developed is testament to our consultative way of working and dedication to Setting Standards."

Greater Manchester Police make **£3.5 million investment** in new **police cars**

Picturered: Inspector Danny Kabal with the tested vehicles

The investement will be used to buy 164 new beat cars and increase driver training for advanced operations.

Spending on crucial infrastructure is a key pledge of GMP's new working model - the Plan on a Page - introduced by new Chief Constable Stephen Watson.

It commits the force to a back-to-basics set of actions to ensure GMP can deliver the service that the people of Greater Manchester deserve.

As part of the plan, senior officers at GMP prioritised talking to front line staff about anything that was impeding the force reaching its potential - with the quality and quantity of marked vehicles being a recurring theme.

Deputy Chief Constable Terry Woods and Chief Officer Christopher Kinsella urgently commissioned work to fix the issue.

Three prospective vehicles were identified - the Toyota Corolla 1.8L petrol hybrid active, Ford Focus Zetec 1.0L eco boost petrol-hybrid and the Hyundai i30 1.0L turbo mild-hybrid.

Recognising the importance of our frontline officers' opinions, a series of road tests of the vehicles was organised by Inspector Danny Kabal - supported by various departments including response, fleet, training and the Federation.

A number of Police Constables - who will be among the main users of the cars - graded the vehicles on exterior and interior, steering, braking, acceleration and deceleration, gearbox, safety features, handling, comfort and storage. Consideration was also given to environmental factors such as fuel consumption and emissions to help reduce the carbon footprint of our fleet - another key pledge of the Plan on a Page.

> "Investing in and improving our Fleet provision is clearly identified in our Plan on a Page and this represents a quick and significant investment to get people the right tools to get the job done.
>
> Deputy Chief Constable, Terry Woods

The Corolla and Focus received very similar scores and an order for 164 new beat cars - split evenly between the Ford and Toyota - has been placed after a £3.5 million funding bid was agreed by the Deputy Mayor.

The money will also pay for more drivers to be trained more quickly.

Deputy Mayor for policing, crime, criminal justice and fire, Bev Hughes said: *"This is a significant investment but one that is extremely important in making sure front line officers are well equipped to respond to incidents and emergencies effectively and safely."*

DCC Terry Woods said: "Investing in and improving our Fleet provision is clearly identified in our Plan on a Page and this represents a quick and significant investment to get people the right tools to get the job done.

"Involving officers and support services more fully in projects such as this will help make sure we are providing our staff with the most effective kit and equipment to enable them to do their jobs. Thank you to all those who organised or took part in the test day, which gave us valuable insights and opinions and influenced the final choice of vehicle".

Neil Clarke, Deputy Secretary of Greater Manchester Police Federation, said: "*The Force wide review of vehicles used by our members on Districts is welcome, as is the considered engagement process the force implemented in reviewing the vehicles.*

"Our members will use these vehicles on a daily basis and it is important that they were given the opportunity to review them from an operational perspective and afforded the opportunity to provide honest constructive feedback. This has assisted in identifying vehicles which are fit for purpose and will provide greater resilience across the fleet, the feedback from all the staff who took part has been really positive."

Mitie achieves 30% EV target, three months ahead of schedule

Mitie, the UK's leading facilities management company, has accelerated past its target to convert 30% of its fleet to zero emission electric vehicles (EVs) by March 2022 – three months ahead of schedule. As a result, the business has increased its target to have 35% of its fleet electric in the same timeframe.

Mitie now has a range of electric cars, vans, and even a gritter, taking its total as of the end of 2021 to more than 2,000 EVs, consisting of 15 different models – what it believes to be the UK's largest fleet of electric vehicles. The vehicles are based throughout the UK, from the Scottish Highlands and Islands down to the Cornish coast, as well as EVs working on Mitie's contracts supporting the UK's Overseas Territories, including Ascension Island. In addition, Mitie has invested heavily in the UK's electric vehicle charge point infrastructure, installing thousands of charge points for a broad range of its customers, as well as at employees' homes.

The transition to a wholly electric fleet is a central component of Mitie's Plan Zero commitment to eliminate carbon emissions from its power and transport. Its current fleet of EVs reduces Mitie's annual CO2 emissions by around 10,000 tonnes and the business has a detailed timeline to switch the rest of its vehicles to zero emission by 2025. In addition to this, the Mitie Fleet Team has put a series of measures in place to reduce the emissions of its existing petrol and diesel vehicles, such as a Telematics Driver Behaviour system that has reduced diesel consumption by 75,000 litres and saved 19.5 tonnes of CO2 in just one year.

Mitie is using its significant experience driving a large-scale rollout of electric vehicles to support more businesses in transitioning to zero emission fleets. This expertise is the basis of its EV transition service, helping customers design and manage every aspect of their own switch to electric. In addition, in November 2021 it expanded its EV charging infrastructure capabilities with the acquisition of Rock Power Connections Limited. Building on its existing Engineering and Green Projects expertise, the addition of Rock Power will enable Mitie to deliver new high voltage electricity connections and the renewal of electrical assets up to 132kV, supporting the installation of rapid EV charge points.

Peter Dickinson, Chief of Staff, Mitie, said:

"Switching 30% of our fleet to electric by the end of March 2022 was already an ambitious target, so to have hit this milestone three months ahead of schedule is an incredible achievement and testament to the hard work of the Mitie Fleet Team. Pushing ourselves to go further, faster, while bringing others along with us on our journey to net zero, is a hallmark of our Plan Zero commitment. By creating the UK's largest fleet of electric vehicles in just three years, we're dedicated to sharing our first-hand expertise and learnings with our customers to help decarbonise Britain."

Electric Vans Help Power Zero Emissions Targets

A new fleet of electric vans will take to the road in 2022 to help Scotland's water and waste water services to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Diesel-powered vans which are coming to their end of their work cycle are now being replaced by vans which can be plugged in at charging points.

They form part of Scottish Water's fleet of small vans and mark the beginning of a wholesale shift to more environmentally-friendly options.

The move comes as a new report for the public water and waste water organisation said up to 60 per cent of its operational fleet could turn electric to reduce transport emissions.

Pre-pandemic, Scottish Water's fleet of vehicles – from HGVs and large heavy-payload vans to small general purpose vans and cars – clocked up 19 million miles annually.

The organisation pledged to become net zero by 2040 and set out plans to achieve that in a routemap published in September 2020.

The 20 new Nissan EV 200s have just been bought and need to be adapted for use in helping deliver services across the country, including by water quality samplers, technical teams and network operatives. They will be on the road by April 2022.

A report by consultants for Scottish Water said that the light commercial van fleet had real potential to reduce fuel emissions.

The comprehensive review of over 1,300 vehicles by Cenex identified where suitable electric vehicles could be introduced, the location and type of charging infrastructure required, and provided a strategic deployment plan to meet Scottish Water's commitment to net zero emissions by 2040.

A new Scottish Water project team led by EV vehicle specialists is now in place to take forward the fleet transformation opportunities.

As well as achieving significant emission savings, including carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides, electric vehicles will generate substantial financial savings from reduced fuel and maintenance costs over their operational life.

Other areas being explored include using alternative fuels for heavy vehicles including compressed natural gas (CNG) and *"drop-in"* fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).

Crucial to successful roll-out is access to electric vehicle Horizons, the utility's commercial subsidiary, are installing charge points during the build of new renewables sites as a cost-effective way of accelerating their deployment.

> *"We are now starting our journey to putting zero emissions vehicles on the road – and planning for more. We operate a varied fleet with specific usage profiles, payload and towing requirements and equipment. "*
>
> ***Elaine Pringle***
> ***Fleet Manager, Scottish Water***

Elaine Pringle, Scottish Water's Fleet Manager, said: "*We are now starting our journey to putting zero emissions vehicles on the road – and planning for more. We operate a varied fleet with specific usage profiles, payload and towing requirements and equipment.*

"We will now carry out our own real-world testing – including having access to vital charging infrastructure at workplaces and at home - to ensure the electric vehicle technology will meet operational requirements with no impact on customer service."

Robert Anderson, Senior Fleet Specialist at Cenex, said: "With such a large and varied operation, Scottish Water was one of the most complex vehicle fleets for us to assess and plan for a zero-emission fleet transition. In-depth analysis has shown that even with such a varied fleet operation, there is still great potential to transition the van fleet to electric, with limited impact on business operations."

www.scottishwater.co.uk

Scotland's first **renewable biomethane** HGV refuelling station opens near Glasgow

HGVs account for 16% of UK transport emissions, and 4.8% of total greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland, making it a key sector to decarbonise. The new station will cut 70,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year when fully utilised

CNG Fuels, the UK's leading supplier of renewable biomethane for HGVs, announced in December 21, the opening of Scotland's first public access biomethane refuelling station, meeting the growing demand from major UK brands to decarbonise haulage emissions and save money.

The new station, located adjacent to the busiest transport route in Scotland between Edinburgh and Glasgow, puts Inverness and Aberdeen within range of CNG Fuels' low carbon refuelling network for the first time. The site can refuel up to 450 lorries per day with renewable and sustainable biomethane sourced from food waste, cutting carbon emissions by 90% and reducing lifetime vehicle cost by 30%-40% compared to diesel.

Waitrose, Hermes and Warburtons are just some of the major UK brands to switch from diesel to renewable biomethane to cut haulage emissions. HGVs account for 16% of UK transport emissions, and 4.8% of total greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland, making it a key sector to decarbonise. The new station will cut 70,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year when fully utilised.

Philip Fjeld, CEO of CNG Fuels, said: *"Glasgow and Scotland were at the centre of the world debate on climate change during COP26, injecting urgency into the global push to tackle the climate crisis. Our new station, just outside Glasgow, is an example of real-world action on climate, unlocking low carbon deliveries across the busiest transport routes in Scotland and supporting the country to meet its emissions reduction targets.*

"Renewable biomethane is the cleanest, most cost-effective solution for HGVs available today. Our growing network of refuelling stations gives fleets across the country the confidence to significantly cut emissions from transport, today."

Demand for renewable biomethane has increased by 1,000% in the last 5 years as brands urgently seek to reduce emissions in line with the UK's net zero plans. This trend is set to continue, with demand forecasted to increase five-fold in the next five years as the UK government's 2040 ban on the sale of new diesel HGVs, announced last month, approaches.

The new station, located at the Eurocentral industrial estate off the M8 near Bellshill, will support both local Scottish fleets as well as brands making low-carbon deliveries from England to Scotland. The station is also located within proximity of two HGV dealerships – Scania and IVECO – which are among the leading manufactures of biomethane-ready HGVs.

The Bellshill station is the latest in CNG Fuels' UK-wide strategic network of refuelling stations which already puts most of the UK within a 300-mile round trip of a refuelling site. Seven stations are already operational with plans to open up to 14 more by 2023, including the world's largest in Avonmouth near Bristol, by the end of 2022.

The opening of the new station comes just weeks after the company announced plans to host hydrogen fuel trails across its expanding UK-wide network to ensure its stations are ready to support a multiple fuel future as different technologies develop and become commercially viable. The first hydrogen trials are due to begin next year and by 2025, CNG Fuels plans to allocate 100 acres of its land to public access hydrogen refuelling.

https://cngfuels.com/

Volkswagen Crafter converted to mobile **COVID-19 support** vehicle

A Volkswagen Crafter has been converted into a mobile COVID-19 support unit for East Riding of Yorkshire Council to assist with COVID-19 test kits, vaccine information, and mental health support.

In collaboration with East Riding of Yorkshire Council and bespoke van racking company, Key Racking, the Crafter has been converted to enable the council to reach the most rural areas of the county as well as the most vulnerable.

The Crafter has been fitted with lockable cupboards, flip down mounted seating, hand wash units, and an on-board heater. The surfaces are fully wipeable, so they can be easily cleaned and sanitised between clients, while anti-slip flooring and pull-out handrails ensure client safety. A separate area to host consultations, fitted with privacy windows, has also been incorporated into the design for confidentiality.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has a long-term relationship with Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, with more than 100 of the brand's vans already on the fleet, and more currently on order to arrive on-site. The Crafter was selected for the mobile support unit for its generous load size and capacity, which provides the space for multi-discipline team to work safely.

Stephen Todd, Contract Manager Vehicle Maintenance at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, said: *"We have a large fleet of Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, and know we can rely on them.*

For this COVID-19 support vehicle, the Crafter was the ideal choice as it enables us to adapt the van to suit our needs, meaning we can provide the highest-quality service while keeping people as safe as possible."

Nick Axtell, Specialist Sales Manager for Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, said: *"We're delighted that East Riding of Yorkshire Council has selected the Crafter for this extremely important job. We offer a range of conversions on all our vehicles to provide our customers with the flexibility to get the right van for the right task. This support vehicle conversion is a great way of demonstrating what the Crafter can achieve."*

How can **AI technology** help support road safety?

Driving heavy vehicles is a challenging occupation, demanding skill and concentration whether operating on work-sites, built-up urban areas or rural roads.

Despite rigorous driver training and improving safety standards overall, it's a tragic fact that road accidents continue to blight lives across the globe.

Accidents even at low speeds can be deadly, especially when involving commercial vehicles such as HGVs and mobile plant.

Often these accidents are caused by blind spots around heavy vehicles, where their sheer size and design make it impossible for drivers to obtain 360 degrees visibility.

Cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians are at particular risk of *'disappearing'* into a vehicle's blind spot. The consequences can be devastating.

Extra mirrors have been a traditional solution, but many drivers find them cumbersome. The time it takes to check various mirrors on both sides of the cab can create dangerous split-second delays.

Increasingly, fleet managers are opting to fit on-board safety devices to their trucks, delivery vans or construction plant. Vehicle CCTV camera systems offer wider viewing angles, while radar detection and ultrasonic sensors can alert drivers to an obstacle even in adverse weather conditions where heavy rain, fog or snow may obscure visibility.

Reversing alarms are another key safety system, with modern iterations such as Brigade Electronic's award-winning White Sound range offering instantly locatable alarms that cause less noise pollution because they are only heard in the danger zone.

Safety upgrades such as these can all be retro-fitted to a vehicle in a matter of hours. The improvement they can make to road safety is incalculable.

The size of modern commercial vehicles means they are potentially highly dangerous machines, often driving on narrow streets packed with parked cars where there is limited room to manoeuvre. The risk of accidents is even greater at night or in wintry weather conditions when cameras may struggle to provide a clear picture.

Ultrasonic obstacle detection systems alert the driver to the presence of obstacles close to the vehicle, whether moving or stationary. An audible and/or visual in-cab warning is triggered, while external speaking alarms can be added to warn cyclists and pedestrians in the vicinity.

Brigade Electronic's latest ultrasonic obstacle detection range was developed using artificial intelligence technology, and supported by the Knowledge Transfer Partnership initiative with Cambridge University. The result - Sidescan®Predict – was extensively trialled in 2020 with impressive results.

Through the use of AI, the Sidescan®Predict sensor constantly gathers object detection data such as the speed and distance of a cyclist or pedestrian in the vicinity. This data feeds into an algorithm created by Brigade to accurately gauge the risk of collision. When danger is detected, the driver is instantly alerted in time to take avoiding action.

Sidescan®Predict is always switched on, including at speeds below 30km/h. And crucially, the collision protection is active with or without the indicators on. This is particularly important as it is recognised that some drivers become irritated by false alerts, even avoiding use of indicators so their system does not trigger alerts, potentially putting vulnerable road users at risk.

Emily Hardy, a vehicle safety expert at Brigade Electronics UK, said:

"The global pandemic has put HGV drivers under pressure like never before. It's vital that we protect them and other road users, keeping supply chains moving without suffering the horrendous consequences of road accidents.

"Vehicle safety systems are game changers when it comes to accident prevention. As AI develops apace, we are able to design increasingly sophisticated devices that drivers can use without the need for extensive training.

"As a company, our stated mission is to deliver zero lives lost in collisions with commercial vehicles and mobile machinery. We truly believe that with the right technology and driver support, this mission is achievable."

For more information visit: https://brigade-electronics.com/

Electric **car chargers fast-tracked** in South East

Almost 1,000 electric car chargers have been fast-tracked to connect to the electricity network in London, the South East and East of England - thanks to an online portal for chargepoint installers.

Since launching Smart Connect in February 2021, UK Power Networks has instantly approved more than 2000 new applications for electric car chargers, heat pumps, batteries and solar panels in record time. The portal means people don't have to complete multiple paper forms and streamlines the process so installers can work more efficiently and install more devices for more customers. So far, 983 (more than half) of the 1,720 new electric car charging applications have been instantly approved by the portal, meaning devices could be connected straight away.

Smart Connect is also making other low carbon technologies possible. Applications to connect 234 electric heat pumps have been auto approved since February, along with 765 household solar installs and 66 domestic batteries.

The service works by using artificial Intelligence to process data about each household installation. When an installer applies to connect a new car charger, Smart Connect refers customers to a UK Power Networks expert if the electricity supply needs to be upgraded to gain additional power. If no upgrades are required, the tool provides an automatic assessment and then auto approval.

Installers with multiple jobs planned, can also use Smart Connect to check the status of all their applications at the click of a button.

Ian Cameron, head of customer service and innovation at UK Power Networks said: *"Millions of electric cars and heat pumps will connect to our networks over the next decade. Through tools like Smart Connect we'll make sure - whether we're working with installers or directly with consumers - they can all connect at pace."*

Gary Church, electrical contracts manager at Blueflame (Colchester) Limited, which installs and maintains heat pumps and solar PV systems across Essex and Suffolk, said: *"We've been using Smart Connect throughout this year and it's been a brilliant tool for us. It's streamlined our process of notifying installations of heat pumps and PV completely. It also ensures we are always complying with all regulations and give our customers the best service possible."*

New **driving rules** for **2022**

In 2022 an array of new driving laws and changes to pre-existing ones are due to come into force. So fleet and transport managers need to make sure drivers keep up to date or they might find themselves facing heavy and penalties.

Highway code changes

The Highway code is set to change on the 29th of January, with eight new rules being introduced as well as 49 updates to existing rules. The Highway Code will now refer to a new "road user hierarchy" aimed at prioritising vulnerable road users, such as cyclists and pedestrians, and are classified as H1, H2 and H3.

- **H1** in general terms puts road vehicles and users in order of how likely they are to cause harm to each other and the severity of the harm that could be caused. The hierarchy is aimed at making sure not only do drivers, cyclists, riders and pedestrians take care of their own safety on the road, but that they pay particular attention to other road users that could potentially be harmed by their actions. This means that more responsibility will be placed on the drivers of large vehicles and pedestrians are given higher priority.
- Rule **H2** is for drivers, motorcyclists, horse riders and cyclists. It states: *'At a junction you should give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross a road into which or from which you are turning.'* In basic terms this means if a driver is turning into a road and there is a pedestrian waiting to cross, they should give way to them. Cyclists must also give way to pedestrians on shared use cycle tracks.
- Rule **H3** is aimed at drivers and motorcyclists, it states that *'You should not cut across cyclists, horse riders or horse drawn vehicles going ahead when you are turning into or out of a junction or changing direction or lane.'* Instead, you are advised to wait for a safe gap before turning in. Cyclists are also now being advised to position themselves in the centre of the road to make themselves more visible to other road users - especially if they are making a turn at a junction or travelling in slow-moving traffic.

Mobile phone use

Drivers should already be avoiding the use of a hand-held device whilst driving. But many drivers still scroll and touch their phones to see a text or notification on the screen. However, from now, this is also now illegal along with taking photos, videos, or playing games whilst driving. Those caught breaking the law with regards to mobile phone use will face a £200 fixed penalty notice, and six points on their licence. Drivers will still be allowed to continue using a device as 'hands-free' for navigational purposes while driving, but the device must be secured in a suitable holder.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, said**:** *"Too many deaths and injuries occur while mobile phones are being held.*

"By making it easier to prosecute people illegally using their phone at the wheel, we are ensuring the law is brought into the 21st century while further protecting all road users."

Flashing your headlights

Finally, the other significant change is how motorists use lights to signal other road users. Now you can *'only flash your headlights to let other road users know that you are there.'*

New Clean Air Zones schemes

Rules are already in place in London in the form of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). In this area, drivers can be charged £12.50 a day as well as a congestion charge, if they choose to drive through it in a vehicle that doesn't meet the low emission standards. In late 2021 this area was expanded to the North and South Circular ring roads and in May 2022 a ULEZ it is set to be rolled out in Greater Manchester. Plans are also set to be introduced Birmingham in June.

The above areas will charge between £2 and £10 depending on the area, and in Greater Manchester, it will initially apply to larger vehicles such as buses, coaches, taxis, and other heavy goods vehicles.

Newcastle, North Tyneside, Gateshead, Sheffield, and Bristol will introduce a similar scheme in July, but charges won't be in place for these areas just yet.

New £70 fines from councils

Local authorities are being handed more powers to fine motorists for breaking 'moving traffic' offences' with drivers set to receive increased standard penalties of £70.

Offences include: stopping in yellow box junctions and performing bad/illegal manoeuvres.

Currently most councils are only able to send out penalties for parking and driving in bus lanes and it is the police that are typically responsible for issuing "moving traffic" offence fines, apart from in London and Cardiff.

But the new powers will mean almost 300 councils in England will be able to apply for the right to issue these penalties as well.

Autotech Training creates suite of **EV training options** for organisations electrifying fleets

By 2025, the UK fleet vehicle industry is expected to account for 75% of all electric cars on the road.

Faced with the increasing need to decarbonise road transport, local authorities and organisations are expected to set the standard for the electric revolution, and many are already electrifying their fleets.

However, a lack of essential electric/hybrid vehicle training could render fleet electrification a 'tick the box' exercise for many organisations.

In a bid to remove this bottleneck, Autotech Training, the dedicated training division of Autotech Group, has created a suite of EV training options enabling an organisation to create a bespoke programme which directly meets their needs – from basic awareness training, which offers core knowledge to enable employees to work safely around EVs, through to IMI Level 4 electric/hybrid vehicle training which will enable fleet service managers to service and maintain an electric vehicle fleet.

The high voltage nature of electric vehicles introduces new hazards, therefore, as the sector continues to electrify its fleets, basic EV awareness training should be planned for all members of staff to enable them to safely work alongside these vehicles. In accordance with the Electricity at Work regulations, enforced by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) all employers have a responsibility to ensure that employees are adequately trained – otherwise they may find themselves liable.

Electric vehicle awareness training will provide employees with an introduction to the knowledge of safe working practices, the dangers surrounding EV's, and the precautions required to avoid potential injury when near EVs.

Certified to teach IMI Levels 2 to 4 electric/hybrid vehicle training, Autotech Training can deliver training from their dedicated EV Training Suite within its Milton Keynes headquarters, or on the premises of any organisation to minimise downtime and employee travel expenses.

Autotech Group is the UK's largest employment and training solutions provider for the automotive aftermarket. Its training suite has the capacity to teach a group of employees on an EV course at any one time, and also features an electric car for hands-on learning.

"It is vital that employees, whether they will drive an electric fleet vehicle or not, receive training to ensure they can safely work alongside EVs," comments Mandla Ndhlovu, Training Delivery Director for Autotech Training. "We can work with any organisation to create an EV training programme to suit their exact needs. All courses are delivered by highly-experienced trainers and feature an electric vehicle, to not only provide awareness, but offer a hands-on approach to learning."

For further information on Autotech Training visit www.autotechrecruit.co.uk/training

Misfuelling it happens!

As a fleet or transport manager you will understand that petrol and diesel engines work differently. Petrol engines use an electrical spark to ignite the fuel, whereas a diesel engine will burn the fuel by creating high pressure. Diesel engines are partially lubricated by the oiliness of the fuel, but if it is contaminated with petrol that oil gets washed away as the petrol acts as a solvent.

Therefore if one of your drivers mistakenly puts petrol in a diesel, this is far more serious than putting diesel in a petrol vehicle.

Unfortunately most misfuelling incidents do occur when petrol is pumped by mistake into a diesel vehicle. It is actually harder to misfuel the other way around, as diesel pumps have wider nozzles.

If misfuelling does happen, your drivers should be advised to not switch on the ignition, as this will circulates the mixture increasing the friction between components, damaging parts including the vehicle's fuel lines and pump. Repairs are often expensive and you may need to replace the vehicle's entire fuel system.

Engine damage can be limited by leaving the vehicle switched off. Drivers should put it in neutral and seek help to push the vehicle to a safe place if it is causing a dangerous obstruction and needs to be moved - otherwise the driver is better off leaving the vehicle where it is. Depending on which type of breakdown cover you have for your fleet, you may find that your breakdown service when they arrive, will drain the fuel tank on the forecourt - alternatively the vehicle will be recovered to the nearest facility.

As soon as you are made aware of any misfuelling incident it is important to call your fleet insurance provider to check if you are covered. It can cost around £200 to drain and clean a fuel tank, £2,000 to repair an engine and as much as £9,000 to replace it altogether. Some insurers will cover the cost of everything, but others may only pay out for you to get the vehicle's tank cleaned and drained. More companies are excluding misfuelling from standard policies and instead offer misfuelling cover as an add-on, which can make insurance more expensive. You can also find out if you are covered by reading your fleet insurance policy details, misfuelling will probably be mentioned under accidental damage.

Drivers should be made aware that if the drive off after misfuelling they may experience:

- Smoke from the exhaust
- The engine misfiring, cutting out or not restarting
- A loud knocking sound when accelerating
- Engine warning lights turning on
- The vehicle's engine stopping completely

It is important for all drivers to be made aware of how costly misfuelling is. As an extra precaution you may also wish to add additional signage inside the vehicle or next to the fuel cap, reminding drivers of the fuel type to use - this especially helps if drivers are constantly changing vehicles, or the vehicle is used as a pool car.

What about E10, what is it and can I misfuel my vehicle with it?

There is a new fuel grade that emerged at forecourts across the UK in September 2021, E10.

Before the introduction of E10, the current petrol grades in the UK contained up to 5% bioethanol, known as E5. E10 is a biofuel made up of 90% regular unleaded and 10% ethanol – hence the E10 name. It is thought that this greener fuel could reduce CO2 emissions by 750,000 tonnes per year, the equivalent of taking up to 350,000 cars off the road. However, as the new mix has a slightly lower energy density than E5, this means fuel consumption will increase slightly when using E10. As a result, fuel costs for petrol cars are estimated to increase after the switch.

The SMMT estimated that over 92% of the petrol-engined vehicles in the UK are compatible with E10, but it is thought that as many as 600,000 vehicles on our roads aren't compatible. E10 petrol's higher bioethanol content is corrosive to rubber parts, gaskets, seals, metals and plastics, which causes engine damage, so it could dislodge deposits in older engines and fuel systems, causing blockages. As a rule, drivers of cars registered prior to 2002 are advised not to use E10 in their vehicle, as problems have been reported. And as of 2011, all new cars sold in the UK must be E10 compatible.

If you have misfuelled with E10, your car will run as usual it is best to top up with E5 next time you are at the pumps. If your car is not compatible with E10 and you keep using it, it may cause longer term damage to your engine.

Picture for illustration purposes only

When is a **write-off** not a **write-off?**

Around 700,000 vehicles are known to be written off by insurance companies each year, and the true figure could be even higher.

However, according to a leading price comparison site, many drivers are unaware that some cars are written off not because they aren't roadworthy, but because the cost of repairing them might be more than the vehicle is worth.

In fact, a car that is classed as a *'Category N write-off'* may have only sustained minor cosmetic damage such as scratched paintwork, while a *'Category S write-off'* might have sustained some structural damage that could be easily repaired, such as a dent in the car door panel.

Greg Wilson, Founder of Quotezone.co.uk, explains: *"It comes as a surprise to many drivers to be told their car is a write-off as, far from being a tangled wreck, the damage may sometimes be very superficial. While each insurer has different guidelines, they will generally class the vehicle as a write-off if the cost of repairing the damage is more than the car is worth.*

"So even if the damage is purely cosmetic – for example if the bodywork is dented or the paintwork is scratched - if it is costly to put right, the vehicle may be written off. If your car has a low value, even very minor repairs like this may not be considered worthwhile.

"Provided you have fully-comprehensive insurance, you should be covered up to the current market value of the vehicle, but if it's written off you might not be able to find a comparable car for the same price so could lose out financially or end up with an inferior vehicle - particularly if you have customised it to suit your needs or it is an older model that you love and that would be hard to replace.

"If you've bought the car on finance, the insurance pay-out also isn't likely to be enough to replace your car with a brand new motor, unless you happen to have GAP insurance in place to cover the shortfall.

"Drivers in these circumstances are often unaware that they may have another option. If a vehicle is classed as a category C, D, S or N write-off, it doesn't have to be scrapped and they may be better buying it back from the insurer and using the pay-out to get it repaired rather than buying a replacement. And if you can live with a few dents and scratches, cosmetic damage may not need repairing at all if yours was a Category N or S write-off."

Owners will need to negotiate with the insurance company and agree a settlement for the vehicle based on its pre-accident value, minus a sum to reflect its salvage value. They would then have to arrange the repairs themselves and take responsibility for bringing it back to a roadworthy condition.

Anyone considering this option should always have an independent mechanic inspect the vehicle and assess the repair costs. They should also be aware of the drawbacks.

Greg Wilson explains: *"Insurers may consider it more risky to cover a former write-off so it will probably cost more to insure, apart from the fact that you will have probably lost your no claims bonus. Therefore it will be even more important to compare insurance prices. You will also need to declare its prior status to any future buyers, and it is likely to be worth less.*

"While safety is always paramount, in some cases buying back a write-off could be the most cost-effective and convenient option – just do your due diligence and have the vehicle professionally assessed before you decide."

When does a write-off **not need** to be scrapped?

A vehicle that is declared a write-off is placed into one of six categories shown in the table below:

Category A:	The vehicle can't be repaired and has to be scrapped.
Category B:	The vehicle can't be repaired and the body shell has to be crushed, but other parts could be salvaged.
Category C:	The vehicle can be repaired, but the work would cost more than its value. The vehicle can be used again if it's repaired to a roadworthy condition.
Category D:	Repair work would cost less than the vehicle's worth, but other costs (such as transportation) would make it uneconomical. The vehicle can be used again if it's repaired to a roadworthy condition.
Category N:	The vehicle can be repaired following non-structural damage and can be used again if it's repaired to a roadworthy condition.
Category S:	The vehicle can be repaired following structural damage and can be used again if it's repaired to a roadworthy condition.

According to The Motor Insurance Anti-Fraud Register (MIAFTR), which is used by some insurers to record when a car is written off, around 700,000 vehicles are added to its register each year, though not all insurers are signed up to it.

Opel announces first commercially available production **hydrogen van**

Vauxhall is actively speaking to **business customers in the UK** now about Vivaro-e Hydrogen and expects right-hand drive vehicles to arrive from **early 2023**

The first hydrogen transporter from a vehicle manufacturer is ready to go. The first Vivaro-e Hydrogen off the production line, from Vauxhall's sister brand Opel, will begin its zero-emissions-in-use work in the fleet of Miele. The hydrogen fuel cell vehicle will perform daily field service in the Rhine-Main region of Germany.

Uwe Hochgeschurtz, Opel CEO, and Marcus Lott, Head of Development, were present at the start of production in Rüsselsheim, Germany. Hochgeschurtz commented: *"With the new Opel Vivaro-e Hydrogen we are opening the next chapter in our sustainable mobility offensive. The clever concept combines the advantages of hydrogen fuel cell propulsion with the versatility and capabilities of our best-selling light commercial vehicle."*

Marcus Lott, Head of Development, added: *"The new Vivaro-e Hydrogen perfectly meets the requirements of fleet customers. The hydrogen van is the ideal solution for driving long distances with zero-emissions-in-use as well as for transporting larger loads without losing time while charging the batteries. The Opel Vivaro-e Hydrogen leads zero-emissions mobility into the future, especially for* commercial use."

Clever concept: Long driving range, zero emissions, quick refuelling

The Vivaro-e Hydrogen is based on the existing battery electric Opel Vivaro-e, the 2021 'International Van of the Year'. With full tanks of hydrogen, the driving range is more than 249 miles (WLTP). The 45kW fuel cell is capable of generating enough power for continuous highway driving. It takes only three minutes to refuel with hydrogen – about the same time needed

Time-saving: 3-minute refuelling for a **249 mile** range (WLTP)

No compromises: Up to **6.1 m3** of cargo volume and **1,000kg** payload

to fill up a conventional diesel or petrol vehicle.

The 10.5kWh lithium-ion battery provides dynamic peak power when required, for example, at start-up and under acceleration. Since the battery covers power needs in such situations, the fuel cell can run at optimum operating conditions. The battery also enables regenerative braking, while the plug-in capability offers the opportunity to recharge the battery externally if necessary, e.g. at a charging station, providing 31 miles of pure battery electric range.

Thanks to smart packaging, the Vivaro-e Hydrogen demands no compromises on space compared to the combustion engine versions, offering up to 5.3m3 or 6.1 m3 of cargo volume. The fuel cell electric LCV is available in lengths M and L (4.95m and 5.30m) with up to 1,000kg of payload.

Like its battery-electric sibling and those with internal combustion engines, the Vivaro-e Hydrogen offers an unusually wide range of driver assistance systems that enhance safety. The equipment includes a 180-degree panorama rear view camera, blind-spot alert and front/rear park pilot.

The new Vivaro-e Hydrogen benefits from more than 20 years of experience in the development of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles at Opel and Stellantis. Production takes place at Opel Special Vehicles (OSV) in Rüsselsheim. With the new Vivaro-e Hydrogen, Opel is continuing its electrification offensive. Customers have the choice of selecting the drive concept in the Opel LCV portfolio that suits their application. The Vivaro-e Hydrogen complements the Combo-e, Vivaro-e and Movano-e battery-electric vans that are already available to order.

Mercedes-Benz Unimog puts on more muscle where it matters for UK customers

Mercedes-Benz Trucks has responded to customer feedback by introducing more powerful versions of its 4x4 Unimog UGE implement carrier.

Now available for order by UK operators, the U435 and U535 produce 260 kW (354 hp). This represents an increase of 40 kW (54 hp) on the highest output previously available from the Euro VI Step E 7.7-litre in-line six-cylinder engine. Maximum torque is up by 180 Nm to 1,380 Nm, which is available from 1,800 rpm.

Daimler Truck engineers have also purpose-designed and built an automated manual transmission to manage the higher outputs of the U435/U535. The Opti-drive system's improved gear change co-ordination and clutch control produces quicker shifts that translate into a smoother ride and improved fuel-efficiency. As a result, it is expected to prove popular with UK operators as an alternative to the standard-fit manual gearbox.

In other developments, the Unimog implement carrier can now be specified for the first time with self-levelling suspension for the rear axle. This new set-up, which employs gas storage tanks and hydraulic cylinders, instead of the usual coil springs, offers benefits in terms of comfort and operational efficiency.

As well as providing a constant driving level irrespective of load status or any rear attachments that may be fitted, the hydropneumatic system contributes to handling stability and assists operators when coupling and uncoupling implements.

A new Comfort steering option, meanwhile, makes it easier for drivers to turn the wheel at low, manoeuvring speeds, or when stationary, and is particularly helpful when the vehicle is fitted with large-volume tyres or heavy front implements such as mowers. The electrohydraulic steering delivers a 'feel' that adapts to the driving situation.

The U435 and U535 have maximum gross weights (with relevant special equipment) of 14 tonnes and 16.5 tonnes respectively. The first examples are expected to reach the UK next month (January).

The latest round of product enhancements cap a memorable 75th anniversary year for the Mercedes-Benz Unimog. Although it offers many of the attributes of both, this unique vehicle is neither a truck, nor a tractor. It enjoys an unrivalled reputation as the ultimate off-roader, but also achieves impressive on-road speeds of up to 56 mph (where applicable).

Unimogs are chosen for the most arduous applications by a broad spectrum of operators, particularly those engaged in the agriculture and arboriculture, utilities, municipal and emergency services sectors. They are also engaged in highly specialised roles such as railway infrastructure maintenance– the vehicle can even be adapted to run on rails.

The Mercedes-Benz Unimog range encompasses vehicles with gross weights from 7.5 to 16.5 tonnes. All have single rear wheels that follow the track created by the front wheels.


U535
R D343
UNIMOG
U535

Mercedes-Benz Vans announces specification for the new **eVito**

The next level, fully electric Mercedes-Benz eVito is now available for order, with production and first deliveries starting in March.

The new panel van offers significant advances in efficiency, reliability and connectivity. It also offers an impressive 162-mile range^, making electric mobility a feasible proposition for many businesses that have yet to switch from diesel.

What's more, its 66 kWh lithium-ion battery can be restored to 80% of full usable capacity in just 35 minutes†, using a publicly available rapid charging point. As a result, a short stop to recharge can extend the vehicle's range by approximately 105 miles (WLTP combined).

AC fast charging to 100% capacity takes six-and-a-half hours using an 11kW Wallbox Type 2 charger, and approximately 20 hours using a regular domestic power outlet. eVito customers can take advantage of Mercedes-Benz Vans' home charge point offers, which are redeemable via its infrastructure partners EO and New Motion. EO charging can also support customers with depot and business charging rollouts.

As with previous eVito models, gearshift paddles allow drivers to adjust the recuperation mode by which battery charge is extended through the recovery of energy when decelerating. A 'first' for the latest version is the DAUTO recuperation mode, which determines whether the van should glide with least possible resistance, or decelerate and recover energy into the battery.

The eVito's electric motor drives the front wheels, delivering peak and steady outputs of 116 hp and 95 hp respectively, and up to 360 Nm of torque. The 3.2-tonne vehicle offers a payload allowance of up to 807 kg and a maximum load volume of 6.6m3 – the battery is safely housed beneath the floor, so does not impinge on the available space. The cargo area is easily accessed via sliding doors on body sides of the vehicle, as well as from the rear.

Mercedes-Benz Vans is widely acknowledged as the market leader when it comes to safety, and the new eVito achieves a 'Gold' rating from the independent crash testing body Euro NCAP. Additions to the outgoing version's standard specification include Active Brake Assist with pedestrian recognition technology; Attention Assist, which detects drowsiness in the driver and encourages them to take breaks when tired; and Cruise Control with Adaptive speed limiter function.

As with all Mercedes-Benz vans, the eVito comes with a three-year, unlimited mileage warranty, although the battery cover extends to eight years or 160,000 km. Anti-theft protection in the form of double locks and a Thatcham Category 1-approved alarm, and award-winning MobiloVan support with free, round-the-clock emergency roadside assistance including out-of-charge cover, add further peace of mind for customers.

The new van is also equipped as standard with an intuitively-operated, seven-inch touchscreen with smartphone integration, and comes with a three-year subscription to the Mercedes me app. This provides connectivity via digital devices to a variety of services, including remote eCharging, Navigation with Electronic Intelligence, which allows routes to be plotted with reference to public charge points, and live tracking and remote locking.

Drivers can use the pre-conditioning function in the Mercedes me app to programme cooling or heating of their van while it is charging, conserving battery life and maximising range, while simultaneously ensuring the cab temperature is perfectly comfortable from the 'off'.

To minimise vehicle downtime, Mercedes me also monitors the 'health' of critical parts and provides real-time updates on upcoming maintenance requirements that can be relayed remotely to the customer's official Mercedes-Benz Dealer.

Choice is extended too. Like its predecessor, the new eVito is available in the PROGRESSIVE trimline –standard specification includes air conditioning, a Comfort driver's seat with heating, a reversing camera, and the AUDIO 30 entertainment system with DAB radio, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Now, though, customers can opt for the enhanced specification of the new PREMIMUM line. This adds styling features such as metallic paint with colour-coded bumpers, 17-inch, aerodynamically-optimised light alloy wheels, a chrome grille and a leather-covered steering wheel, along with practical driver aids including PARKTRONIC parking sensors, front fog lights, electrically-folding door mirrors and lumbar support for the seat.

To simplify its offer and provide extra value, Mercedes-Benz Vans UK has also introduced four option packages. These incorporate additional features in attractively priced bundles, including: Load Area Package, Technology Package PLUS, Comfort Package PLUS and Driver Assistance Package.

Citroën **Berlingo Van** is the UK's best-selling **Compact Van** for 2021

Citroën Berlingo Van has taken top spot for 2021, in the highly competitive 'F1' Compact Van segment, highlighting it as the van of choice for fleet and local business operators alike. Over 12,000 Berlingo Vans were registered in 2021 – contributing to 10.9% year-on-year sales growth and 7.0% market share for the Citroën brand in the UK LCV market – according to the SMMT.

This final achievement rounds off a busy year for Berlingo Van, a year that saw the introduction of ë-Berlingo Van Electric as well as a wealth of additional accolades.

Both Citroën ë-Berlingo Van Electric and Berlingo Van are available in Panel Van form, with two body lengths, and as a Crew Van with the latter offering two rows of seating for up to five individuals. The different body styles, coupled with up to four different trim levels, ensures there is a Berlingo Van to suit everyone's business needs.

The zero-emissions Citroën ë-Berlingo Van Electric features a 50kWh battery connected to a 100kW (136hp) electric motor with up to 260Nm of torque. From a single charge, new ë-Berlingo Van Electric has a range of up to 171 miles under WLTP testing. Ideal for both fleet and SME business users, ë-Berlingo Van Electric also supports up to 100kW rapid charging – with a 0-80% charge taking just 30 minutes.

New ë-Berlingo Van Electric and Berlingo Van are available in sizes 'M' and 'XL', with Medium models measuring 4.4m long, and XL variants coming in at 4.75m long. All versions are 1.90m high and – thanks to a specially adapted power steering system – have an agile turning circle of just 10.8m (with the exception of the XL Crew Van, which has an increased turning circle of 11.4m).

Load volumes in Panel Van 'M' versions range from 3.3m3 to 3.9m3 – with the EXTENSO® seat folded, while the 'XL' variant offers an increased available load volume of 3.8m3 to 4.4m3. 'M' variants can carry loads of up to 3.09m in length and have a maximum payload of 1000kg, while the longer 'XL' model offers a 3.44m maximum load length with the EXTENSO® seat folded down, and a maximum payload of 974kg.

Make **checking tyres** an essential **New Year resolution**

With millions of us making New Year's resolutions, TyreSafe is urging drivers to pledge to check their tyres regularly to reduce the risk of incidents while out on the road.

Adequate tread depth is essential, especially when there is significant standing water. Tread clears water from between the road surface and the tyre – as much as a bucket full every seven seconds on a new tyre. The lower the tread, the less water it can clear, thereby increasing the chances of 'aquaplaning'.

Also known as 'hydroplaning', aquaplaning is caused when a layer of water builds up between a vehicle's tyres and the surface of the road. When this happens, tyres are not effectively in contact with the road, making any attempts by the driver to steer, brake or accelerate ineffective – in other words, they're out of control.

If there is lots of standing water, drivers should lower their speed and leave more distance between their vehicle and the one in front. Should they find themselves aquaplaning, drivers should gently lift their foot from the accelerator and allow the vehicle's speed to naturally reduce. This will allow the tyres to regain grip on the road.

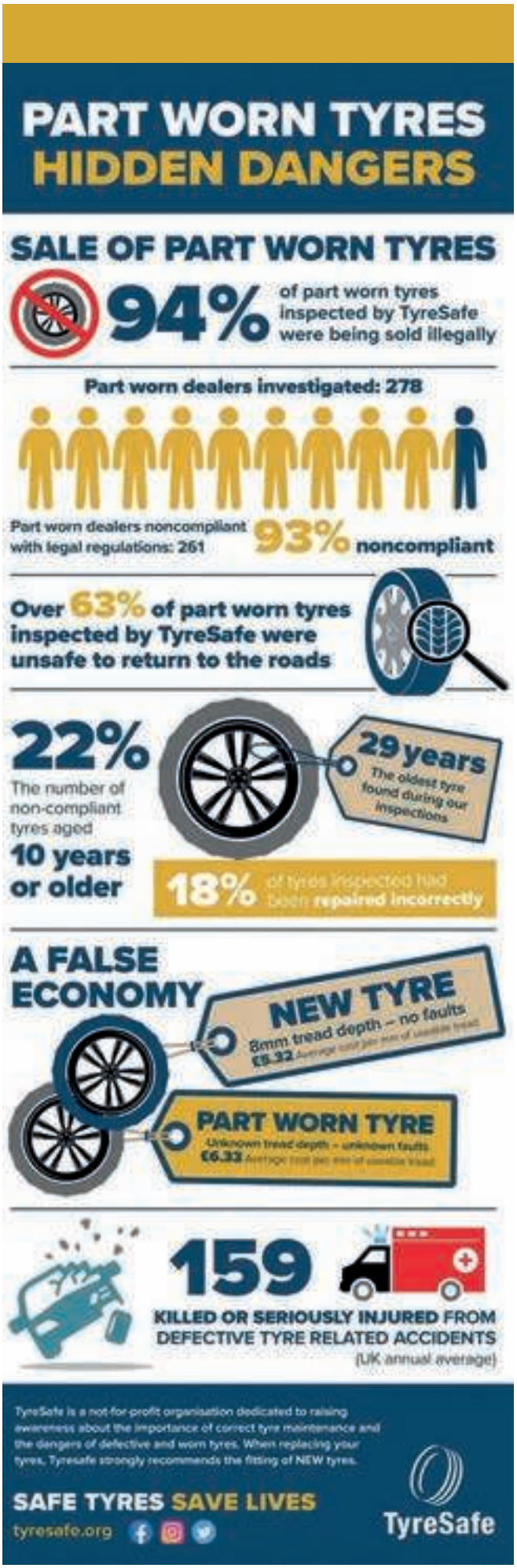
Winter tyres and All Season tyres have special tread patterns which help to provide extra grip in snow and ice, and have a different compound to allow them to perform in low temperatures, offering better grip at this time of year. However, it is essential all tyres have adequate tread depth of at least the minimum legal limit of 1.6mm.

You can check your tyres' tread depth with a 20p piece if you do not have a tread depth gauge. The outer rim of the 20p is approximately 2.6mm, so drivers can insert the coin into the tyre's tread and gauge how much of the border remains exposed. If the border is completely hidden, tread depth is likely to be above the legal limit; if any more than the slightest amount of the coin's rim is visible, the tread needs to be checked by a professional.

For optimum performance and safety, drivers should also check their tyres are correctly inflated. The correct tyre pressures are shown on a sticker in your car's door shut, filler cap or in the owner's manual. Use an accurate pressure gauge to ensure they are right for the load as part of your pre-journey planning.

Finally, motorists should check the condition of their tyres so signs of anything out of the ordinary and potential defects. Bulges, cracks, cuts and embedded objects are cause for concern and need to be checked by a professional. If stones or other objects caught between grooves in the tread can be removed without damaging the tyre, drivers are advised to do so.

Stuart Jackson, TyreSafe chairman, said: "*Pledging to check your tyres once a month, every month and before long journeys could be the most life-changing New Year's resolution you could ever make. Conditions in January are already challenging, with an increased risk of aquaplaning, which is why it is even more important during the winter months. It only takes a few minutes, less time than a workout, or prepping a detox smoothie, and could save the lives of you, your passengers and other road users.*"



New van market grows by a **fifth** as battery electric demand more than **doubles**

UK new light commercial vehicle (LCV) registrations bounced back from the pandemic-hit 2020, growing by more than a fifth (21.4%) in 2021, according to the latest figures released by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

355,380 new light commercial vehicles were registered in the year, ending with the best December for the sector since 2015 with a 7.8% increase.

The robustness of the LCV market was due in part to strong underlying demand from key sectors – notably construction and home deliveries – with significant fleet investments resulting in 62,723 more units being registered in the last year than in 2020. This performance is only marginally weaker than the strong 2019 market (-2.8%)1 and the five-year pre-Covid average (-3.0%).

There was more good news for the sector as BEV uptake soared by 142.3%, although this equates to a relatively modest 12,759 zero emission vans and a total market share of 3.6%. With petrol and diesel vans facing the same end of sale date as passenger cars, this shows just how far the LCV BEV market needs to grow even to replicate the shift taking place in the passenger car market where BEVs account for one in nine registrations as opposed to one in 28 in the van market.

In terms of market segmentation, there were significant increases for both 4x4s and the heaviest vans weighing greater than 2.5-3.5 tonnes of 183.0% and 27.8% respectively, while vans weighing greater than 2.0-2.5 tonnes were the only segment to decrease, albeit by a marginal -0.8%.

Looking ahead in 2022, the LCV market is predicted to grow further to 363,700 units, bringing registrations in line with 2019's 365,778 units.

REGISTRATIONS OF VANS plus HCVs 3.5T-6T by MONTH

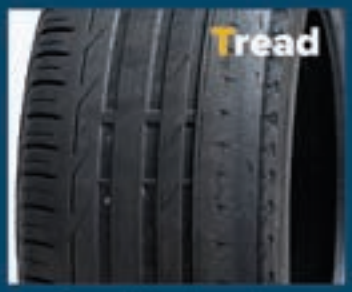
	Dec-21	Dec-20	% change
Pickups	3,775	2,596	45.4%
4x4s	154	68	126.5%
Vans <= 2.0t	871	1,528	-43.0%
Vans > 2.0 - 2.5t	3,710	4,089	-9.3%
Vans > 2.5 - 3.5t	20,894	19,002	10.0%
All Vans to 3.5t	**29,404**	**27,283**	**7.8%**
Rigids > 3.5 - 6.0t	639	616	3.7%

TYRE SAFETY CHECKS:
What's stopping you?

Remember to ACT on tyre safety

Check the air pressure on all your tyres.

Check for cracks and any bulges.



Check tread depths using the 20p test.

Check your tyres **at least once a month** and **before a long journey**

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